

out and broken—half-dead, even—it makes me glad to remember that for Easter people, even death is full of promise.

“The world makes a lot of promises. Smoke and mirrors, mostly. Frantic, cartoonish attempts to distract us from the gaping holes in the middle of our souls (or to sell us the latest product in order to fill them). There's no life in those promises.

“So I'm hoping that ... I'll be a little more willing to die to that stuff. I'm praying I'll become more aware of the empty space within, and that I'll resist the urge to fill it with any old thing I can find. I'm going to wait, carved out, vulnerable, a cracked and crumbling jar of clay, on a life God's offered to deposit anywhere there's room. I'm going to believe that if I'll just leave my empty spaces empty, he'll fill them. That, I'm convinced, is a reasonable expectation.” (“What’s So Good About Good Friday”, Kyria.com (4-10-09))

PRAY: “Empty” yourself of the need to be strong, in-control, in-charge, so that Christ’s Spirit can fill you with His strength and power.

THURSDAY APRIL 21 - MAUNDY THURSDAY

Read: John 13: 1-9, 12-15

Offer this Maundy Thursday prayer taken from a liturgy used at Seekers Church, in Washington DC (www.seekerschurch.org/liturgies/20020328.htm).

“O Christ, in your presence we discover who we are. You wash our feet, and we learn how reluctant we are to serve one another and the world around us.

“We are so like your disciples, who looked to their own self-centered interests even as you prepared to give yourself for the sake of the whole world.

“Our love scarcely suffices for those closest to us, and yet you invite us to join all creation at your feast. Forgive us, and help us treasure your presence more deeply, that we may find this night a celebration of overflowing joy.”

PRAY: As an enacted prayer of submission and service, consider washing each other’s feet (if you are with more than one ☺). Offer prayers of submission to God.

FRIDAY APRIL 22 - GOOD FRIDAY

Join together for worship at the evening Tenebrae Service at 7:30 PM.

SATURDAY APRIL 23 - HOLY SATURDAY

NOTE: There is no morning prayer service today.

Consider coming to the Holy Saturday contemplative evening presented by the Indonesian Evangelical Church in our sanctuary at 7:00PM.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

APRIL 17-23, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

SERIES: A 'TANGIBLE DISPLAY' PEOPLE: JOURNEYING WITH JESUS IN LUKE

SERMON: “THE KING ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM...BUT THEY MISSED HIM”

LUKE 19:28-48

PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

SUNDAY APRIL 17

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY APRIL 18 - HOLY WEEK

Read: John 17: 25-26

Last words. Have you ever experienced listening to the last words of someone who knew they were going to die? They stick with you. I remember well the conversation I had with my father next to his hospital bed in William Osler Memorial Hospital in Brampton, Ontario. I thought they might be his last words. Although he still lived 4 months longer, they never left me.

What would your last words be? To your spouse? Your children? Your grandchildren? Your congregation?

At this point in John's Gospel, we listen in on some of Jesus' last words. Just before his arrest, John shares with his audience a prayer that Jesus offered. We don't know exactly when the prayer was offered, or where (in the Upper Room?), or who heard it (all the disciples? Just a few?); presumably for John that's not important. That he locates this significant prayer right before Jesus' arrest and the unfolding narrative in Jerusalem is. These are some of Jesus' last words.

Jesus' last words are that two things would be in us or with us: the love of God, and the Presence of Christ. Actually, they can't be separated.

"I love you" and "I am with you"... those are two of the most significant Gospel promises in all of Scripture. And they are words that any Christian can pass on to another as last words: "God loves you." and "God is with you."....and one more we can add...because that's true, "Submit your life to Him."

Let us never forget these last words.

PRAY: Thank God for His love and presence. As you begin Holy Week pray that God's Spirit will open your heart more fully to the message of Easter.

TUESDAY APRIL 19

Read: Luke 23: 44-46

My Croatian friend Danny, who I worked with at Ford Motor Company, found it a deep offence that a "loving" God would send his one and only son to die a torturous death to bear the punishment of others. "I can't believe in that kind of God!" he once said with great emotion.

Danny is not alone. Even the great Croatian theologian, Miroslav Volf, used to reject the idea of God's wrath. The notion that a loving God was also an angry one was barbaric. But experience changed this for Volf. In his book *Free of Charge*, he writes:

"My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3,000,000 were

displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry.

"Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in one hundred days! How did God react to the carnage? By doting on the perpetrators in a grandfatherly fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrators' basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them?"

"Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love."

The wrath of God against all that divides and destroys and derides and disdains is a profound expression of love. An expression made even greater when we see that on the cross, God bore that wrath Himself, so that we, the dividers, destroyers, deriders, and disdains might receive forgiveness and live.

PRAY: Sing (Tune "O Sacred Head): "My Lord, what you did suffer was all for sinners' gain; mine, mine was the transgression, but yours the deadly pain. So here I kneel, my Savior, for I deserve your place; look on me with your favor and save me by your grace."

WEDNESDAY APRIL 20

Read: 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31

Recording artist and writer, Carolyn Arends writes a devotional piece for *Kyria.com*, inspired by her pastor:

"A couple years ago, during a jubilant Easter service, our pastor said something that stopped me in my mental tracks: "The world offers promises full of emptiness. But Easter offers emptiness full of promise."

"Empty cross, empty tomb, empty grave-clothes ... all full of promise. If I were writing the Easter story, I don't think I'd choose emptiness as my symbolic gesture. But then, I also wouldn't be talking about strength being made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9), foolish things confounding the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27), the meek inheriting the earth (Matthew 5:5), or the poor in spirit getting (in every sense of the word "get") the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3). And I certainly wouldn't be talking about dying in order to live.

"What is it about God that makes him so favor this kind of paradox? I guess this is what we should expect from the Servant King—the God who decided that the best way to save the world was to let it kill him. I don't understand the way God thinks. But on those days when I feel hollowed