

Monday

Read Matthew 28:1–10

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?

The Jesus movement comes to an end when Jesus is executed. His closest followers, his disciples, don't know what to do with themselves and so go into hiding and start going back to their former jobs and lives. Why? Many religious leaders die and their followers carry on for centuries or millennia. Buddha died 2,400 years ago and there are about half a billion Buddhists today. So, why would the Jesus movement die just because Jesus dies? It is because the message and ministry of Jesus was about the coming Kingdom of God. If Jesus is dead, he must've been tragically wrong about that. Jesus healed people of their diseases, maladies, and spiritual problems as a demonstration of the new age that he was inaugurating – this Kingdom of God - he didn't perform miracles to impress people. The purpose of Jesus' teachings wasn't so that people would be nice, moral people who did nice, moral things and lived happy, middle-class lives. The purpose of his teachings was to demonstrate the truth of God, the love of God for us, and how we are to live in God's Kingdom of God's peace, justice, and love. But if Jesus is dead, he must've been wrong about the coming Kingdom of God. And so his followers scatter. They don't understand everything Jesus taught them, but they knew that if he was the Savior he said he was that he would be starting this awesome new age of God's reign on earth.

In being raised from the dead, Jesus confirms everything he ever said and did and the Kingdom of God is here. Jesus' resurrection is the dawn of a new day that changes everything. To finish up, read Luke 1:76-79. That is the time you are living in!

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 14:15-16

When you understand and experience God's mercy in Jesus you will be less anxious, stressed, frustrated, and hopeless. You will have greater peace of mind, have more joy, and be in harmony with God and with others. It will change your life and people might think you are a bit of a weirdo – because all the junk that everyone is throwing at you and that society is screaming at you to care about and define yourself by just won't interest you anymore and you'll be living the life God has planned for you.

To understand, experience, and live in God's mercy, you should know what it is. God's mercy is undeserved forgiveness and unearned kindness towards you. So, a key thing to realize is that you don't deserve it and that you didn't earn it. If you deserved it, it wouldn't be mercy, it would be justice. If you earned it, it wouldn't be kind, it would be your due wages for being so awesome. I doubt you think your boss is being kind when they pay you what you've earned through your work. Many people, especially many of the people Jesus talks to in the gospels, don't understand that God's mercy is undeserved forgiveness and unearned kindness – hopefully you do now!

Take a moment in prayer today to thank God for the gift of mercy in Jesus Christ.

Wednesday

Read John 8:2-11

This woman is caught in the wrong kind of relationship and these allegedly very devoted followers of God are using her as a prop to trap Jesus and prove he's not holy or wise. (Where the man from this wrong relationship is remains a mystery... such is their true concern for justice.) So, she's caught doing wrong. What are you caught up in that you know is wrong? Perhaps your conscience has caught you even if no one else has.

What does Jesus do with this person caught in sin?

Jesus protects her dignity and her safety in a very public way. After all, they wanted to throw rocks at her until she died. Very holy. Jesus sticks up for her. You don't have to agree with someone to treat them with dignity.

Jesus didn't condemn her and he didn't condone her actions. He changed her with his mercy. Jesus wants to change you. Jesus shows you mercy when you're guilty, when you feel ashamed, angry, and afraid. This divine mercy forgives you and frees you from guilt.

Thursday

Read Luke 23:39–42

This redeemed criminal sees from the cross what it will take Jesus' disciples a few more days to start getting a handle on: Jesus' death isn't the end of God's Kingdom, it is the beginning of God's glorious Kingdom being realized in a new way. A few weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples can proclaim and preach that everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved. Saved from sin, saved from anger, brokenness, hopelessness, anxiety, stress, and all that is wrong and has gone astray; all because of Jesus' mercy. And so a question Jesus asks is before us. It is a question that persists because the answer is not a one-off like telling a server your Easter dinner whether you want dessert or not. The response is a way of life. It is the question that came upon everyone who comes near Jesus. The woman on that street one day, two criminals dying on crosses.

The person of Jesus has come near to you and he says to you, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Do you believe this? Are you willing to make Jesus' mercy your way of life?

Friday

Each week in 2022, we are praying for the most dangerous places to be a follower of Jesus. Please spend today in prayer for Saudi Arabia and the Christians in Saudi Arabia. You can get more info, and this info comes from, here:

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

What is life like for Christians in Saudi Arabia?

The majority of Christians in Saudi Arabia are expatriates with most coming from low/middle income countries in Asia and Africa. The few Saudi Christians from a Muslim background face the greatest pressure, especially from their families. Expatriate Muslims converting to the Christian faith also face strong persecution, likely similar to the levels they would experience in their home country. Whether Saudi or otherwise, most converts are forced to practice their faith in secrecy.

Areas for prayer:

- Pray that the Lord will continue to use the Internet to strengthen and unite believers, and grow the Saudi church.
- Pray that the Lord will reveal Himself to both Christians and non-Christians in dreams and visions.
- Pray for the protection of all Christians in Saudi Arabia, and for them to be given continued wisdom and discernment as they seek to follow and share Jesus.