

Passion Week Devotionals

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Journey with Jesus by Susan Narjala.

Monday- April 15th—We start the Passion Week devotional with someone who truly got it. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, actually understood. In fact, she understood more than the indignant disciples who tried to stop her from “wasting” the perfume on Jesus. She, perhaps, understood that Jesus wouldn’t be with them much longer.

Her response to Jesus’ imminent death is beautiful. She worshipped him. Not a casual, what’s-next-on-the-agenda worship. But an extravagant worship where she didn’t count the cost. It was a reverential worship, an extraordinary worship, perhaps even an irrational worship. She didn’t look at the clock or her wallet or at people around her who were wagging their fingers in judgement.

Instead, she looked at Jesus. She allowed him to fill her vision and eclipse everything else around her. She worshipped like no one was watching.

Bringing It Home

What is my response to Jesus’ death on the Cross? Am I offering Him a sacrifice of worship and praise? Or is my sacrifice this season of Lent geared more for my own benefit?

Lean In

Heavenly Father, Help me to worship in a way that truly takes all of me. Help me love you with not just my words but with all my soul, my mind, my strength and my heart. Let me never be content with lukewarm worship, but let me burn with the flame of faith set aglow by a deep reverence for you. Amen.

Tuesday April 16- Journey with Jesus by Susan Narjala

When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother” John 19:16

From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

As Jesus hung on the cross, his sayings, thus far, have been others’ focused.

He asked for forgiveness for his crucifiers.

He welcomed the thief into the kingdom.

And, he takes care of his mother, Mary, and his disciple John.

Even in the torture and humiliation, Jesus did not focus on himself. He wanted to make sure his mother would be taken care of. (It’s a well-established fact that Mary’s husband, Joseph, had died by then). Jesus wanted to give his beloved disciple John the important role of caring for Mary.

Even from the cross, Jesus let go of that which was close to his heart: his mother and his close friend.

Bringing It Home

What or whom I am holding on to too tightly? Is God convicting me of letting go of someone or something and trusting Him for that submission?

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!”

John 19:26 KJV

Wednesday- April 17-Journey with Jesus by Susan Narjala

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The thief on the cross next to Jesus heard his cries asking for the forgiveness of those who were nailing him.

He knew that there was something different about the man who hung next to him. We don't know the turning point, but the thief says to him, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

That word “kingdom” is key. The thief and certifiably “bad guy” recognized that the man who was bruised and beaten and hanging on a wooden cross was the King. He put his faith in this unlikely ruler. And Jesus accepts this convicted criminal in an instant.

Jesus gives up his right to social correctness. He lets go of any notion of what is socially acceptable or considered morally upright.

The thief put his faith in Jesus. And Jesus exchanged the thief's filthy rags with robes of righteousness. No transaction fee charged. No questions asked.

Bringing It Home

Am I holding on to some obnoxious sense of what is “socially acceptable” to God? Do I subconsciously write off some people as “beyond redemption”? What can I do to truly grasp that salvation is a free gift for ALL who believe?

Lean In

Heavenly Father, Thank you for the reassuring words of Jesus to the thief. They weren't just empty placebos. Jesus sealed the promise he made with his blood. Thank you that he let go of the sense of social correctness in order to display his grace. Help me to do the same. Amen

Thursday- April 18-Journey with Jesus by Susan Narjala

“About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) Matthew 27:46

That cry of dereliction is something we will never fully grasp. It was a cry within the being of the Triune God.

As I’ve heard it explained, Jesus was so marred by the sin of the entire world past, present and future, that God, the Father, had to turn his face away from his beloved Son. As I see it, he could not bear to see the depravity of the world taken on by the holy blemishless Lamb of God.

This is the only time Jesus address the “Father” as “God.” I don’t think we’ll ever know the dynamics of that moment. But, in those words, the utter desolation Jesus experienced comes through plainly. Jesus experienced the wrath that we deserved by bearing our sin. Jesus gave up his right of intimacy with his Father.

This was the reason he wept and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yet, beneath it all, is the fact that Jesus endured the Cross, scorning its shame for the “joy set before him.”

Bringing It Home

Do I allow the loneliness and abandonment of the Cross to take hold of my heart?

Lean In

Jesus, I’ll never be able to understand that exact moment when in the darkness you uttered that cry of dereliction. But because of that loneliness you experienced I will never have to walk alone. I’m accepted because you were forsaken. I’m forgiven because you were condemned. Amazing grace, how can it be? Amen

Friday April 19 -Journey with Jesus by Susan Narjala

Matthew 27:27-31

Sometimes, we just need to stop awhile and let the hard truth sink in. Today's passage doesn't require explanations or key takeaways. It requires deep, soulful reflection on all that Jesus endured for me.

It requires that I don't brush away the brutality of that day 2000 years ago. It mandates that I allow the Holy Spirit to chisel away at the hardness of my heart.

Some 200 soldiers gathered around the Son of God with the sole intent of humiliating and torturing him.

Did you read that they had him flogged? It wasn't an ordinary whip. Pieces of metal and bones were attached to it. Many convicted felons died when being flogged as their flesh was literally torn to shreds.

Did you read of how they struck him on the head again and again? With a staff. On his head. Again and again.

Did you read of how they mocked him? After parading him in a scarlet robe, they pushed down a crown of thorns on his head. They called out hateful words and spat upon him.

Today's passage doesn't require explanations or key takeaways. It requires deep, soulful reflection on all that Christ endured for me.

Bringing It Home

Have I become casual in my reflection of Christ's suffering? Do I allow the hate and hurt of that day to change who I am and Whose I am today?

Lean In

Lord Jesus, I can't begin to understand the torture and humiliation that you went through on my behalf. But my heart responds in thankfulness. You are altogether perfect and lovely. Amen