



For the Week of April 8, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
why Easter is such good news

Daily Life Notes for Individuals & Couples

Introductions

Welcome to this week's **Life Notes**. This week, we ask ourselves why Easter is such good news!

The passages selected by Pastor Mark this week are copied below in their entirety, but it's great to use your own Bible so you can make note of things that interest you or speak to you in some way. It's always good to read a passage at least twice, so that your mind begins to get involved with what the Holy Spirit is saying. It's also great to read a second version so you can compare what's going on. The following is the NIV. You can view various Bible versions online at sites like www.biblegateway.com

Note: Saturday is used as a "sabbath" or "rest from our every day work responsibilities" experience, but you might work on Saturday and be off some other time during the week that would be more appropriate to celebrating rest. Please feel free to adjust the **Life Notes** schedule to fit your own.

The Word: John 8:28,29; 20:27-29; 1:29; Romans 4:25; John 6:40; 11:25; 14:1-3; 16:33

Jesus (to the Jewish religious leaders): *"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."* (John 8:28,29)

Jesus: *"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

Thomas: *"My Lord and my God!"*

Jesus: *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* (John 20:27-29)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him.

John: *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29)

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.
(Romans 4:25)

Jesus: *"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:40)

Jesus (to Martha): *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."* (John 11:25)

Jesus (to the disciples): *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* (John 14:1-3)

Jesus (to the disciples): *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

Monday: good news, Jesus is Lord

As we celebrate the day after Easter, let's begin by reflecting on a personal aspect of Easter that came to your mind during yesterday's celebration. Thank God for giving you that thought and ask him to help you continue to focus on his resurrected power and presence in your life.

Today, we'll see Jesus is Lord through the eyes of Thomas and his companions. Read John 20 and then focus your attention on the following verses.

Jesus: *"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

Thomas: *"My Lord and my God!"*

Jesus: *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* (John 20:27-29)

We are those who did not see, and yet we believe. And we daily look for ways to blend our human understanding of God into the reality of his Lordship. "Jesus is Lord" is a description of who he is - regardless of whether you or I acknowledge that or not. But when we do believe, our lives are forever changed.

If you had been watching from the corner of the upper room, what would you have seen?

If you had been Thomas or any one of the followers with him that day, what would "stop doubting and believe" have meant to you? What do you think Jesus meant?

What does "stop doubting and believe" mean for you right now, some 2000 years later?

- Thomas doubted; but “Jesus is Lord” meant, for him, the chance to confront his doubts and yield control to Jesus.
- Peter denied; but “Jesus is Lord” meant, for him, the chance to be restored and voice his love again.
- All of Jesus’ followers lost something precious that had informed their life for three transforming years; but “Jesus is Lord” meant God’s Word is true, not just for those three years of ministry, but for eternity. The Holy Spirit would come and relationship (personal and community) with the living God would change the course of history.

“Jesus is Lord” means transformation today and forevermore.

*Where do you need to personally embrace “Jesus is Lord” in your life today?
What do you need to release to God in order to more fully live this transformed life?*

Try an examen question.

*What is the greatest difference that living “Jesus is Lord” makes in your life each day?
What is the greatest loss you experience each day by **not** living “Jesus is Lord?”*

Pastor Mark said, *“The fact of the resurrection is clear evidence that Jesus is Lord. That’s good news, it’s good to be reminded that your worship is rightly placed when you bow the knee to Jesus.”*

As you close, journal any thoughts God has shared with you today. Let yourself reflect on his lordship and find your safe place there.

Tuesday: good news, I am forgiven

Let your time today begin with forgiveness. Ask God to clear your mind of all other issues or concerns that arise and simply concentrate on his presence with you there.

Journal words or names or situations that come to mind when you think “I am forgiven.” Then respond to:

In what way, what relationship or what area of your life are you currently experiencing forgiveness?

We might know that Jesus died to forgive our sins and that we are called to a life of forgiveness, but knowing that and experiencing that are two very different things.

“There is nothing lacking in the sacrificial death of Jesus for our sins. The resurrection proves it worked - the way of forgiveness has been provided. Now, through faith in the risen Christ, we are justified, forgiven of our sins. The resurrection reminds us the payment of Jesus for our sins was fully sufficient, and in him, we are fully forgiven. Here’s good news...whatever your sin, the payment of Christ on the cross, is greater.” (Pastor Mark)

When God created us in his image, we enjoyed unbroken fellowship with Father, Son and Spirit. Then we chose our own images instead of worshiping him and we couldn’t find our way back. Only God could make us whole again. And he did, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus...through the incredible power of perfect love that continues to flow in and through us today. Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven and reigns today - across time and space and in our hearts. We are restored, even though we do not yet fully experience the fullness of our restoration.

Read John 18:15-27 and John 21, putting yourself in Peter's story. Peter experienced such a personal moment of Easter's forgiveness. He was a courageous, energetic, faith-filled friend of Jesus who found himself alone in a garden, unable to reconnect what he knew he'd broken. But Jesus found him. And Peter understood forgiveness for the first time - not a forgiveness based on his own ability to make a wrong right, but forgiveness based on Jesus as Lord.

How would you describe forgiveness?

How has Jesus forgiven you in your lifetime? This week? Today?

Who, in your life, have you had to forgive most?

Who has had to forgive you most?

Who needs to experience Jesus' forgiveness through you?

Who do you need to release from the pain of incomplete forgiveness?

What do you need to release to Jesus?

Pastor Mark wants us to know that we've been forgiven. *"Here's what you need to hear and receive and embrace for yourself this Easter, if you are in Christ, you are forgiven! The stain is gone and the burden fully lifted because the payment of Christ on the cross is fully sufficient payment for your sin, and the resurrection is proof positive."*

In short. We can be renewed by forgiveness every day. And we can offer God's forgiveness to everyone around us. Our daily transformation is a reflection of Easter's transformation. And we can experience it right here, right now. Spend some final moments simply thanking God for the gift of forgiveness. Let everything go into Jesus' care.

Wednesday: good news, I have eternal life

Begin today by reading John 20, pausing to reflect on each person's experience of the resurrection. When Jesus conquered death, our eternal destination became real...tangible...assured. What had been a promise for the disciples now took root. Jesus conquered death. And followers of Jesus have nothing to fear.

"The resurrection of Jesus is evidence that he has full power and authority to make good on his promise to give us eternal life." (Pastor Mark)

Jesus: *"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:40)

Eternal life belongs to the Jesus-follower, and that's not a "maybe" in Scripture. The resurrection proves that Jesus has full authority over death, and complete ability to follow through on all of his promises. Eternal life is "then" for us, and eternal life is now. When we step into relationship with the Lord of the kingdom, we are members of the kingdom. And that kingdom is then and now.

Pastor Mark likened kingdom membership to joining the Marines. When we apply, we get the acceptance letter. There's still a lot to do before we're fully engaged in duty, but we're in and we begin to think like a Marine, talk like a Marine, plan like a Marine and self-identify as a Marine. The new identity becomes us. Even more so our identity in Jesus.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29)

Jesus (to Martha): *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."* (John 11:25)

Jesus promises eternal life to those who follow him. And that life starts here and now.

At MISSION we express kingdom living through our corporate worship and community and through living out our Micah 6:8 vision together. We walk humbly with God, we love mercy and we live justly. Milawi, Fiji and our current adoption initiative are all aspects of taking God's kingdom into the world and letting our new identity in Jesus impact other's lives. We hear Jesus' voice and we follow him.

What do we know to be true about Jesus as a result of Easter? (make a list of all that comes to mind.)

What do we know about being citizens of God's kingdom?

How can seeing yourself as a today-member of the kingdom of God impact the decisions you make?

How can seeing yourself as a today-member of the kingdom of God impact the relationships you have?

How can seeing yourself as a today-member of the kingdom of God impact the way you spend your time or your energy?

As you finish these moments with Father, Son and Spirit today, ask God to show you if there is any specific way he is leading you right now. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He is the good shepherd. Listen to his voice. Picture the stone rolled away some 2000 years ago. Ask God to be actively at work in your life and, through you, in this world.

Thursday: good news, I can trust Jesus

Begin your time today making a mind-map or list of everything you can trust about God - Father, Son and Spirit. Why *do* you trust God? Why *can* you trust God? Let your testimony about God's trustworthiness take shape. Then read our passage for today several times.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:1-3)

This promise is clear - there is nothing veiled. He is preparing our place, even as we gather with him right now. Everything Jesus told his disciples about his death and resurrection came true. We can trust him. We can take him at his word.

One of the punishments we often deliver is "I can no longer trust you." And what we mean by that is we're hurt or angry about the behavior of the other person and we don't want to believe that person's words any more...not until something takes place to restore the trust. In truth, not one of us is trustworthy, even by our own standards. But Jesus is.

What do you need to trust Jesus with today? What's happening in your life that you need to hand over to him?

If you feel like Jesus has let you down in some way, he can take the honest confession. He understands that there is much we cannot understand. There is no problem confessing our struggles - the breakdown occurs when we don't...when we aren't honest and, as a result, relate to God in a careful, guarded way. In order to know and be known, we have to be honest with God and let him know what is truly on our minds and hearts.

Try this examen, asking the Holy Spirit to give you insight and the courage to be open and honest.

*It is easiest for me to trust God with these situations or relationships.
It is most difficult for me to trust God with these situations or relationships.*

What I wish I trust with Jesus today is...

As you bring your time to an end, tell God you want to trust him more. Read over your response to the "What I wish I could trust Jesus with" question, and Jesus joining you on this journey.

Friday: good news, I can have peace

We've spent this week looking at the celebrations of Easter - the good news that flows into our lives as a result of the time Jesus spent with us here on this earth.

Review the celebrations that Pastor Mark offered: *Jesus is Lord, I am forgiven, I have eternal life, I can trust Jesus and I can have peace*, and let those form the basis for a time of meditation today.

Jesus prepared the disciples for his own death and their future, and John gives us four chapters of Jesus' own words. They are filled with wisdom, encouragement and truth, even though he spoke of things the disciples couldn't fully understand. Toward the end of some very profound moments, he gave them these words that are often quoted by his followers today.

Jesus (to the disciples): *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

Pastor Mark made it clear to us that we will have struggles in this world. It is part of the landscape of a broken world where sin has had its hold for a very long time. When we come to know Jesus, it doesn't mean that all engagement with this troubled world comes to an end. What it does mean is that the troubles of this world have been overcome by Jesus - and we are now overcomers, as we live as members of his kingdom together.

What circumstances or relationships used to bring pain but now you see in a new light? What happened? What changed?

Make a list of those situations you've faced that you now see from a different perspective - God has worked his good and you see purpose in what used to be simply a worry, a fear or a burden.

In what ways are you currently wrestling with the troubles of this world?

Write down your answers. Look at those things that you are facing right now so that you and Jesus can see them together.

The amazing promise of the ruler of our kingdom is that he works good in all things. In this world, there are troubles, but Jesus has overcome. Not only did he overcome death itself, but he also uses pain to create goodness.

Spend your final moments with Father, Son and Spirit today, letting God begin to work his good in those things on your list of trouble. And then watch. Watch every day. As we look for God's goodness to show up, we begin to have eyes that see in a new way.

Easter. New sight. New purpose. A new you. A new Kingdom. A new future. A new now. Jesus wins.

Saturday

We encourage you to let Saturdays be a “mini Sabbath” moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in **Life Notes** for the day you have off. It’s really important to learn to simply “be” with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an “agenda.”

Sabbath simply means “cease” and “rest.” So, today, spend moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. “Cease” all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

Couples, if possible, spend some Sabbath moments together reading, taking a walk, drinking coffee outside, sharing a song you both like, inviting friends over and cooking for them, taking a drive or a bike ride, exercising, watching a movie. Whatever you might like to do to truly rest, do it together. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life together this week. Just let the time unfold. Sense God’s love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Families, spend a Sabbath day together. Let different members of the family choose what to do each week. Simply enjoy God’s company together. Or maybe serve somewhere as a family or invite neighbors over, simply because you care.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He’ll delight and amaze you.