

“Author Henri Nouwen tells the story of a family he knew in Paraguay. The father, a doctor, spoke out against the military regime there and its human rights abuses. Local police took their revenge on him by arresting his teenage son and torturing him to death. Enraged townsfolk wanted to turn the boy's funeral into a huge protest march, but the doctor chose another means of protest. At the funeral, the father displayed his son's body as he had found it in the jail—naked, scarred from electric shocks and cigarette burns, and beatings. All the villagers filed past the corpse, which lay not in a coffin but on the blood-soaked mattress from the prison. It was the strongest protest imaginable, for it put injustice on grotesque display.

“Isn't that what God did at Calvary? ... The cross that held Jesus' body, naked and marked with scars, exposed all the violence and injustice of this world. At once, the cross revealed what kind of world we have and what kind of God we have: a world of gross unfairness, a God of sacrificial love.”

PRAY: Thank the Lord for how the cross reveals both the gross injustices of sin and the selfless love of God for sinners.

FRIDAY APRIL 29

Read: Luke 23:44-49

Whenever I am visiting someone who I think I may never see again, perhaps because of impending death, severe illness, or physical separation, if they are a believer and a follower of Jesus, I will often say, “till we meet again.”

In a sermon preached by Greg Ogden called “Christians Never Say Goodbye” he tells of Sheldon Vanauken. Sheldon was a student of the English professor and Christian apologist C. S. Lewis in the early 1950s. He recounts in his book *A Severe Mercy* the story of his last meeting with his mentor when Vanauken was leaving Oxford for the United States. Over one final lunch together at a pub, they had spent time wondering aloud about the nature of life after death. When they had finished eating, they stood outside of the pub, talked for a few more minutes, and just before parting ways, Lewis said to Vanauken, “I shan't say goodbye. We'll meet again.” The great apologist then plunged into the traffic to cross the street while Vanuaken watched his friend walk away. When Lewis got to the other side of the street, he turned around, anticipating that his friend would still be standing there. With a grin on his face, Lewis shouted over the great roar of cars, “Besides—Christians never say goodbye.” And all this because of Easter!

PRAY: Thank the Lord that in Christ, there are no goodbyes for those who follow Jesus!

SATURDAY APRIL 30

Consider coming to morning prayer today at 6:00AM

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

APRIL 24-30, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

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

SERMON: “RENEWED LIFE AND FELLOWSHIP”

LUKE 24:13-35

DR. MICHAEL GOHEEN

SUNDAY APRIL 24

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY APRIL 25

Read: John 20:1-10

In the Scriptures, Saturday is the seventh day, the last day of the week, the day on which God rested from his work of creating. And He said, "It is good."

Sunday is the first day of the week. The tomb was found empty, says John, early on the first day of the week. This is significant in John for a number of reasons.

Numerous Bible scholars have observed a unique feature in John's Gospel. John describes events in Jesus' ministry that are "signs." The first is the changing of water into wine at a wedding in Cana. The signs continue. An official's son is healed. That's two. A man healed by a pool is the third. Feeding a crowd is four. Walking on water, five. Healing a blind man, six. Raising Lazarus from the dead, seven. Seven signs. In a Gospel that begins with the creation narrative echo, "In the beginning..." we can sense John wants us to make a connection between the seven signs and the seven days of creation in Gen.1-2.

But then another sign comes, number eight if you will. A sign on the first day of the week; a day of new creation. This sign is the resurrection of the "renewed man" that is our Lord Jesus. And in John 20:22, Jesus "breathes" His new resurrection life into his disciples; the life of the Spirit.

New creation life has burst forth from the grave. Death has been conquered! Wine, healing, bread, order, sight, new life are all signs that the new creation has been inaugurated.

As we celebrate Easter, we give thanks and praise that the new creation life of Christ has been made available to us! May that life increasingly fill us and change us.

PRAY: Thank God for the gift of new creation. Pray that Jesus will fill you afresh with His Spirit. Pray specifically for areas in your life where you wish more of that new life to flow.

TUESDAY APRIL 26

Read: Luke 24: 13-18

The two walking along the Emmaus road were silent with confusion and bewilderment. How did it come to this? The One who held such promise and who taught with such authority, now dead. So many questions.

Then a stranger arrived. And as he spoke, their burning hearts confirmed in them that he taught with such authority. As he opened the Scriptures with them, lights went off, and passion was stirred. Hope was being rekindled.

I've often wondered why Luke only gives us the name of one of the two travelers, Cleopas. As we've made our way through Luke's Journey to Jeru-

salem we've paid attention to details. Details mentioned or left out often are done with intention by Luke so that his audience is impacted more forcefully.

Why only one name? Perhaps this is the reason: As Jesus did with the two travellers, Luke invites you and me to search the Scriptures together discovering afresh why Jesus had to come. Moreover, as we sit together at the Lord's Table, we break bread together so that our hearts may be opened and fed. Maybe, just maybe, Luke's story leaves one person unnamed, because he invites you and I to put our names there instead. Do you feel your heart burning as you are confronted by the Easter story? Maybe Luke would have you imagine yourself being the second traveller and allow Jesus to speak to you and nourish you as if for the first time. ...just a thought.

PRAY: Ask the Lord to allow the news of resurrection to speak to you as if for the first time. Thank Jesus for opening your heart and your mind to see and know Him. Pray for opportunity to proclaim to others, "He is risen!"

WEDNESDAY APRIL 27

Read: Ephesians 3:14-19

With the coming of Easter, everything changes. When a man comes who raises others from the dead, and who himself is raised from the dead, then everything changes. Surely if death itself can be undone, if the death sentence that all must one day face, can be removed, if life itself has the final word and not death, than that means nothing is really the same.

Eugene Peterson writes in his book, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, "The gospel message says: "You don't live in a mechanistic world ruled by necessity; you don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter. He will do things in you that neither you nor your friends would have supposed possible."

Paul prays that we would find new hope and power in a God who can do infinitely more than all we can ask or imagine. And he can pray that because of Easter. Because God did the impossible. God conquered death, decay, and destruction. And Jesus walked the planet as our living proof!

Where in your life, in our church, or in our community, do we long to see God do things that we did not suppose were possible?

PRAY: Pray that the reality of Exodus and Easter will be tangibly displayed in your life, our church, and our community... all for God's glory!

THURSDAY APRIL 28

Read: Luke 23:44-49

In his book, *Disappointment with God*, Philip Yancey shares a story that he had first heard from author Henri Nouwen. This is what Yancey writes,