

A crown of thorns, a symbol of suffering and sacrifice, is the central focus of the image. It is made of dry, brown, woody branches with sharp, pointed thorns. Several of the thorns are stained with a dark red, viscous substance, likely representing blood. The crown is set against a dark, textured background.

Holy Week*

*otherwise known as: *The Week Nothing Went as the Disciples Expected*

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. John 13:1-5

When my youngest daughter was just a baby, she began to have episodes of vomiting. At first, they appeared to be random and not connected to any other symptoms. Periodically, she would awaken suddenly in the middle of the night, crying inconsolably. Then, she would throw up in spectacular fashion and go back to sleep.

She never had a fever. She never had any other symp-

toms or warning signs. After this happened several times, we started to see the doctors. First, her pediatrician. Then a heart specialist and a thyroid specialist and a gastro specialist. Finally, she was diagnosed with Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome. I gave thanks that her episodes didn't last for days, as the doctors said they could.

Although Jovanna's episodes occurred mostly at night, there were times when she would have an episode in the middle

of the day. We could be at the grocery store or riding in the car or visiting a friend's house. There never seemed to be any rhyme or reason to it. Consequently, it didn't take very long for me to become the Queen of Vomit.

I outfitted the car with a special tub and clean-up kit, and we began to leave tubs around the house that could be grabbed at a second's notice. Whenever we ate dinner out, I was always aware of what dish I might be able to grab and use in a pinch. (And once I had to.)

By the time Jovanna was three, what had once seemed like a frightening proposition (*a sick child! smelly laundry! carpet scrubbing!*) had become routine and familiar, though still not fun. And I won't forget the moment it hit me: *This is what a lot of parenting is – routine, familiar, necessary things that aren't fun.*

In many ways, that's what foot washing was in Jesus' day: something routine, familiar, and necessary. But it wasn't very fun. In fact, it was pretty

gross and disgusting—a job left to the slaves, the lowest of the low in society. In those days, nobody ate dinner with dirty feet, but after walking and working all day in either sandals or bare feet, they were covered with caked-on mud, garbage, and animal feces. Yuck!

On this particular night, the night of Jesus' last supper with His disciples, there was no slave present to wash feet. And after arguing over who was going to hold the greatest position in the Kingdom of Heaven, none of the disciples were going to volunteer for the task.

So Jesus got up, put the servant's towel around his waist, and began to wash the feet of His disciples. Doing what was routine, familiar, and necessary. Doing what needed to be done, even though it was a dirty, thankless job.

Imagine God, the Creator of the Universe, the Lord of those 12 men, washing away the grit, grime, and utter grossness from their feet. Imagine Him kneeling before them, serving them in such an intimate, personal, and humbling way.

And then think about how, when He was finished, He sat back at the table with His own feet still filthy. Not one of

those 12 men offered to wash the feet of their Lord. What a missed opportunity!

If you had been there, would you have made the same choice, or would you wish to have done something else? Let's take the opportunity to do something else today!

* * *

REFLECT:
Fill a basin with warm water and take turns washing feet with someone else in your home. If you are alone, soak your feet in the basin of warm water. (*Tangible, concrete activities help us internalize intangible, spiritual truths!*)

As you participate in this exercise, take a moment to think about Jesus' selfless act for all of His disciples, including the one He knew would soon betray Him.

Consider these questions:

***What dirt or grime has Jesus washed away from my own life?**

***What has God put within my power to do for someone else, even if it is a dirty, thankless job?**

***Do I have any enemies that God would like me to serve in some way? Am I willing?**

LISTEN:
Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy (find link in your daily email or search title on YouTube)

PRAY:
Dear Jesus, please help me to be more like You. Help me to love my enemies, to do what is necessary (even if nobody notices), and to use my power to serve others. I know that my life is in Your hands and that I can trust You to do what is best for me. I don't have to look out for myself or put others down to lift myself higher. Help me to remember the sacrifice You made for me, so that I might be willing to sacrifice myself for You and the sake of Your kingdom. Amen.

RECIPE: HOMEMADE COMMUNION BREAD

4 c whole-wheat flour	2 c white flour	2 c water, divided	1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp baking powder	3/4 tsp salt	1/4 c melted shortening	3/4 c honey

Measure shortening, honey, and 1 c hot water into microwaveable bowl. Microwave for 1 minute or until melted. Mix together flours, salt, baking soda, and baking powder with 1 c cool water. Add wet ingredients to dry and mix together. Pour out on floured counter and knead to blend. Round with hands to elongate dough, and tear apart into 7 equal pieces. Roll with rolling pin to a round shape about 1/4-inch thick. Bake on cookie sheet at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes (underbaked is better!). Cool and enjoy. (Place in a large baggie to refrigerate or freeze.)

MAUNDY THURSDAY

John chapter 1 says that the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The Light of Jesus' life and truth never shone brighter than when He suffered and died on Calvary. Here, we consider what His seven last "words" (or statements) reveal to us about the character of God.

Forgive

They led Jesus away to be crucified, and two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him. When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." Luke 23:32-34

When Jesus spoke these words, He had just been nailed to the cross. The spikes had been driven through the tender flesh in His hands and feet, and as the cross had been dragged upright and dropped into the ground, the weight of Jesus' body now began to pull against the nails. The crowd gathered around was mocking Him. The Roman soldiers were casting lots to see who would win His clothes. Naked, bleeding, and in great pain, the first

thing Jesus said was, "Father, forgive them."

In this, the first of the last words of Jesus, there is a stunning revelation regarding the character of God. And it is this: **There is nothing you can do to God to get Him to retaliate against you.** There will never come a point when His patience will run out. There is no amount of pain He cannot and will not tolerate. If you spend the rest of your days trying to think of ways to hurt Him, He will never strike back at you.

If Jesus could be unjustly arrested, unfairly tried and condemned, beaten until He was unrecognizable, nailed to a cross, and then offer forgiveness, there will never be a time when we will find anything but love and forgiveness for us in His heart. There is absolutely nothing we can do to make God turn against us.

Paradise

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!" But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And Jesus

replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43

Hanging beside the innocent Son of God were two criminals, both who deserved to die under Roman law because of the crimes they had committed. Because of the choices they had made, the government rulers determined they were no longer fit to enjoy life in the kingdom. But the door to Paradise in God's kingdom was still wide open to them. In this, the second of the last words of Christ, we see that **our God doesn't keep a record of our misdeeds.** He doesn't keep a list of the wrongs we have done to Him or to others. None of our bad behavior can keep us out of Paradise.

Jesus immediately accepted the request of the criminal who longed to be with Him. It didn't matter how many laws he had broken or how many people he had hurt. What mattered was that his heart was open to God, and he was willing to accept whatever Jesus would offer him. And so God reveals to us that the only requirement for salvation is that we have an open heart to receiving Him. If we want to be with Him, then we will get to be with Him, for there is nothing He wants more than to be with us. Our door may be closed to God, but God's door is never closed to us. The moment we desire to be with Him is the moment we are accepted into Paradise.

Woman

Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, His aunt, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple accepted her as his own mother. John 19:25-27

On top of all the pain Jesus had endured up to this point, the process of crucifixion was excruciating and exhausting. With arms stretched across the beams and the weight of gravity pulling the body down, a person who was being crucified had to physically hoist themselves up in order to be able to take a breath. This movement, of course, would have been unbearably painful, but as long as the body had strength to accomplish it, it would seek its next breath at any cost, and the painful cycle would begin again.

It's impossible to think that a person being crucified could be aware of anything going on outside of their own pain, yet Jesus, who has not uttered a word about His own suffering, looks out at His mother and expresses His desire to see

that her needs are met. What a revelation about God: **He always thinks of others before Himself.** Always and forever. He never seeks to address His needs first, but puts the needs of His creatures before His own. We never have to worry that God won't do what is best for us; in fact, He will take care of us before He takes care of Himself.

Forsaken

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. At that time, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Matthew 27:45-46

After revealing that there is nothing we can do to God to make Him retaliate against us, Jesus was to demonstrate what would happen to those who decide to separate themselves from God instead of reuniting with Him. And what will God do to such people? He will give them up. Abandon them. Forsake them. In Romans 1, Paul defines this as the wrath of God against sin, that when there is nothing more God can do to be reunited with one of His children, He gives them up, lets them go.

That's what happened when Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" He was experiencing the full wrath of God against sin. As Jesus took on the sin of the whole world, **He experienced and revealed to us what God will do in the end to His rebellious children. And the answer is: He won't do anything to them.** He will let them have their way. He will give them up and let them go and be separated from them for the rest of eternity.

On the cross, Jesus revealed that God is into freedom. It is the cry of His heart to be with us, but He won't force Himself on us. If we want to spend eternity with Him, then we will. And if we don't want to spend eternity with Him, then we won't. But He won't treat us badly if we choose against Him. The death of Jesus proved that we are free to make whichever choice we want without fear of retaliation from Him.

GOOD FRIDAY

Thirsty

Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty." A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. John 19:28-29

Is there not irony in these words, the fifth of the last seven words of Christ? He had sat at the well with the woman from Samaria and had proclaimed to her that He was the living water, and that anyone who drank of Him would never be thirsty again. Yet here we see the great Fountain of Life, hanging on a cross, thirsty.

On the other hand, all this time, He has been drinking, has He not? Several times when He mentioned His coming sufferings to His disciples, He spoke of these very events as drinking a cup from His Father. And right before He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He pleaded for this cup to be taken away from Him if it was possible.

Perhaps Jesus was so thirsty because of all He had been drinking. In taking the cup of suffering in His hand, He willingly allowed His own inner stream of Living Water to dry

up. He willingly cut Himself off from the ever-flowing stream of life so we might have the chance to drink deeply of it.

This is just what Paul said of Him in Philippians 2: that Jesus gave up His rights to divine privilege and became a human, that He used everything He had for our advantage instead of His advantage. In these words, "I thirst," we clearly see that **servanthood is the essence of Godhood.**

Jesus lived and died as a man because He was God. He humbled Himself because He was God. He came to serve us because He was God. He took our ravenous thirst upon Himself so we could drink from the fountain of Living Water.

Finished

When Jesus had tasted the wine, He said, "It is finished!" At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. John 19:30; Matthew 27:51

At the moment Jesus proclaimed, "It is finished," the sacrifice of the unblemished Passover lamb was occurring in the Temple in Jerusalem. Suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two, from top to bottom. At the same time Jesus was breathing His last, the veil in the Temple which symbolized

the separation between sinful man and God was destroyed. To say that this was significant is an understatement.

This veil was 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide, and about four inches thick. It was so massive and heavy that it took 300 priests to manipulate it. It could not have been torn by human strength, but only by the hand of God. Matthew adds the detail that it was torn from top to bottom so we would know it was God who removed the veil, and not us. And this reveals that **God wants there to be no separation between us and Him.** It was our sin that separated us from Him in the first place, but by coming here in the person of Jesus, God overcame the separation we had caused so we could be reunited with Him once again.

When Jesus said, "It is finished," He wasn't talking about His crucifixion coming to an end. He was declaring that His revelation of the character of God was complete, that we could finally know who He truly is. And He was proclaiming that our separation from Him is finished... if we wish it to be. From now on, the only way we could remain separated from God was if we chose the separation for ourselves. For Jesus had revealed that God doesn't want there to be anything or anyone between us and Him. We can come to Him freely and without hesitation.

Commit

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" Luke 23:46; Mark 15:39

In this, Jesus' very last words on the cross, He revealed that when we see and understand the whole truth about our gracious God, the proper response is absolute trust. For if we really believe that God is the kind of person Jesus showed Him to be – One who has our best interests at heart, One who pays back good for evil, One whose door is always open to us – then there is no question that we can trust Him with everything, No Matter What.

With His last breath, Jesus surrendered His very Spirit, but He declared not that He was going into the grave or the void or the dark unknown. He declared that His Father was still in control. He knew what He wanted us to know: that **no matter what condition we're in, we're safe in God's hands.** If we're alive or dead, awake or asleep, breathing or not breathing, we are in the

Father's hands, and there's no better place to be.

Before going to the cross, Jesus had declared that He would rise from the dead, but in this final moment, He had to do with His life what each of us have the opportunity to do with ours: surrender it completely to God and trust Him with the outcome. There are going to be plenty of moments when we don't understand what life has brought to us, there are going to be plenty of moments when we can't see what the future holds, there are going to be plenty of moments when we're disappointed that God hasn't answered our prayers the way we expect. And in those moments, as life hangs in the balance, we can choose to say, as Jesus did, in full confidence, "Father, I put myself into your hands."

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REFLECT:
Light seven small candles or tealights. Then, read each of the seven last words of Christ slowly, blowing out one candle after each:

***FATHER, FORGIVE THEM**

***TODAY, YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE**

***DEAR WOMAN, HERE IS YOUR SON**

***MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?**

***I AM THIRSTY**

***IT IS FINISHED**

***FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT**

LISTEN:

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (find link in your daily email or search title on YouTube)

PRAY:

Dear Jesus, You once showed the greatest love by laying down Your life for Your friends. Though we often think of this time as one of darkness, help me to see the light of Your character that flooded the whole universe when You died on the cross. Help me to live in that light – to forgive those who hurt me, to think of others before myself, to be willing to serve, and to trust You completely – so that I may learn to live and love as You do. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

On the evening of that day, the disciples had gathered together and locked the doors of the place because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. John 20:19

Nothing had gone the way the disciples expected it to go. They thought Judas had left the Upper Room to run an errand for Jesus; instead, he had gone to sell Jesus out to His enemies. They thought Jesus was there to overthrow the Romans; instead, He was there to die. They thought they could defend Jesus to the death with weapons; instead, they scattered when Jesus said He had no intentions of fighting. They thought they were ready to die with Him; instead, they denied and deserted Him.

Nothing had gone the way the disciples expected it to go. While they were busy planning which thrones they were going to occupy in the Kingdom, Jesus was planning to abandon His throne in favor of the cross. While they were preparing to wear crowns of honor, Jesus was preparing to wear a crown of thorns.

Jesus had gone "all in," so to speak, when it came to confronting the powerful priests and religious leaders in Israel, and the disciples had gone "all in" with Him, or so they thought. They were ready to vanquish their

enemies, throw out the opposition, and become the new ruling class of the Kingdom of Heaven. They weren't expecting their fearless leader to be arrested, unjustly condemned, and executed.

Even though Jesus told them many times, plainly, exactly what was going to happen to Him, they still didn't expect Him to die. And suddenly, He was gone, and they were left holding the bag. And they were afraid. They were very, very afraid.

So, they went into lockdown. They "socially distanced" themselves from the chief priests and teachers of law who had hated Jesus enough to kill Him and, they were sure, would turn on them next for supporting Him.

This fear had begun after Jesus' arrest, even before He was crucified, for that's the only reason Peter would have had to deny the Lord he loved so much. The girl who recognized him in the courtyard and began to make a fuss about it was surely going to get him killed! He couldn't believe what was happening to Jesus, and if they realized that he was one of Jesus' disciples, they'd kill him, too.

So, they ran and hid. All of them except John, who followed Jesus to Golgotha with His mother Mary, and together, they watched Him die there.

And then... what? They laid His body in the tomb, and life as they knew it was over. In what seemed like an instant, everything had changed. All their hopes and dreams for the future were gone. Everything they had lived for and worked for during the last three years was gone. Their whole world was upended, and they were frightened.

I couldn't help but think that, in some strange way, we are currently experiencing a part of the Passion story we've never experienced before. For, since we know "the rest of the story," as Paul Harvey used to say, Easter is pretty anti-climactic, and the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday lose a lot of their gut-wrenching punch.

Yes, yes, yes, we know Jesus has died and is in the tomb, but don't worry. We know He's coming right back out again. As the popular saying goes this time of year, "It's Friday, but Sunday's comin'!" It hasn't occurred to us to spend any part of Passion Week cowering in fear behind locked doors.

Until this year.

And all of a sudden, most of us are in our homes with the doors locked, afraid to go out. Of course, it's not because of

the events of Passion Week, but because of a viral pandemic. Still, regardless of the cause, the present *experience* of fear can help us connect with this part of the Easter story like I bet we never have before.

We are on lockdown, just as the disciples were over that Sabbath day. Why, even Jesus was "sheltering in place" in the tomb, resting over the Sabbath day before His Easter resurrection.

And why? Have you ever stopped to ask, Why did Jesus "rest" in the tomb on the Sabbath day? Was it to satisfy the Jewish requirement? Certainly not, as Jesus' life and ministry had never been about following the traditions of men.

Perhaps Jesus allowed this time of rest on "lockdown Sabbath" during the events of Passion Week for the same reason God had celebrated the first Sabbath at the end of Creation Week.

In the Bible, God reminded Israel to observe the Sabbath day in order to remember that He was the Creator of the Earth and everything in it. He wanted them to remember that He had created and given them every good thing – so they wouldn't be afraid, thinking they had to provide for themselves.

Perhaps the Sabbath of Passion Week was meant to be used in the same way: as a gift of time for us to remember that God was the Redeemer of the Earth and everyone in it. Maybe He was hoping that His disciples (and now we!) would think back on all that had happened and realize that the same God who created them was the same God who redeemed them – and they wouldn't be afraid, thinking they had to fend for themselves.

If that was the purpose, it seems the disciples missed a lot of that message. They concentrated on the "lockdown" part much more than they did on the "Sabbath" part, to the extent that when Jesus appeared to them on Sunday night, they were *still* behind locked doors.

And the first thing He said was, "Peace be with you."

Have we truly learned the lessons of Passion Week? If so, may we not forget the lesson of Lockdown Sabbath – that the only way to have peace is by knowing God and remembering all He has done for us.

Forgetting that is what leads us to lock ourselves away in fear.

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REFLECT:
Make a list of five, specific things God has done for you or times when you've seen Him at work in your life. If you have trouble coming up with five, ask Him to bring some to your mind. He remembers!

Consider these questions:

***How can I create time and space in my week for resting in God?**

***What are some creative ways I can make my "rest" active, in terms of remembering and recording what God has done for me in the past?**

LISTEN:

My Peace I Give Unto You
(find link in your daily email or search title on YouTube)

PRAY:

Dear Jesus, how easy it is to forget everything You have done for me! Help me not to be overcome by fear when things don't go just the way I think they should. Instead, help me to remember that all Your plans for me are good, and that You are working in ways I can't yet begin to understand. Thank You for giving me the gift of Sabbath rest to help build my trust in You. Amen.

LOCKDOWN SABBATH

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. Matthew 28:1-2

The disciples had spent the Sabbath in turmoil. The only thing they knew was that their world had been turned upside down. The One they loved had been taken away and executed. The biggest storm of their lives had burst on them unexpectedly, right over their heads

And as the ladies went to the tomb that Sunday morning, they certainly weren't expecting to find anything but the cold, dead body of their Master. They were headed out on a sad mission – to carry out a final act of love for the One they loved so much.

But here's something marvelous we learn about our God from the Easter story: **with Him, what looks like an ending is really just a beginning.** What looks to us like the worst possible thing that could happen may be, from God's perspective, the best possible thing.

That was certainly the case with the events of Passion Week! When Jesus was being falsely tried and sentenced to die, and later when He was being beaten

and crucified, not one of the disciples were thinking, *"This is perfect! Everything is going according to plan!"* Though Jesus had tried to prepare them for what was about to happen, they couldn't see or understand what God was doing.

What they thought was the worst possible thing was really the best. What looked to them like the disastrous end of their Messiah's life was the beginning of the event that brought assurance, salvation, and life to the entire world and – the Apostle Paul says – even to the beings in heavenly realms!

That's a sobering thought – that the very thing the disciples *never* wanted to happen was the very thing that accomplished what they *really* needed! What they didn't plan for, hope for, or want was used by God to change history. That's incredible!

Right now, the entire world finds itself in a situation we didn't want, didn't plan for, and didn't hope for. It's certainly a situation we'd like to get out of! And how interesting it is for us to once again encounter the Easter story at this very time, when Easter reminds us that

what looks like an ending to us is just a beginning to God, and that with Him, we can expect the unexpected!

The women went to the tomb expecting to find a dead body; instead, they found peace and joy! And God wants us to remember that He hasn't changed one bit. Because of who He is, we don't have to be afraid of the circumstances in our lives that look threatening to us. Instead, as disciples of Christ, we ought to prepare to be surprised by joy and peace.

This is God's message to us in Isaiah 55. At the beginning of the chapter, He invites everyone who is thirsty to come and drink freely. Then, He tells people who have no money to come, *buy* and eat! And, just in case you're wondering how people with no money can buy anything to eat, He goes on to say that "My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts."

In other words, what looks *impossible* to us is absolutely no problem for God! When we're destitute and poor, God says, "You have enough to buy what you need." When we're tired and sick, God says, "You have wings like eagles. You have strength to run and not grow weary." This looks impossible to us, but that's because we forget that our God is a God who can turn gloomy places full of death into joyful places full of life.

In the current pandemic we're facing, there are a great many people concerned about safety, and there is certainly a place for proper hygiene habits and common sense actions that can mitigate the spread of unnecessary disease. But, as Christians, let us not lose sight of our *ultimate* safety, for true safety consists not in the *absence of danger*, but in the *presence of God*.

This means that we could keep ourselves "safe" from the virus and other things that threaten to do us temporary harm, but if we don't daily attend to the presence of God, we will have missed out on the only kind of safety that can last. **Safety consists not in the absence of danger, but in the presence of God.**

So what is it that you're facing today? The coronavirus pandemic looms large, but what else causes you fear? Are you headed to a tomb, to face a "dead area" of your life? Something that is painful, something that looks like a dead-end?

Remember that, with God, what looks to us like the worst possible outcome can be the very thing He can use to awaken you to a new life. Trust Him with it, whatever it is. Lay it down today and find peace. Don't anticipate the worst; don't lock yourself up behind closed

doors in fear. Instead, prepare yourself to be surprised by peace and delighted by joy.

However, if switching those emotional gears seems too difficult, that's okay, too. When Jesus first appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, they were still gathered together behind locked doors.

And if whatever you're facing has you locked up in fear, you can be sure that God will come and find you behind those locked doors! He is able to find you wherever you are and speak peace to you.

He will say, "My son, My daughter, do not be afraid. I can see things in a way that you can't right now, and I want you to know that everything is going to be okay."

When the women went to the tomb on Easter Sunday, they never imagined it was Easter! They found something they never expected in their wildest imaginations. And in God's presence, we can still find the *peace and joy and safety* they experienced on that first Easter Sunday morning so long ago.

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REFLECT:
Make a list of three things in your life where everything

seems dead. These may be relationships, situations, or places in your heart. Pick one of them, and commit to praying about it for 90 days. Ask God for a resurrection!

If you watch, listen to, or read any news today, follow up at the end of each story by shouting, "It's Friday, but Sunday's comin'!"

Consider these questions:

***If true safety is found in the presence of God, how many minutes of each day am I currently safe?**

***Do I ever expect God to do the unexpected?**

LISTEN:

Lord of the Dance (find link in your daily email or search title on YouTube)

PRAY:

Dear Jesus, You were willing to experience the most awful death so I might experience the most abundant life. Wherever I am still cowering in the grave of fear, please roll away the stone and call me out into the peace and joy of Your resurrection life! Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the one
who is called the Word.

The Word was with God
and was truly God.

From the very beginning
the Word was with God.

And with this Word,
God created all things.
Nothing was made
without the Word.

Everything that was created
received its life from Him,
and His life gave light
to everyone.

The light keeps shining
in the dark,
and darkness has
never
put it out.