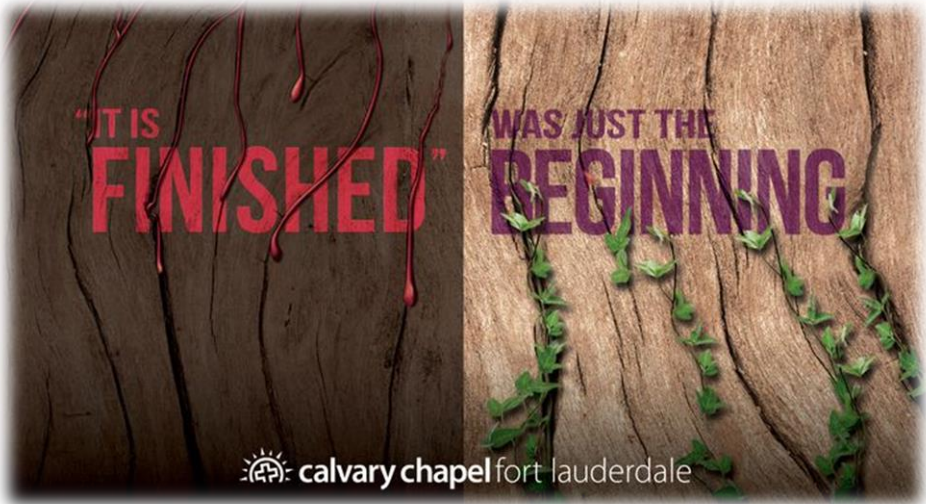


# HOLY WEEK

— DAILY DEVOTIONS —



## Easter: "It is Finished" Was Just the Beginning

The Holy Week is a time we can truly reflect on and celebrate the lengths God went to in order to redeem us! This Easter, let us walk through the events that took place during Jesus' final week. Connect to the past as we reflect on prophecies, He fulfilled each day and get a peek into the future as we see the fruit it produced for the early church, as well as for us today.

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# PALM SUNDAY

## The Road

Have you ever found yourself traveling down the road on your way to something you know will be a significant moment in your life? Perhaps you were on your way to your first day of college or to interview for your dream job. Or maybe you were driving to your wedding or speeding to the hospital for the birth of your child. Undoubtedly, this ride is different from your usual trip to the grocery store! Your heart is racing as your mind plays out every possible scenario.

Imagine how Jesus must have felt as He travelled down the road about to enter Jerusalem, knowing that this road ultimately would end in His death. Jesus knew that He'd be betrayed, imprisoned, tortured, and killed, but He also knew that "the hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12:23). You see, Jesus was on a mission to tear down the great divide between God and man (2 Corinthians 5:18), to render sin powerless (Romans 6:6), to defeat death (1 Corinthians 15:55), and to set us free (Galatians 5:1). Nothing was going to stop Him from fulfilling His mission to rescue mankind.

In Acts 9, we read about a Pharisee who was also traveling on a road to complete a mission. And just like Jesus, this man believed he was fulfilling God's work. But unlike Jesus, he had no idea where this road would lead him. His name was Saul of Tarsus, a man known for persecuting believers, for "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). His mission? To arrest Christ followers and bring them to Jerusalem for trial (9:2), which essentially guaranteed they'd be stoned unless they denied their faith.

But on this road, Saul came face-to-face with Jesus, the very One whose followers Saul was persecuting! And in the midst of their

encounter, the zealous Pharisee, who was no doubt humbled by the sight of the Light of the world, was given a new name (Paul, which means humble) and a new mission.

What road are you on today? Where has your journey taken you? Sometimes, life takes us down a dark road, and we wake up one day wondering how we got this far. But the good news is that Jesus travelled the road we never could and “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2). And because of this, no matter what road we’re on or where our ride has left us, Jesus will be there to meet us and shine His light on us!

### **Reflecting on the Promise**

In Zechariah 9:9–10, it was foretold that the King of the Jews would ride into the holy city in the humblest of ways . . . on a colt, a young male donkey. In Matthew 21, Jesus, the humble Servant King, fulfils this prophecy as He enters Jerusalem for the Passover festivities, days before becoming the Passover Lamb.

Take time today to reflect on the humility of our Saviour and what you can do to embody that same servant heartedness.

### **Scripture Reading**

#### ***Zechariah 9:9-10***

#### ***The Coming of Zion’s King***

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!*

*See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

## MONDAY

### A Heart of Zeal: A House of Prayer

The word zeal isn't one you hear very often. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to hear it come up in everyday conversation. The dictionary defines zeal as "great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective." Some related words include passion, vigour, intensity, devotion, fervour, and fire.

As Jesus' final week continued, His issues with the established religious order escalated, starting when He rode into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. As the people were shouting praises and laying down palm branches, the indignant Pharisees said, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples. But He answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out'" (Luke 19:39–40). Things heated up more the following day, as Jesus walked into His Father's house and saw those He referred to as "robbers," taking advantage of God's people. He disrupted the business of religion and, in doing so, drew the anger of the religious leaders who had already decided to have Jesus killed.

Naturally, Jesus—being zealous for God's house and God's children—took action. Jesus would not stand for such abuse upon those who sought to be closer to God. These were men and women coming to the temple in order to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and they were being taken advantage of. In that moment, He showed Himself once again to be the voice of the voiceless and the defender of the defenceless. He caused a scene, ruffled some feathers, and no doubt stirred hearts. His righteous anger led to a holy and teachable moment.

Later, we see His disciples preaching and demonstrating the same fire as Jesus. By the time we arrive at Acts 4, Peter and John had been making waves in the temple, healing a lame man and proclaiming the

message of Jesus and His resurrection boldly. They, like their Master, disrupted the religious order, the temple. Not for the sake of dissention, but to set those held captive by an unreachable religious standard free, to receive the grace of God that comes by faith in Christ.

What are you zealous for? Where does your passion and devotion lie? For Jesus and His disciples, it was all about serving the lost and broken, bringing hope and freedom to all who would receive it. As Christ followers, our zeal should be for God's temple, because you are His temple. Your neighbor is His temple. Your enemy is His temple! Ask God to show you how you can clear your temple so that the Spirit may fill it!

### Reflecting on the Promise

In Matthew 21:12–13, Jesus fulfilled three prophetic words when He showed passion for God's house (Psalm 69:9) and cleansed the temple of crooks (Jeremiah 7:11) so that it could once again be a place of prayer (Isaiah 56:7). The cleansing of the temple by Jesus allowed the presence of God once more to fill the temple. The cleansing of our heart by Jesus' blood allows God's Spirit to fill us.

Today, spend time reflecting on what it means to have God's Spirit within you.

### Scripture Reading

#### ***Matthew 21:12 -13***

*Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"*

## TUESDAY

### Moving Mountains

Over the last few years, Snickers has had a clever campaign that states, “You’re not yourself when you’re hungry.” Needless to say, the commercials have been entertaining. In Matthew 21, Jesus was hungry. He saw the fig tree and went to grab a fruit, but nothing was on it, so He said, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again” (Matthew 21:19). And the tree did something amazing: it listened and withered away. But unlike Snickers would have you believe, Jesus was being Himself—even in His hunger—because in that moment, He found the opportunity to teach an extremely valuable lesson.

Amazed, the disciples asked how it could have withered so quickly. And Jesus proceeded to teach them about the power of faith. He taught them that if they prayed in faith, according to His will (1 John 5:14), confident and without doubt, they could move mountains!

In Acts, we see these men living this lesson. The apostles were boldly preaching, performing miracles, and doing amazing things in the name of Jesus. In Acts 4, Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin. As they were being questioned by the chief priests and rulers—the same men who had plotted to have Jesus killed—Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and proceeded to deliver a powerful message that left the elite of Israel stunned. They marvelled at the boldness of what they believed were untrained men—of course, we know that they weren’t untrained, because they were taught by the best: Jesus!

How did Peter, the apostles, and the believers in the early church like Stephen have this boldness? From whom did these “ordinary” men receive these profound words? From Jesus, in faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit! You see, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus predicted this very moment in the lives of His disciples. And He instructed them on

what to do, saying, "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at the time what you should say" (Luke 12:11–12).

Their faith allowed the Spirit to do amazing things in and through them, to bring about a revolution and revival in the hearts of Jews and Gentiles around the ancient world, to ignite a fire that spread across the land—a fire that still burns today. And just like the apostles, we too can be used by the Spirit to fulfil God's work . . . all we need is faith in Jesus!

### **Reflecting on the Promise**

In Zechariah 11:12 it says, "So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver." On this day, Judas fulfilled the prophecy of the Messiah's betrayal (Matthew 26:14–16). Most would agree that Judas likely didn't think his decision would lead to Jesus' death when he turned away from Jesus. Often, we don't think our "small" sins will hurt anyone, but sin has a way of snowballing into a full avalanche.

Today, ask the Lord to search your heart for any hint of rebellion and lead you back to the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23–24).

### **Scripture Reading**

#### ***Matthew 21:21***

*Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done*

## WEDNESDAY

### Spiritual Preparation

Have you ever run a marathon or entered a cooking competition? If you've done any of these things, you know they require a great deal of preparation and training. Running a marathon without training or preparation is a sure-fire way to get injured or cramp up. Entering a cooking competition without planning your meal and practicing its execution and plating is a recipe for disaster. The same thing applies to your spiritual walk!

If, like Paul, we liken the Christian life to running a race, we can see clearly that running this race requires a great deal of preparation, training, and endurance. We can't just walk forward, say a prayer, and expect that life will now be a stroll through the park. In fact, Jesus told His disciples "In the world you will have tribulation . . ." (John 16:33). Truthfully, this race may be the most difficult and trying race anyone can ever run because it requires us to completely adjust our focus, go against our nature, and have a change of heart. But, as is typical of our Lord, Jesus gives us the ultimate hope in the latter part of the verse when He says, "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

And having overcome the world, Jesus provides examples of ways we can run the race with endurance; things like prayer (Matthew 26:36–56), studying the Word (Luke 2:51–52, 4:16–20), solitude with God (Luke 5:16), serving others (Matthew 20:28; John 13:1–17), fasting (Matthew 4), and more.

Along the journey of the Passion Week, there are no recorded events that took place on this day. The assumption is that Jesus and His disciples were preparing everything for the Passover. No doubt, Jesus, knowing what was to come, spent a great deal of time mentally, physically, and emotionally readying Himself.



In Acts, the apostles and the early church similarly endured a great deal of tribulation and difficulty. They suffered through persecution and torment, and many lost their lives for their faith. How did they get through it? How did they survive and thrive in the work God had tasked them with? Through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1–4) and with much spiritual training (Acts 1:14, 2:42, 9:8–11, 13:1–3).

And just like Jesus and His disciples, we can prepare ourselves each day for whatever obstacles the world can throw at us. But always remember, all the training and preparation means nothing if our heart is not seeking after God’s heart (1 Chronicles 22:19) and our will conformed to His (Luke 22:42). It also doesn’t hurt to have training partners (Philemon 1:6)!

### **Reflecting on the Promise**

As we approach Good Friday, we encourage you to prepare your heart. Spend time in prayer and Bible study, reflecting on the gravity of what transpired. Consider that the Creator endured physical torture (Isaiah 53:5a; Matthew 27:26, 35) and gave His life to pay the price for our shortcomings (Isaiah 53:5b; Ephesians 1:7). Reflect upon the fact that the perfect Son of God stood silently as He was accused and insulted by the ones He came to save (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 26:63, 27:12; Luke 23:34).

### **Scripture Reading**

#### ***Ezekiel 38:7***

*“Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them*

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

### The Divine Drama

When asked about the Passover, Barbara, a Jewish sister in Christ recalled: “I remember it well. Arriving at Grandma Ethel’s house and smelling the food; singing songs; seeing the lamb shank; drinking wine, and eating matzohs. My grandfather would go on and on, retelling the story of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt. But little did I understand then that Passover was the unfolding of a divine drama written, produced, and directed by God Himself. After giving my heart to Jesus at age 32, I came to understand and be amazed how all the symbols of that beautiful feast speak of Jesus.”

You see, Passover is the celebration and remembrance of God’s deliverance for the Jewish people from their oppression in Egypt. Before this, the sons and daughters of Israel had been in cruel bondage and slavery for 400 years. But God had not forgotten His great promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:2). And when the time came, God sent Moses to free his people from Pharaoh. But Pharaoh would not “let the people go,” so God sent the plagues—gnats, boils, frogs, and more.

Finally, the tenth plague came, the death of the first born in every household. However, the Lord spared death and gave life to His followers who sacrificed a spotless lamb and applied the blood over their doors (Exodus 11–12). When the angel of death saw the blood, he passed over that house. It was after this plague that Pharaoh let the Israelites go.

According to Barbara, “One word used for feast is miqra, which means a rehearsal. The other word is mo’ed, which means an appointed time; a fixed time; an exact time.” What an amazing picture! Passover was a rehearsal for the future to be celebrated every

year—over and over—until, at the exact appointed time, the true fulfilment would come.

After 1500 years of Passover celebrations, with the symbols of unleavened bread, wine, and a slain, unblemished lamb . . . the hour had come. No more rehearsals, for the Passover had become reality! The night known as the last supper saw Jesus and His disciples celebrate the “last” Passover Feast. In that upper room, Jesus took the wine, which represented the blood of the Passover lamb and said, “This is My blood” (Matthew 26:28). He broke the unleavened bread, a symbol of sinlessness, and said, “This is My body” (Luke 22:19). The very next day, upon a cross reserved for a criminal, Jesus became the Passover Lamb.

As we take communion, we, like our brothers and sisters in the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, 11:17–34), reflect upon and remember what Christ, our Passover Lamb, our exodus from the land of sin and death, did to bring us into a new life of freedom!

### Reflecting on the Promise

In Zechariah 13:7, it says, “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” We see this prophecy come to fruition as Jesus is arrested. Jesus knew this would happen, and even warned His disciples saying, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me” (Matthew 26:31).

How many times have we all turned away from Jesus? Betrayed Him? Today, as you pray, thank the Lord that He never turns His back on us; that He is always there, even when we turn away.

### Scripture Reading

#### ***Luke 22:19***

*“Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them*

## GOOD FRIDAY

### **Mission Impossible? Not for God!**

Have you ever been given an important mission? Perhaps you were asked to head up a major project. Maybe you were purposed with single-handedly saving your company from the brink of disaster.

Jesus had a mission. His entire 33-year earthly journey was in service of this mission. What was the nature of His assignment? Well, you could say it was a rescue mission.

Jesus, the Anointed One, was sent by God to rescue mankind from their sins by taking the ultimate punishment for our sins upon Himself. You see, in Genesis 2:17, God gave Adam a simple command, saying, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Through Adam and Eve’s disobedience, sin entered the world. And as God warned, by this one act of disobedience, Adam and Eve sealed the fate of all humanity and brought death into this world. In that moment, their spirits died. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Their sin became our sin, their fate became our fate, and we were powerless to save ourselves from this fate.

You see, sin separates us from the holy and perfect living God. So, in order to bring us back to life, death was required. Blood needed to be spilled. Why? Leviticus 17:11 says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood . . . for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul,” and Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.”

As a temporary solution, a yearly sacrifice was made at the temple for the covering of sin. But these sacrifices were not the answer, as it says in Hebrews 10:1–2, “The law, having a shadow of the good

things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?"

Jesus' death on the cross paid the debt of sin for all mankind. Christ did what no one else could do: He lived a perfect life, free from sin, from the stain of Adam. He took all of our iniquity upon His shoulders, and conquered sin at the cross. In John 19:30, Jesus said, "Tetelestai . . ." which means, "it is finished," the debt is paid, the punishment has been fulfilled! God's work of redemption for fallen man was complete; mission accomplished. The blood of "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" had been poured out on the altar of eternity.

### **Reflecting on the Promise**

Various prophecies were fulfilled at the cross. John 19, Luke 23, Mark 15, and Matthew 27 have many parallels to Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. From Jesus being rejected (Isaiah 53:5), pierced (Psalm 22:19 and Isaiah 53:5), and having His garments divided (Psalm 22:18) to insults hurled at Him (Psalm 22:7–8), His iconic statement, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Psalm 22:1), and His burial among the rich (Isaiah 53:9). What has the crucifixion fulfilled in your life?

### **Scripture Reading**

#### ***John 19:30***

*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

## HOLY SATURDAY

### The Darkest Day

Have you ever lost a loved one? Someone who meant a great deal to you? As children, the idea of losing someone is almost unfathomable. But the older we get, the more real death becomes.

Though they weren't children, it's probably safe to assume that the disciples couldn't imagine a scenario where their Master—who healed the blind, walked on water, calmed the storms, and raised people from the dead—would be killed. And even though Jesus told them repeatedly that He'd be delivered into the hands of the religious leaders and would be killed, they still seemed to brush His words off.

But, then . . . it happened. Jesus said, “It is finished!” and “gave up His spirit” (John 19:30). Though the gospels tell us only John was there to see it, you can imagine the other ten quickly learned of all that transpired. Jesus died and was buried immediately afterwards, as the Sabbath was upon them. And though He was laid in a rich man's tomb—a tomb that had never been used (Luke 23:50–54)—Jesus wasn't given a proper burial. Did you know the disciples couldn't even hold a funeral for Jesus the next day, as it was the Sabbath?

So, what do you imagine they did on that darkest of Saturdays? Did they sit together and talk about what He meant to them? Perhaps reminisce on how great He was? It's possible. But after all they'd seen and gone through, having placed their lives, hope, all their eggs into His basket, it's more likely that they may have simply sat in silence, hopeless, full of despair, fearful, confused, angry, distraught, inconsolable. No doubt, it had to be the darkest and most empty day of their lives. But, it's always darkest before the dawn, and the dawn was coming . . . the dawn of a new day, a new era, a new promise, a new covenant.

The early church endured their fair share of dark days, too. “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8), but he was stoned to death. And don’t forget the apostles, who were executed, or the thousands of believers who’ve given their lives since. But for them, it wasn’t hopeless, because their hope—and ours—is in the One who conquered the grave, the One Stephen saw and spoke of just before his death saying, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:56).

Every now and then you’ll undoubtedly find yourself in a dark place. During those times, remember, “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

### Reflecting on the Promise

In Matthew 12, the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign. He said, “No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39–40 NKJV). Jesus fulfilled this after His death, before He rose three days later.

### Scripture Reading

#### *Luke 23:56*

*Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.*

## EASTER SUNDAY

### Greater Things Are Yet to Come

In 2006, Tim Hughes wrote the song “Happy Day,” which describes Jesus’ resurrection as, “The greatest day in history, death is beaten, You have rescued me. Sing it out, Jesus is alive! The empty cross, the empty grave, life eternal, You have won the day.”

Truly, this was the greatest day in history. From Adam and Eve until the day Jesus rose from the dead, death held us ransom. But on the cross, sin had been rendered powerless. Paul points out, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Jesus’ resurrection changed everything for mankind, as when we are in Christ, we are now free, restored, redeemed, and reconciled back to God. We’ve been given the free gift of eternal life. Jesus told Martha that those who believe in Him “shall never die” (John 11:26) and He also said to Nicodemus that those who believe in Him “should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

You see, when Adam and Eve fell, we became spiritually dead—empty shells, lacking in the image of God. Humanity was incomplete until the arrival of Jesus Christ, who was and is the true image and likeness of God. By rising on the third day, Jesus created a way for the original image of God in man to be restored.

“It is finished” was not the end. It was just the beginning, for greater things were yet to come! Jesus said, “I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised” (Luke 24:49), who “will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26) and “convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). At Pentecost, Jesus’ promise was fulfilled as the Holy Spirit descended upon believers.



The fire Jesus started began to spread around the world. God’s redemptive work continued with the coming of the Holy Spirit, through His Church—the bearers of the new covenant. The Book of Acts is the continuing story of Jesus set into the hearts, thoughts, and actions of the apostles and early believers. And though the acts of the apostles may have come to a close with their deaths, the acts of the Holy Spirit continues to this day through us—Jesus’ followers!

God “has given us the ministry of reconciliation . . . and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). We are all part of God’s work, part of His story of redemption, and He has entrusted us to carry His message of salvation to the entire world!

### Reflecting on the Promise

“On the third day He will restore us, that we may live in His presence” (Hosea 6:2). The resurrection of Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by giving us the opportunity to be restored to God, having a close, personal relationship with Him.

As you celebrate Easter today, remember that God’s still writing redemption on the hearts of man through His people by the Holy Spirit! Spend some time reflecting on how God is using you to write redemption on the hearts of the people around you.

### Scripture Reading

#### ***Luke 24:5-6***

*In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:*

**NOTES...**



**Lord Jesus,**

The world is changing so fast. Every day the media relays tales of those who disregard law, devise evil, and destroy both people and property. And because of what's happening, fear sometimes rises up in my heart—for me, for those I love, and for people everywhere. Yet I know you are in control.

I ask you today for your supernatural protection, Lord—both personally and globally. Please station angels around my home and family to guard them from danger. Lead us away from temptation, and help us to run from the presence of questionable activities or harmful influences. When we're weak, help us to look up to you and to hold on tight to the truth that you love us and want the best for us.

**In Jesus' precious name,**

**Amen**

**Happy Easter  
Stay Blessed.**