

Readings for April 2019

Sunday April 7th 2019

Isaiah 43:16-21

I am the one who cut a path
through the mighty ocean.
I sent an army to chase you
with chariots and horses;
now they lie dead,
unable to move.
They are like an oil lamp
with the flame snuffed out.

The LORD said:

Forget what happened long ago!
Don't think about the past.
I am creating something new.
There it is! Do you see it?
I have put roads in deserts,
streams in thirsty lands.
Every wild animal honours me,
even jackals and owls.
I provide water in deserts—
streams in thirsty lands
for my chosen people.
I made them my own nation,
so they would praise me.

Philippians 3:4-14

Others may brag about themselves, but I have more reason to brag than anyone else. I was circumcised when I was eight days old, and I am from the nation of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin. I am a true Hebrew. As a Pharisee, I strictly obeyed the Law of Moses. And I was so eager that I even made trouble for the church. I did everything the Law demands in order to please God.

But Christ has shown me that what I once thought was valuable is worthless. Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ. All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, so that somehow I also may be raised to life.

I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize. My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done.

John 12:1-8

Six days before Passover Jesus went back to Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus from death. A meal had been prepared for Jesus. Martha was doing the serving, and Lazarus himself was there.

Mary took a very expensive bottle of perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. She wiped them with her hair, and the sweet smell of the perfume filled the house.

A disciple named Judas Iscariot was there. He was the one who was going to betray Jesus, and he asked, "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?" Judas did not really care about the poor. He asked this because he carried the moneybag and sometimes would steal from it.

Jesus replied, "Leave her alone! She has kept this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor with you, but you won't always have me."

Sunday 14th April 2019 Palm Sunday

Isaiah 42:1-9

Here is my servant!

I have made him strong.
He is my chosen one;
I am pleased with him.
I have given him my Spirit,
and he will bring justice
to the nations.
He won't shout or yell
or call out in the streets.
He won't break off a bent reed
or put out a dying flame,
but he will make sure
that justice is done.
He won't quit or give up
until he brings justice
everywhere on earth,
and people in foreign nations
long for his teaching.

I am the LORD God.
I created the heavens
like an open tent above.
I made the earth and everything
that grows on it.
I am the source of life
for all who live on this earth,
so listen to what I say.
I chose you to bring justice,
and I am here at your side.
I selected and sent you
to bring light
and my promise of hope
to the nations.
You will give sight

to the blind;
you will set prisoners free
from dark dungeons.

My name is the LORD!
I won't let idols or humans
share my glory and praise.
Everything has happened
just as I said it would;
now I will announce
what will happen next.

Philippians 2:5-11

Christ was truly God.
But he did not try to remain
equal with God.
Instead he gave up everything
and became a slave,
when he became
like one of us.

Christ was humble.
He obeyed God
and even died
on a cross.

Then God gave Christ
the highest place
and honoured his name
above all others.

So at the name of Jesus
everyone will bow down,
those in heaven, on earth,
and under the earth.

And to the glory
of God the Father
everyone will openly agree,
"Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Luke 23:1-49

Everyone in the council got up and led Jesus off to Pilate. They started accusing him and said, "We caught this man trying to get our people to riot and to stop paying taxes to the Emperor. He also claims that he is the Messiah, our king."

Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Those are your words," Jesus answered.

Pilate told the chief priests and the crowd, "I don't find him guilty of anything."

But they all kept on saying, "He has been teaching and causing trouble all over Judea. He started in Galilee and has now come all the way here."

When Pilate heard this, he asked, "Is this man from Galilee?" After Pilate learned that Jesus came from the region ruled by Herod, he sent him to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at that time.

For a long time Herod had wanted to see Jesus and was very happy because he finally had this chance. He had heard many things about Jesus and hoped to see him work a miracle.

Herod asked him a lot of questions, but Jesus did not answer. Then the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses stood up and accused him of all kinds of bad things.

Herod and his soldiers made fun of Jesus and insulted him. They put a fine robe on him and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends, even though they had been enemies before this.

Pilate called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people. He told them, "You brought Jesus to me and said he was a troublemaker. But I have questioned him here in front of you, and I have not found him

guilty of anything that you say he has done. Herod didn't find him guilty either and sent him back. This man doesn't deserve to be put to death! I will just have him beaten with a whip and set free."

But the whole crowd shouted, "Kill Jesus! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was in jail because he had started a riot in the city and had murdered someone.

Pilate wanted to set Jesus free, so he spoke again to the crowds. But they kept shouting, "Nail him to a cross! Nail him to a cross!"

Pilate spoke to them a third time, "But what crime has he done? I have not found him guilty of anything for which he should be put to death. I will have him beaten with a whip and set free."

The people kept on shouting as loud as they could for Jesus to be put to death. Finally, Pilate gave in. He freed the man who was in jail for rioting and murder, because he was the one the crowd wanted to be set free. Then Pilate handed Jesus over for them to do what they wanted with him.

As Jesus was being led away, some soldiers grabbed hold of a man from Cyrene named Simon. He was coming in from the fields, but they put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

A large crowd was following Jesus, and in the crowd a lot of women were crying and weeping for him. Jesus turned to the women and said:

Women of Jerusalem, don't cry for me! Cry for yourselves and for your children. Someday people will say, "Women who never had children are really fortunate!" At that time everyone will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" They will say to the hills, "Hide us!" If this can happen when the wood is green, what do you think will happen when it is dry?

Two criminals were led out to be put to death with Jesus. When the soldiers came to the place called "The Skull," they nailed Jesus to a cross. They also nailed the two criminals to crosses, one on each side of Jesus.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing."

While the crowd stood there watching Jesus, the soldiers gambled for his clothes. The leaders insulted him by saying, "He saved others. Now he should save himself, if he really is God's chosen Messiah!"

The soldiers made fun of Jesus and brought him some wine. They said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!"

Above him was a sign that said, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals hanging there also insulted Jesus by saying, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and save us!"

But the other criminal told the first one off, "Don't you fear God? Aren't you getting the same punishment as this man? We got what was coming to us, but he didn't do anything wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into power!"

Jesus replied, "I promise that today you will be with me in paradise."

Around noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until the middle of the afternoon. The sun stopped shining, and the curtain in the temple split down the middle. Jesus shouted, "Father, I put myself in your hands!" Then he died.

When the Roman officer saw what had happened, he praised God and said, "Jesus must really have been a good man!"

A crowd had gathered to see the terrible sight. Then after they had seen it, they felt broken hearted and went home. All of Jesus' close friends and the women who had come with him from Galilee stood at a distance and watched.

Thursday 18th April 2019 Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-5, 11-14

Some time later the LORD said to Moses and Aaron:

This month is to be the first month of the year for you. Tell the people of Israel that on the tenth day of this month the head of each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for his family to eat. If any family is too small to eat the whole animal, they must share it with their next-door neighbours. Choose either a sheep or a goat, but it must be a one-year-old male that has nothing wrong with it. And it must be large enough for everyone to have some of the meat.

When you eat the meal, be dressed and ready to travel. Have your sandals on, carry your walking stick in your hand, and eat quickly. This is the Passover Festival in honour of me, your LORD.

That same night I will pass through Egypt and kill the first-born son in every family and the first-born male of all animals. I am the LORD, and I will punish the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses will show me where you live, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. Then you won't be bothered by the terrible disasters I will bring on Egypt.

Remember this day and celebrate it each year as a festival in my honour.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

I have already told you what the Lord Jesus did on the night he was betrayed. And it came from the Lord himself.

He took some bread in his hands. Then after he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this and remember me."

After the meal, Jesus took a cup of wine in his hands and said, "This is my blood, and with it God makes his new agreement with you. Drink this and remember me."

The Lord meant that when you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you tell about his death until he comes.

John 13:1-17

It was before Passover, and Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to return to the Father. He had always loved his followers in this world, and he loved them to the very end.

Even before the evening meal started, the devil had made Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, decide to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that he had come from God and would go back to God. He also knew that the Father had given him complete power. So during the meal Jesus got up, removed his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist. He put some water into a large bowl. Then he began washing his disciples' feet and drying them with the towel he was wearing.

But when he came to Simon Peter, that disciple asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You don't really know what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"You will never wash my feet!" Peter replied.

"If I don't wash you," Jesus told him, "you don't really belong to me."

Peter said, "Lord, don't wash just my feet. Wash my hands and my head."

Jesus answered, "People who have bathed and are clean all over need to wash just their feet. And you, my disciples, are clean, except for one of you." Jesus knew who would betray him. That is why he said, "except for one of you."

After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet and had put his outer garment back on, he sat down again. Then he said:

Do you understand what I have done? You call me your teacher and Lord, and you should, because that is who I am. And if your Lord and teacher

has washed your feet, you should do the same for each other. I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you. I tell you for certain that servants are not greater than their master, and messengers are not greater than the one who sent them. You know these things, and God will bless you, if you do them.

Sunday 21st April 2019 Easter Sunday

Acts 10:30-43

Cornelius answered:

Four days ago at about three o'clock in the afternoon I was praying at home. Suddenly a man in bright clothes stood in front of me. He said, "Cornelius, God has heard your prayers, and he knows about your gifts to the poor. Now send to Joppa for Simon Peter. He is visiting in the home of Simon the leather maker, who lives near the sea."

I sent for you right away, and you have been good enough to come. All of us are here in the presence of the Lord God, so that we can hear what he has to say.

Peter then said:

Now I am certain that God treats all people alike. God is pleased with everyone who worships him and does right, no matter what nation they come from. This is the same message that God gave to the people of Israel, when he sent Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, to offer peace to them.

You surely know what happened everywhere in Judea. It all began in Galilee after John had told everyone to be baptized. God gave the Holy Spirit and power to Jesus from Nazareth. He was with Jesus, as he went around doing good and healing everyone who was under the power of the devil. We all saw what Jesus did both in Israel and in the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus was put to death on a cross. But three days later, God raised him to life and let him be seen. Not everyone saw him. He was seen only by us,

who ate and drank with him after he was raised from death. We were the ones God chose to tell others about him.

God told us to announce clearly to the people that Jesus is the one he has chosen to judge the living and the dead. Every one of the prophets has said that all who have faith in Jesus will have their sins forgiven in his name.

Colossians 3:1-7

You have been raised to life with Christ. Now set your heart on what is in heaven, where Christ rules at God's right side. Think about what is up there, not about what is here on earth. You died, which means that your life is hidden with Christ, who sits beside God. Christ gives meaning to your life, and when he appears, you will also appear with him in glory.

Don't be controlled by your body. Kill every desire for the wrong kind of sex. Don't be immoral or indecent or have evil thoughts. Don't be greedy, which is the same as worshiping idols. God is angry with people who disobey him by doing these things. And that is exactly what you did, when you lived among people who behaved in this way.

John 20:1-10

On Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran to Simon Peter and to Jesus' favorite disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him."

Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. They ran side by side, until the other disciple ran faster than Peter and got there first. He bent over and saw the strips of linen cloth lying inside the tomb, but he did not go in.

When Simon Peter got there, he went into the tomb and saw the strips of cloth. He also saw the piece of cloth that had been used to cover Jesus' face. It was rolled up and in a place by itself. The disciple who got there first then went into the tomb, and when he saw it, he believed. At that time Peter and the other disciple did not know that the Scriptures said Jesus would rise to life. So the two of them went back to the other disciples.

Sunday 28th April 2019

Acts 5:27-32

When the apostles were brought before the council, the high priest said to them, "We told you plainly not to teach in the name of Jesus. But look what you have done! You have been teaching all over Jerusalem, and you are trying to blame us for his death."

Peter and the apostles replied:

We don't obey people. We obey God. You killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. But the God our ancestors worshiped raised him to life and made him our Leader and Saviour. Then God gave him a place at his right side, so that the people of Israel would turn back to him and be forgiven. We are here to tell you about all this, and so is the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to everyone who obeys God.

Revelation 1:4-8

From John to the seven churches in Asia.

I pray that you
will be blessed

with kindness and peace
from God, who is and was
and is coming.
May you receive
kindness and peace
from the seven spirits
before the throne of God.
May kindness and peace
be yours
from Jesus Christ,
the faithful witness.

Jesus was the first
to conquer death,
and he is the ruler
of all earthly kings.

Christ loves us,
and by his blood
he set us free
from our sins.

He lets us rule as kings
and serve God his Father
as priests.

To him be glory and power
forever and ever! Amen.

Look! He is coming
with the clouds.

Everyone will see him,
even the ones who stuck
a sword through him.

All people on earth
will weep because of him.

Yes, it will happen! Amen.

The Lord God says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the one who is and was and is coming. I am God All-Powerful!"

John 20:19-31

The disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders, and on the evening of that same Sunday they locked themselves in a room. Suddenly, Jesus appeared in the middle of the group. He greeted them and showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they became very happy.

After Jesus had greeted them again, he said, "I am sending you, just as the Father has sent me." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they will be forgiven. But if you don't forgive their sins, they will not be forgiven."

Although Thomas the Twin was one of the twelve disciples, he wasn't with the others when Jesus appeared to them. So they told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But Thomas said, "First, I must see the nail scars in his hands and touch them with my finger. I must put my hand where the spear went into his side. I won't believe unless I do this!"

A week later the disciples were together again. This time, Thomas was with them. Jesus came in while the doors were still locked and stood in the middle of the group. He greeted his disciples and said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands! Put your hand into my side. Stop doubting and have faith!"

Thomas replied, "You are my Lord and my God!"

Jesus said, "Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!"

Jesus worked many other miracles for his disciples, and not all of them are written in this book. But these are written so that you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. If you have faith in