



passion week
2026 DEVOTIONAL



Passion Week

2026 Devotional
Valley Life Church

At the Cross

8 Days & 7 Words That Changed Everything

Each year during Passion Week, we slow down to remember the final days of Jesus' life: His journey to the cross and His victory over the grave. This devotional is designed to help us not just observe these events, but reflect on what they mean for us today.

Throughout this week, we will listen closely to the seven statements Jesus made from the cross. In His final hours, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness, promise, compassion, suffering, and victory. These were not random words, they reveal the heart of the gospel and the depth of His love for us.

As you read each day, take time to sit with Scripture, reflect on what Jesus has done, and respond in prayer. Our hope is that this journey will lead you to the foot of the cross, and ultimately to the empty tomb, where we are reminded that because of Jesus, we are forgiven, made new, and never alone.



day one

The Road to the Cross

Written By: Adam Young

Read Luke 19:28-44 and Mark 10:32-34.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds were celebrating. They waved palm branches, shouted praises, and welcomed Him as King. But while the people saw a moment of triumph, Jesus saw something else. He knew exactly where this road would lead. This was not a surprise or a tragic turn of events, it was a deliberate path.

In Mark 10, we are told that Jesus was walking ahead of His disciples as they made their way to Jerusalem. He had already told them what would happen; that He would be betrayed, mocked, beaten, and killed. Still, He kept walking. Step by step, Jesus moved toward the cross.

While the crowds expected a political savior, Jesus came as a suffering Savior. He did not come to overthrow Rome, He came to deal with something far greater: sin. He came not just to rule, but to rescue. Not just to reign, but to redeem. And He did it willingly. Every step toward Jerusalem was a step toward you; toward your sin, your brokenness, your need. Jesus was not caught in circumstances beyond His control. He was carrying out the plan of God with purpose and love.

As the week begins, we are invited to walk this road with Him. Invited to slow down, to pay attention, and to see not just what happened to Jesus, but what His journey means for us. In the days ahead, we will hear the words Jesus spoke from the cross. Words of forgiveness, grace, sacrifice, and victory. But before we get there, we must first recognize this: the cross was always the destination.



day two

Forgiveness

Written By: Robby Rasbaugh

Luke 23:34: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Jesus chose forgiveness.

If I were hanging on a cross, a cross I was nailed to by my enemies, forgiveness would not have even crossed my mind. But forgiveness was clearly on Jesus’ mind in the final hours before His death, when He gave us the most powerful example of forgiveness in all of the Holy Scriptures.

A few years ago, I got tickets to a taping of a game show in Hollywood. During a commercial break, the host stood in front of the audience and bared his heart. A couple of weeks earlier, one of his best friends had been murdered in a domestic dispute. The host told us, “I was able to forgive the murderer almost immediately because my upbringing in church taught me that we’re supposed to forgive each other. And sadly, I feel like forgiveness is something that’s missing in America—and ironically, something that’s missing in the church. And I think we need to bring that back.” All of the sudden, I wasn’t at a game show, I was at church.

It made me think—if this game show host could forgive a murderer, why is it so hard for me to forgive the ones I love? If Pope John Paul II could forgive his would-be assassin in prison, what’s holding me back from forgiving my brother or sister? And if Jesus, the Savior of the world, can forgive the very people He came to save for nailing Him to a cross, what’s stopping you from forgiving your friends and enemies?

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

—Colossians 3:13 (NIV)



day three

Paradise

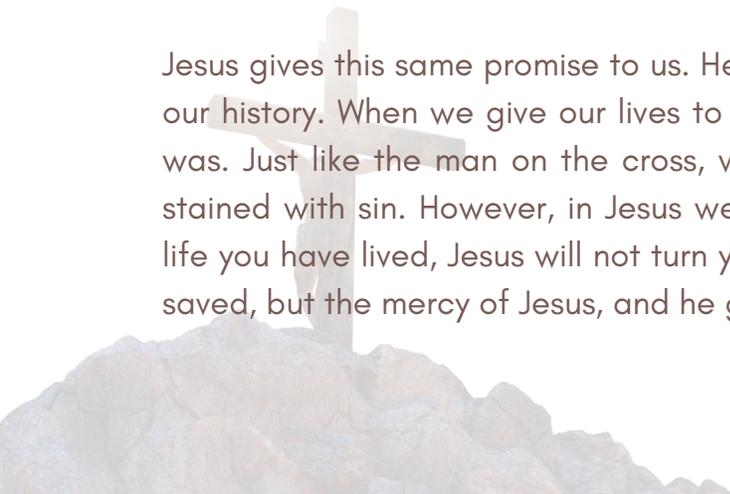
Written By: Beckett Young

Luke 23:43: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus was crucified alongside two other men. Both were convicted criminals, charged with crimes against Rome. Unlike Jesus, these were not innocent men and, according to Rome, they deserved to be crucified. Sharing the same fate, Jesus hung between them. He was mocked, beaten, shunned, and scolded. He hung on a cross, on a hill, in front of a crowd as if He were a criminal himself. Both men alongside Jesus called out to him. One man criticized Jesus, saying that if Jesus really was the Son of God he would have the power to take them down from the cross and save them. However, the other man was different. In his final moments, he understood that Jesus did not belong with the others there. He knew that Jesus was innocent, that he didn't deserve the punishment of a criminal. He understood that Jesus really was the ultimate sacrifice, the Son of God. The man finishes by asking Jesus to remember him when he returns to his kingdom, to which Jesus assures him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The man hanging next to Jesus was not a good man by normal standards. He had committed crimes against Rome with enough severity to be sentenced to the worst punishment that could be carried out by the Roman government, crucifixion; a death meant for the lowest criminals. Yet in his last moments on the cross, after a lifetime of sin, he was granted entry into the Kingdom of God. To Jesus, it wasn't about the man's past actions, his crimes, or his sins. To Jesus, all that mattered was the man's faith. The man had lived a life devoted to wrongdoings and was paying for it by hanging on the cross but it did not matter to Jesus. In that moment, the man on the cross proclaimed that Jesus truly was the Son of God and surrendered what little he had left of his life. He gave his life to Jesus, and was rewarded with a relationship and a promise that would last for eternity.

Jesus gives this same promise to us. He calls us into a life that isn't defined by our sin or our history. When we give our lives to Christ we are renewed, as the man on the cross was. Just like the man on the cross, we are anything but perfect, all of our pasts are stained with sin. However, in Jesus we find redemption. It does not matter the kind of life you have lived, Jesus will not turn you away. It is not by our own actions that we are saved, but the mercy of Jesus, and he gives this gift to all that put their faith in him.



day four

A New Family

Written By: Brittany Cramer

John 19:26-27: "Woman, behold, your son... Behold, your mother!"

Notice the people present at this moment during Jesus' death. Who is Jesus speaking to while He is suffering on the cross? Now imagine being there. Maybe you are close to the cross, or maybe you are watching from a distance. Read John 19:16-27.

Jesus, fully God and fully human, was suffering, though He never sinned, in order to pay the price for sin (1 Peter 3:18). The great story of redemption, the moment all of Scripture had been pointing toward, was unfolding. In those excruciating hours, He looked down and saw His mother. With deep love and care, He addressed her and entrusted her to John, who stood nearby, asking him to care for her in His absence. John, one of Jesus' closest followers, received both a responsibility and a gift: a new family relationship.

John's life had been forever changed by following Jesus. He wrote his Gospel so "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). As part of that message, John chose to include Jesus' mother in both the account of His first miracle (John 2:1-12) and in one of His final moments on the cross—details not recorded in the other Gospels. At the wedding in Cana, only a few fully understood what had happened; at the cross, many witnessed the weight and significance of what was taking place. Jesus' mother experienced both; walking closely with her Son in moments of glory and in moments of suffering. After the wedding, Jesus spent time with her and His brothers (John 2:12), and here, even as He died, He formed a new family for her.

This personal act of care points to a greater truth: through Christ, we are brought into a new family. This is not just a moment of provision, it's a picture of adoption. John knew this because he lived it. He declared it at the beginning of his Gospel: "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Take a moment today to thank God not only for rescuing you from sin, but also for placing you in His family. He is your Father. You are His child.

day five

Forsaken For Us

Written By: Joe Moctezuma

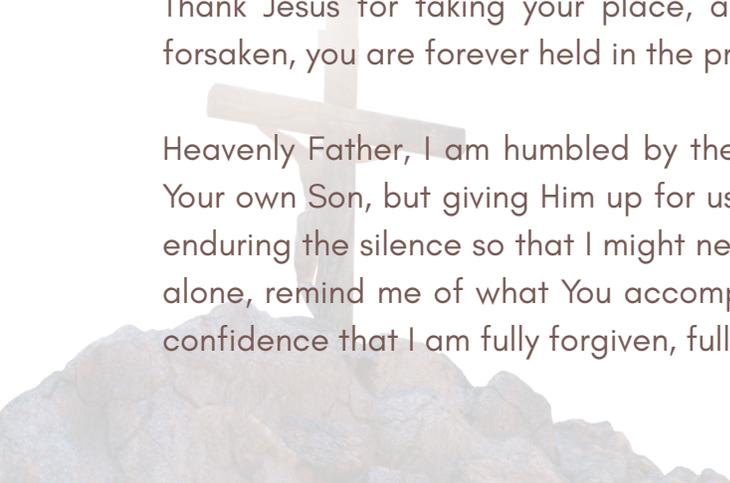
Matthew 27:46: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Over a small hill in Jerusalem called Golgotha, an unnatural midday darkness—thick, heavy, and suffocating—covered the land. The crowds gathered to mock and watch the crucifixion had begun to thin, and an eerie silence pressed down over everything. At the center of it all hung Jesus. His body was torn, His strength spent, and every breath was a grueling labor. Then, at three in the afternoon, the silence was shattered. Jesus cried out in a loud voice: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But the true weight of that cry wasn't in its sound—it was in the response. For the first time in eternity, the silence from heaven was absolute.

These words were not random. Jesus was quoting Psalm 22, a psalm that begins in anguish but ends in victory. For the first time, He experienced separation from the Father. Why? Because of sin. God is perfectly holy and just, and sin cannot simply be ignored—it must be judged. On the cross, Jesus stepped into our place. Though He had no sin of His own, He took on ours fully and willingly. At Golgotha, the Son of God became our sin-bearer. He was treated as if He had committed our sins so that we might be treated as if we possessed His righteousness. Christ was forsaken so that we never will be.

When we look at the cross, we see more than a tragic execution—we see the cost of our salvation, the weight of sin, and the depth of God's love. Jesus endured the silence of heaven so that we would always have the ear of the Father. Because of Him, the promise is now secure: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Even when God feels distant, the cross reminds us of what is true. Our feelings may waver, but His promise does not. Take a moment today to reflect on the cost of your salvation. Thank Jesus for taking your place, and rest in the assurance that because He was forsaken, you are forever held in the presence of God.

Heavenly Father, I am humbled by the mystery of the cross. Thank You for not sparing Your own Son, but giving Him up for us all. Lord Jesus, thank You for bearing my sin and enduring the silence so that I might never be separated from You. When I feel distant or alone, remind me of what You accomplished on the cross. Help me to live today in the confidence that I am fully forgiven, fully loved, and never forsaken. Amen.



day six

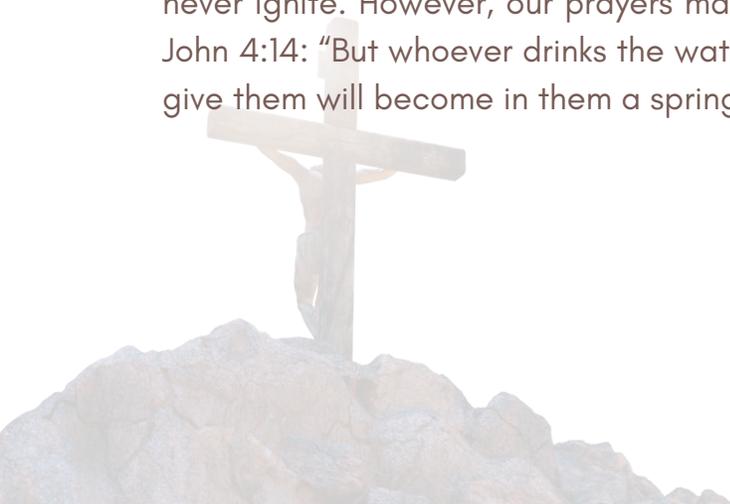
The Fountain Thirsts Written By: Bryce Harman

John 19:28: "I thirst."

As we barrel into an unseasonably warm spring, it becomes more evident that time is running out for the snow to stack up. Most passing conversations now include the obligatory comments about the fire season that awaits us. The physical and mental scars of the East Troublesome Fire are slowly fading, but the fear of the next big fire will never completely die. Try to complain about rain or bemoan a snowstorm without someone enthusiastically reminding you that we need the moisture. All the while, our much more desperate need for the "living water" too often goes unspoken.

In John 19:28, Jesus says, "I thirst," moments before His death on the cross. Like all of our Lord's words, these are full of meaning and purpose. His utterance fulfills the prophecy of Psalm 69:3: "I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God." Imagine the source of eternal life—the very source of living water Himself—experiencing thirst as our sins weighed Him down on the cross. His words show that He was fully human, experiencing real physical needs and suffering. At the same time, they paint a vivid picture of our Lord and Savior being poured out for the forgiveness of our sins. That forgiveness was poured out for the very people who nailed Him to the cross, for those who mocked Him, and for those today who continue to struggle through life parched, yet fail to take a drink from the proffered well of living water. One sip of this Living Water quenches our soul's thirst for all eternity.

As the days grow warmer and the topic of drought is on everyone's tongue, I hope our church will take this opportunity to speak about our greater need for the living water. I am prayerful that the moisture will come, the fields will turn green, and the fires will never ignite. However, our prayers may be even better directed toward the promise of John 4:14: "But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."



day seven

It Is Finished

Written By: David Newell

John 19:30: "It is finished."

Undoubtedly regarding those redeemed, the most important utterance Jesus made on the cross that fateful day, came moments before He took His last breath. When, at the end, He took in that sour wine on a hyssop branch, He gazed over those around Him and proclaimed the marvelous word: tetelestai (pronounced teh teh Les tie). In our English translations we read this word as "it is finished."

Spoken in the Greek perfect tense, this word has incredible depth to it. It means that though a work was completed in time, its results continue onward and indefinitely through the ages. In the perfect tense we hear that it is finished and it will never not be finished. In Jesus' time this word was a common word with uncommon power and depth: It was used in commerce between individuals or businesses in which a loan was involved. When the debtor satisfied his debt obligations, the lender would stamp their paper contract with the word "tetelestai" (paid in full). It was used in a judicial sense in which a prisoner, having completed his sentence for his crime, would receive a certificate stating "tetelestai" (his crimes were paid in full). He could never again be made to pay for those crimes. A servant, tasked by his master to complete a large project would report back "tetelestai" (the work is accomplished). Finally, militarily, when victory in battle was achieved over an enemy, the word declared was "tetelestai" (victory had been won).

So when Jesus declared tetelestai right before His death, He was in effect declaring that all believers' debt has been fully paid, the judgment for sin has been fully served and the spiritual war involving death, sin, and Satan has been completely won!

As you read this and realize you haven't fully committed to Jesus yet because of heinous sins of your past and you question whether you can be forgiven, you are invited to the cross to hear the Savior's word: tetelestai - your debt has been fully paid. If you, as a Christian, are frustrated by a reoccurring sin that seemingly mars your salvation, hear that precious word of Jesus - tetelestai - the victory has been won and continues to be won. If you struggle with guilt over anything, go to the cross and hear your savior's word - tetelestai - the sentence completed and your crimes have been paid in full.

Tetelestai, it is well and truly finished!

day eight

Raised With Christ

Written By: Adam Young

Luke 23:46: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"

As Jesus hung on the cross, after hours of suffering and darkness, He spoke His final words: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). These were not words of defeat, but of trust. Even in death, Jesus entrusted Himself fully to the Father. Then He breathed His last, and the world fell silent.

For His followers, that silence must have felt overwhelming. The One they had trusted, followed, and loved was gone. Hope seemed buried with Him. The cross appeared to be the end of the story. But it was not the end.

Three days later, everything changed. The same Father into whose hands Jesus entrusted His spirit acted in power and raised Him from the dead. The tomb was empty. Death was defeated. What looked like loss was revealed as victory. The resurrection is not just proof that Jesus is who He claimed to be—it is the declaration that His work on the cross was accepted. Sin was paid for. The power of death was broken. And new life had begun.

But the resurrection is not only something that happened to Jesus; it is something that now shapes us. Scripture tells us that just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too are raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). His victory becomes our victory. His life becomes our life.

This means that the story of Easter is not just about what happened then, it is about what is true now. Because Jesus lives, we are no longer defined by our sin, our past, or our failures. We are made new. We are brought into a living hope. We are invited to live in the power of the resurrection today.

The hands that received His spirit are the hands that raised Him and those same hands now hold you!

Take a moment today to reflect on the empty tomb. Thank Jesus not only for dying in your place, but for rising again to give you new life. And ask Him to help you live in that reality today.

