



This letter is a little different from previous ones, in that it is a meditation on Easter. I would encourage you to take some time to meditate on each stage of the journey from the last supper to the cross. It's a journey perhaps that you have taken often but during this Easter, allow God to speak and minister into your heart in a new way.

**The last supper:** Jesus had been looking forward to this last meal with his disciples for some time. Of course it was a bitter-sweet moment. It was the pivotal point for the disciples from being a cosy team enjoying being a part of something new together, to entering a grieving, fearful and confusing time of wondering what all this was about. Jesus had made it clear that he had to suffer but somehow they didn't get it. They would very soon.

I have to ask myself – do I get it? Some days I find myself wanting to believe the prosperity gospel and if I pray hard enough, all these things will be taken from me. But the scriptures share enough stories and promises to confirm that “in the world we will receive tribulation,” and that “it has been granted to us to not only believe in Christ but also to suffer for him.” And yet through it all Jesus came to make our joy complete.

As you take bread and wine to remember what Jesus has done for us this Easter, thank him for this life more abundant than he has provided for us. Let's come to that point where we can count it all joy to serve and suffer for his name sake.

**Prayer in the garden:** The disciples went with him to the garden to pray but sadly couldn't stay awake. It had been a busy week and there was no awareness of what was to come. So Jesus wrestled in prayer alone, as he anticipated the coming hours of trial. As he poured his heart out to the Father, he cried, “if it's possible, let this cup pass from me, but not my will but yours be done.”

Do you have a situation that you are wrestling with and are desperate for God to help you? Sometimes we feel all alone and although others have said they will be with us in it, they seem a long way away. It's during these times that we go deep with the Lord and come to that place of abandonment and deep dependence in his unfailing love. Take time this Easter to pour out your heart in prayer over those issues that burden and trouble your soul and spirit. The Father is always there to listen.

**Condemned to death:** Jesus was pushed around, hassled, mocked and spat upon. Jesus was not responsible for doing anything to deserve this horrendous punishment of death. Pilate washed his hands of any responsibility of condemning Jesus to this painful death on the cross. Jesus received the ultimate injustice. Yet he stood there in humility and took the physical blows, the slander and all that they threw at him.

We live in a world full of injustices. Christian leaders are tortured and imprisoned, or cast out of the countries they have loved and served. Innocent children and young people are trafficked into lives of slavery. People of all kinds are unheard, overlooked and abused. Have you had an injustice done to you, or do you know of a situation that burdens you? Ask God what he is saying to you – let it go or pursue it with the power yet calmness of his spirit in you. The next time you are out walking, pick up a stone and throw it as far as you can as a symbolic act of letting go or pursuing.

**Clothed in a purple robe and a crown of thorns:** They took every opportunity of mocking Jesus. They treated him like a king in jest when that's exactly what he was - the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. They were seeking to dishonour him. How easy it is for words of dishonour to fall from our lips. Speaking negatively about someone or not speaking the full truth, putting someone down or undermining them in some way. We have been brought into a family that the Father honours and blesses. Let's take this opportunity of honouring in the best possible way the Jesus that we love.

In your conversation, think how you can affirm, bless and honour the name of Jesus. May it overflow from your heart of adoration. How he deserves our praise.

**Stripped of his garments:** Having dressed Jesus up in mock kings clothes, they stripped him to reveal his blood stained body. His tunic was in one piece and so they cast lots among themselves to see who the new owner was to be. I wonder how that individual felt as he wore the tunic of the Son of God?

Jesus is made to be vulnerable. He came to this world, born in a stable and wrapped in swaddling clothes. He is to leave the world in similar fashion. He went through this humiliation all for us.

To remind you of Jesus being stripped for us, remove something for a season – a watch, a ring, a necklace, a jacket..... Where there have been losses in our lives, they don't have to take away from who God has made us to be. We can stand as one who joins in the suffering of our Saviour.

**Simon helped to carry the cross:** Jesus had been dragged from trial to trial, beaten, whipped, and forced to carry the heavy cross through the streets towards the hill of Golgotha. He is weary and stumbles. He loses his footing and falls to the ground. He struggles to stand under the heavy weight and simply collapses under the pressure. Simon is asked to help. He steps forward with sorrow and yet pride at helping the Messiah at this difficult stage of his journey.

Like Jesus we need others to help us through the difficult times. How many people have there been in our lives who have stepped in when the going was rough? People that we were able to lean on and receive encouragement from. Take time to thank God for all those who have helped to carry your cross and made your load lighter. Imagine being on the road as Jesus was coming by and stumbling to the ground in front of you. Do you see yourself stepping in and helping him to carry that cross. He says to us, "Take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

**Jesus was nailed to a cross:** “The shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” He lay down, with his arms outstretched and waited for the nails to be pounded into his hands and feet. He willingly went through the pain, suffering and death so that we could live. What a Saviour!

Go to your toolbox or workshop and pick up a nail. Put it in your pocket and carry it around with you for a while. Every time you put your hand in your pocket and feel that nail, remember what Jesus has done for you. Then remember his command to you – “deny yourself and take up your cross daily.”

**Jesus was laid in the tomb:** How they wept and grieved at the cross, as they took down his body and prepared his body for burial. There was much weeping from afar too as the disciples hid away in fear and shook their heads in disbelief at what had taken place. He was gone. The messiah, who they had laughed with, ate with, travelled and preached with, listened to for hours and now who had been taken from them.

It’s on Holy Saturday that we hit the all time low. It’s here we have run out of our strength and grace, and we are faced with the “what now?” In the emptiness God can meet us. It was during this time that Jesus was gaining his victory over Satan and his demon hosts. As C.S. Lewis said, this is when the deep magic took place.

We mustn’t run from the dark night, the holy Saturday but pass through it to discover the resurrection that is promised. In due time it will come. If you are in that place, hang in there and put your stake in the ground. “Even in the darkest hour Lord, I put my trust in you.”

**The stone was rolled away:** Jesus conquered death and hell and rose from the dead. Hallelujah! He has made the way open for us to be reconciled with God. Now we have the opportunity of receiving “life and life more abundantly.”

Give thanks and celebrate His love, forgiveness, mercy, strength and grace. Allow your heart to overflow with your adoration and thanksgiving. Take every opportunity of expressing yourself through grace before meals, blessing others as they come into your home and as you meet them during your days. Let thanks and joy be spilling from our mouths as we remember we serve a risen, living Saviour. Buy some flowers to remind you of the colour, fragrance and new life that sprang forth on Easter Sunday.