

Grace & Peace (Holy Week - March 25 - 29)

Lenten Devotions 2024

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Note: Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the English Standard Version.

Holy Week—Monday, March 25

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Ephesians 6:10-13

Stand Firm

What might have been in Jesus' mind as Holy Week began? He knew fully all that the week held for Him. He knew the betrayal and suffering and agony that awaited Him. He knew that the battle into which He was entering was not against flesh and blood. How did He stand firm?

During His years with His disciples, Jesus gradually revealed what was to come. *"Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised"* (Matthew 16:21). When Peter told Jesus that such a thing should never happen, Jesus replied, *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man"* (Matthew 16:23).

Here is a clue about how Jesus stood firm. He fixed His mind on the things of God—on God's eternal purposes that the world would be redeemed through the sacrifice of the Son.

Yes, even knowing all that Holy Week meant for Him, Jesus stood firm.

Dear Jesus, Thank You for standing firm in Your mission to save us all. Your redeemed children are forever grateful. Amen.

Tuesday, March 26

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:14-15

His Armor and Ours

I'm sure you've heard many sermons about the armor of God. I remember a pastor stepping up to preach actually dressed in pieces of armor—a heavy belt, a metal breastplate, and hiking boots. That got our attention, for sure!

I wonder, did Jesus need such armor? He is, as we confess, true God and true man. If we consider His divine nature, we might say no. He is omnipotent and omniscient in Himself; He needs no additional resources. But if we consider the human side of His nature, we might say yes. Especially as He approached His passion, He needed extra spiritual strength.

But let's ask a different question: "Do we need such armor?" Now there is no doubt about the answer. Yes, we need it desperately. And we find it in our Savior. Jesus is the Truth. Jesus is our righteousness. Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

When we need extra spiritual strength (which, of course, we need every moment of every day), we run to Jesus. He covers us with His armor; He covers us with Himself.

Dear Jesus, Be my peace and strength today. Amen.

Wednesday, March 27

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:16-17

The Sword of The Spirit

Yesterday we considered that Jesus, as true man, may have needed spiritual armor. The sword of the Spirit, mentioned in today's reading, brings to mind a specific time Jesus wielded that weapon. After His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness where He faced a 40-day period of temptation by the devil. If ever He needed spiritual armor, this would be one of the times!

The gospel writers don't explain everything that happened during the 40 days. Perhaps Jesus clothed Himself in the armor of God each of those mornings in order to withstand Satan's attacks. We don't know all the details, but we do know that Jesus used the sword of the Spirit. *"It is written,"* He said, countering each temptation (and the clever way Satan tried to twist God's words) with clear truth from Scripture.

Fighting Satan, resisting temptation, wielding the sword—this is exhausting work. Perhaps that's why, at the conclusion of the wilderness temptations, angels came and ministered to Jesus (see Matthew 4:11). His need for this help from angels, God's ministering spirits, shows the human side of our Lord. It also shows some of what it cost Him to win our salvation.

Dear Jesus, Help me not take lightly all You endured throughout Your ministry and, especially, as You suffered and died for me. Amen.

Maundy Thursday, March 28

Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

Ephesians 6:18-19

Keep Alert

Keep alert in persevering prayer! Paul gives this imperative, encouraging believers to support one another through prayer. When Jesus invited Peter, James, and John to keep alert in prayer with Him in Gethsemane, it was more than an imperative. It was a request, a plea from a friend. *“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death, Jesus told them; remain here, and watch with me”* (Matthew 26:38).

We know how the story unfolds. They couldn't do it. These three close friends of Jesus, who had shared so many special moments with the Lord, missed the opportunity to be there when He needed them most. Human help failed Jesus in the garden, but the Father heard His plea and saw His anguish. He sent an angel to comfort and strengthen His beloved Son (see Luke 22:43).

It can be tempting to criticize Peter, James, and John, to think we would have done better. But as we come to the Lord's table this evening, we confess that we probably would have fallen asleep, too. Like them, we often let confusion or fatigue, or fear overcome us. Our faith fails us. We forget our Lord.

But the Lord's Supper reminds us that He never forgets us. Over and over again, He offers His body and blood, His forgiveness and cleansing, to woebegone sinners like us. As He lifted up the bread and the cup, He lifts us up and draws us close to His heart. If sin or guilt or failure is weighing you down, let Him do this for you tonight.

Precious Savior, I offer my praise for forgiveness that is full and free through Your body and blood. Lift me up and draw me close, I pray. Amen.

Good Friday, March 29

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:2

Grace and Peace

We have come full circle. We have journeyed from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday. We began with *grace and peace*, and we conclude the same way.

*“You know the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9 NASB). Through Jesus’s death and resurrection, we are rich indeed—chosen by grace, adopted as dear children, lavished with spiritual blessings. Furthermore, *“having been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1).

Good Friday reminds us that in Christ God has taken care of our deepest need. He has forgiven our sins and reconciled us to the Father. Nothing stands between us and God. Nothing can happen that could separate us from His love. This is a precious gift. A gift to be received in simple, childlike faith. A gift that no one can take from you.

Cling to this gift. Cling to your Savior, today and always.

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit, How sweet to me is this gift of grace and peace. I
worship You. Amen.**