

Take
HEART
Devotional

EASTER WITH HHBC

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 18

The Lord's Supper: 6 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 20

Three worship times: 8:30 | 10 | 11:30 a.m.

Pick up Invite Cards at the Next Steps Room in the lobby. Invite friends and family to join us.



TAKE HEART & REACH OUT – BE A GOSPEL NEIGHBOR THIS EASTER

This Easter season, as we take heart in Christ's victory, we also step out in faith to love our neighbors. Our church is committing to pray for every home within a one-mile radius—knocking on doors, offering a simple prayer, and standing in the gap for those around us.

Why? Because we care. Because prayer changes lives. Because every home represents people with joys, struggles, and stories that matter to God.

Our hope is that these moments of prayer will open doors—not just physically, but spiritually—leading to meaningful conversations and opportunities to share the hope of Jesus. Will you join us as we walk, pray, and trust God to move in our community?

CHURCHWIDE SHARE DAYS: MARCH 29 and APRIL 13, 2-4 p.m.

EASTER PRAYER

Join us online for a powerful time of prayer this Easter season! On March 31, April 7, and April 14 at 6 p.m., we'll gather on social media to pray together—seeking God's presence, lifting up our church, and interceding for our community. As we prepare our hearts for Easter, let's stand in faith, believing that Christ is our catalyst for hope and transformation. Set a reminder, invite a friend, and let's unite in prayer!



EASTER FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Take Heart

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” — John 16:33

Week 1: Take Heart When Your Faith Is Weak

Day 1 – Mark 5:21-43

Day 2 – Mark 5:21-43

Day 3 – Psalm 46

Week 2: Take Heart When You Have Strayed

Day 1 – Luke 15:11-32

Day 2 – Luke 15:11-32

Day 3 – Psalm 103

Week 3: Take Heart, He Has Overcome the World

Day 1 – Matthew 27:27-44

Day 2 – John 1:43-51

Day 3 – Psalm 118

Week 4: Take Heart When the End Draws Near

Day 1 – Matthew 28:16-20

Day 2 – Revelation 7:9

Day 3 – Psalm 130

COVER ART

Artist: Unknown

Title: Christ Presenting the Sacred Heart

Medium: Color lithograph

Date: Unknown

Italian text: *Dolce Cuor del unio Gesu fa ch'io t'ami sempre più.*

Translation: *Sweet Heart of the one Jesus, make me love you more and more.*



Artist: Gustave Brion

Title: Jesus and Peter on the Water

Medium: Oil on canvas

Date: 1863



Take

HEART

When Your Faith Is Weak

Week 1, Day 1

TAKE HEART WHEN YOUR FAITH IS WEAK

Mark 5:21-43

Faith isn't always easy. Sometimes, life's challenges make us wonder if God is truly with us. Today's scripture reminds us that even when we are at our lowest, Jesus meets us with grace.

In Mark 5:21-43, two desperate people came to Jesus: Jairus, a synagogue leader, and a woman suffering from chronic bleeding.

Jairus pleaded with Jesus to heal his dying daughter. As Jesus was walking to Jairus' house, a woman who had suffered for twelve years pushed through the crowd to touch Jesus' robe, believing it would heal her. Immediately, she was healed. Jesus stopped, called her "*Daughter,*" and assured her, "*Your faith has healed you*" (Mark 5:34, NIV). This woman was carrying a heavy burden of shame because her community called her unclean. The shame drove her to Jesus and then to the ground to hide. She knew He could heal her, but she was not expecting Him to see her. Jesus did both.

What this means for your family:

- **Jesus sees you.** The woman felt invisible, yet Jesus noticed her. You are never forgotten.
- **Faith doesn't have to be perfect.** She had faith that she could be healed, but not enough faith in Jesus' kindness to see her.
- **God's timing is never late.** We will dive into this more tomorrow, but Jairus had to stand beside Jesus as "time was wasted" for Him to talk with this woman.

If you're struggling, hear Jesus' words: "Don't be afraid; just believe." He is with you, even in your weakest moments.

Discussion Questions:

- How have you felt unseen by the world but seen by Jesus?
- How can we as a family make sure that we are seeing each other AND pointing one another to Christ?
- How can I pray for you during this month as we look forward to Easter?

Family Activity:

Write everyone's name on a piece of paper. Take turns drawing one name from the group of names. You are now that person's secret encourager. For the rest of the month, be intentional to do little things to make this person feel seen and encouraged. Most importantly, pray for them every day.

[illegible]

JOIN US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PRAYER TIME TODAY AT 6 p.m.

Week 1, Day 2

TAKE HEART WHEN YOUR FAITH IS WEAK

Mark 5:21-43

Albert Einstein is famous for saying, “In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.” We know the first part of this quote to be true because life is most certainly difficult and hard. It seems that every curve of life holds some form of unexpected hardship, seasons of waiting, or difficult decisions that hit us square in the face. However, could Einstein be correct in assuming that opportunities truly exist within life’s difficulties, and if so, what are those opportunities? To answer this question, let’s see what Jesus is up to in Mark 5:21-43.

In this passage we are quickly introduced to Jairus, a synagogue leader, who approached Jesus in desperation because his daughter was very sick. He begged Jesus to come and heal her. Parents who have found themselves in a dire situation such as this one understand the immediate hope that came over Jairus as Jesus agreed to heal his daughter. They set out to Jairus’ house, but on the way a woman who had been sick for twelve years touched Jesus’ robe and was healed instantly. As Jesus stopped to talk to her, Jairus received the heartbreaking news no parent ever wants to hear: his daughter had died.

Jairus started with strong faith; he believed Jesus could heal his daughter. But when the circumstances changed from bad to worse, doubt began to overtake him. His daughter was dead, and everyone knows people don’t come back from the dead. It was in this moment of pain, hurt, and hopelessness that Jairus heard Jesus words, “*Do not fear; only believe*” (Mark 5:36). When Jairus was at his lowest point in life Jesus met him there to teach him a valuable lesson about faith.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus’ house, people were mourning, but He told them the girl was only sleeping. Taking her by the hand, Jesus said, “*Little girl, I say to you, arise*” (Mark 5:41), and she came back to life! It was in that moment that Jairus learned first-hand that faith is not about never doubting; it’s about choosing to trust even when doubts arise.

This passage teaches us that in the difficult times when our faith feels weak, Jesus meets us where we are and provides us with the opportunity to know Him on a deeper level. He calls us to take heart, trust in Him, and believe that He is always working, even when we can’t see the outcome. Faith isn’t just about believing

Week 1, Day 3

TAKE HEART WHEN YOUR FAITH IS WEAK

Psalm 46

Living in East Texas, it has never seemed important to know what to do in an earthquake. But people living in the Pacific Rim should be familiar with earthquake readiness instructions. (When an earthquake occurs, find the nearest, strongest thing under which you can take cover.)

Psalm 46 is the Bible's "earthquake readiness" manual. It is a song that reminds us of the only way to be safe when normal life comes crashing down around our ears. The "earthquake" could be a personal disaster or a national crisis—when my friend group falls apart, when my family struggles, when the doctor says "It's not good news ..." What is the nearest, strongest thing under which I can take cover? Because in moments of crisis, our faith can quickly waiver. Psalm 46:1 gives us the answer: *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*

Don't miss what is really going on. When times are tight and the pressure is on, we tend to develop tunnel vision and lose perspective, and our faith waivers. Pain feels personal and has a way of pulling all our thoughts inward, such that self-pity can keep us from God's peace and presence. God knows this, and so He calls His beleaguered people to lift their eyes and *"behold the works of the Lord!"* (Ps. 46:8). He wants us to see what He is doing behind the scenes of history: He is putting down the nations' proud rebellion against Him (Ps. 46:9; cf. Ps. 2), He is exalting His name in the earth (Ps. 46:10), and He is keeping His people safe through it all (Ps. 46:11).

Nothing and no one is stronger than God. So where could we possibly take refuge to be safe from a God-sized disaster? Only in God Himself. *"Be still and know that I am God"* (v. 10) is the only way to find any kind of stillness and safety.

Here is how we help each other do this: When we sympathize over a broken friendship, we can remind each other to bring our hurt to the God who cares, asking Him to help us keep loving. When we pray for practical help in response to any difficulty, we can thank God together that He always loves us and is still looking after us. We can let each other see us turn to God when we are shaken, instead of doing so privately. Imagine if taking refuge in God became so instinctive that we started reminding each other, "Run to God!" when we forget!

Discussion Questions:

- Read Psalm 46 again, changing “our” to “my.” Receive the Psalm as a personal encouragement as you remember, “*God is my refuge and strength...*”
- Do you think it is easy or difficult to lean into God's strength during normal, even boring days?
- Parents, share about a time when you saw God's strength at work in the lives of your kids.

Family Activity:

Hang a family prayer list on the fridge. Write “answered” over each prayer when God answers it.

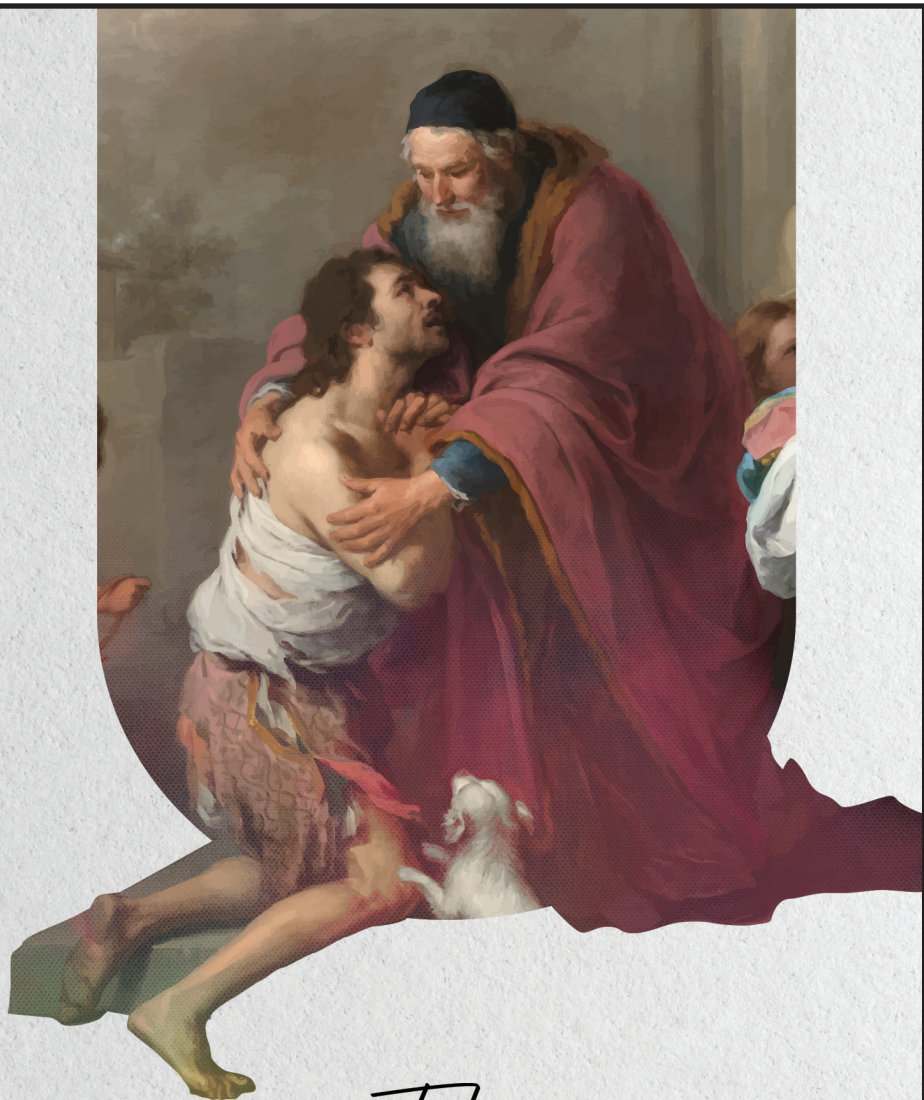
[illegible]

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

Title: The Return of the Prodigal Son

Medium: Oil on canvas

Date: 1670



Take
HEART
When You Have Strayed



Week 2, Day 1

TAKE HEART WHEN YOU HAVE STRAYED

Luke 15:11-32

This parable of Jesus highlights a father and two sons. More importantly, it highlights God's mercy and grace on our behalf. In short, the younger of the two sons turned his back willfully on his father and chose his own way just as we all have chosen our way over God's way. Verse 17 tells us the younger son "came to his senses" and realized he would be better off even as his father's servant. We aren't told if this "coming to his senses" was true repentance at first or simply a plea for help escaping his brokenness for a better life even as a servant. But we *are* told that his father didn't wait for his son's return. He ran to the son and adopted him into the family in a place of honor that he did not deserve. This is a great reminder of the difference between grace and mercy.

Mercy – Not receiving the punishment you deserve

Grace – Receiving the reward you do not deserve

The younger son deserved to be left in the cold and kicked out of the family he had abandoned. Instead the good father ran to the son, who he had been eagerly waiting for, and ran to him, not to condemn him as he deserved but to exalt him to a place of honor! That's what God has done for us if we will humble ourselves before Him as our Lord and Savior.

Isaiah 53 is a well-known prophecy of the coming Messiah, Jesus, who would take on the punishment that was ours to bear. Isaiah 53:6 puts us all firmly in the place of the younger son.

*"All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—everyone—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all."*

But praise the Lord, all believers have received the overwhelming mercy of our punishment being put on Jesus as well as the rich grace of being adopted as sons and daughters into God's family as heirs in His Kingdom. So, take heart! You have strayed, but He is steadfast in running to us and setting us on His firm foundation.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you sometimes forget how much mercy and grace you have received apart from any worthiness of your own?
- Are there people who you feel are unworthy of that same grace and mercy?
- How can you and your family show grace and mercy to those who have also strayed and need to be given a new heart like the son who left?

Family Activity:

Make a list of people who have strayed and need to run back to God. Pray for them as a family.

JOIN US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PRAYER TIME TODAY AT 6 p.m.

Week 2, Day 2

TAKE HEART WHEN YOU HAVE STRAYED

Luke 15:11-32

This parable taught by Jesus is a very insightful look into how welcoming the father is to children who have strayed. It's often used as encouragement to believers who are struggling with that very issue. But for the next few moments, let's focus on the elder son, the one who stayed with the father while the young son left.

Although the elder son remained with the father, he made a crucial mistake upon the return of his younger brother. He did not take heart and celebrate the wandering brother's return. Instead, he let jealousy take over his emotions to the point of anger. This brother often gets a bad rap due to his poor reaction, but, let's be honest with ourselves, all of us have a tendency toward jealousy. If you were working a job and there was a welcome-back party for a new co-worker who had quit the same job years earlier, your initial reaction probably wouldn't be one of joy. However, the father explains to the elder son that he recognizes his loyalty and that he has the right to everything of the father's, but in this moment, they should celebrate—not the wrongdoing or mistakes of the younger son, but the fact that he has been found and has returned to the father's care!

The elder son thought there was something to lose due to the return of his younger brother. The lesson here is to take heart when prodigals come back to the Father. As a matter of fact, there is nothing to lose at all. The Father doesn't strip anything away from us in order to celebrate others coming home. He invites you to celebrate and rejoice with Him. The church should be excited and eager to receive wanderers upon their return home.

Our attitude matters. It matters how we accept first-time believers as well as those returning to the Father. We are not called to judge people based on previous sin. Let us take heart and celebrate the saving work of Christ.

Discussion questions:

- Do you ever find it difficult to celebrate believers coming back to Christ? Why, or why not?
- As a believer in Christ, are you currently laboring in the father's field? How are you doing so, or how can you start?
- Moving forward, what does it look like for you to have an attitude of celebration with those who follow Christ or those who return to Christ?

Family Activity:

Find someone you know (other than a close relative) and celebrate with them what the Lord has done in their life. Take the focus off yourself and shine the spotlight on the work the Lord has done in a brother or sister in Christ.

Week 2, Day 3

TAKE HEART WHEN YOU HAVE STRAYED

Psalm 103

Today's scripture is a wonderful reminder that we can *Take Heart* even when we have been prone to wander from the Lord. Psalm 103 is a reminder that we can worship God because He offers forgiveness to us. So, take heart and bless the Lord today because...

- **He saved you from the pit (vv. 3-4).** When we repent of sin and trust Christ for salvation we go from death (the pit) to life in Christ. Bless His name, for He grants us salvation!
- **He is fair and gracious to you (vv. 6-10).** God revealed His character to Moses in Exodus 34, and many of the biblical writers echo these words about the nature of our God across the pages of scripture, including these verses. He is just and acts justly. He may discipline those who stray from Him, but He does so out of love and a desire to bring them back to Himself. For He is also gracious, merciful, and slow to anger. He will not discipline His children more than needed. His anger does not persist. Bless His name, for we serve a gracious and merciful God!
- **His love and forgiveness are beyond measure (vv. 11-12).** God's love is described as high as heaven is above earth. This is an unmeasurable distance and basically means eternity tall. He also casts our sin as far as the east is from the west. Again, this is not a measurable distance because if you travel east, you will never touch west and vice versa. His forgiveness extends to infinity. Bless His name, for He lovingly and permanently removes our sin when we repent!
- **His impact is far-reaching (vv. 15-19).** The psalmist reminds us that our lives and impact are as fleeting as a flower in a field, but the Lord's impact is everlasting and unfolds upon generation after generation. Bless His name, for His kingdom will never end!
- **He is worthy of all praise (vv. 20-22).** For all the reasons listed above, He is worthy of praise from angels, from all creation, and from those who receive His love and forgiveness. Bless His name, O my soul!

Discussion Questions:

- Watch the YouTube music video for the song, “Bless the Lord, O My Soul (Psalm 103)” by Sovereign Grace Music. Have kids see if they can identify what verses come directly from Psalm 103.
- Get a globe to show how God casts our sin as far as the east is from the west. (Hint: Turn the globe east to illustrate you can spin forever going that direction and not go west.)
- Which of the five examples from Psalm 103 makes you want to bless the name of the Lord the most? Why?

Family Activity:

Have someone pray using the five ways we can bless the name of the Lord.

Artist: Sebastiano Ricci

Title: The Resurrection

Medium: Oil on canvas

Date: 1715-1716



Take
HEART

Jesus Has Overcome the World



Week 3, Day 1

TAKE HEART, JESUS HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD

Matthew 27:27-44

The whole point of Roman crucifixion was not only to execute an enemy of the state but also to humiliate that enemy by making a public spectacle of his death. Jesus, the Savior of the world, didn't look like any kind of savior in these verses. Soldiers showed their disdain for Him by pretending to crown Him and place royal robes on Him. They mocked Him, calling Him, "The King of the Jews." Just as they ripped away any shred of dignity Jesus had that day, they yanked off the "royal" robes and placed Him back in His own clothes.

Jesus, the "*Word who was with God in the beginning*" (John 1:1-5), didn't even have the strength to carry His cross.

Jesus, the Son of God, the one the disciples thought would rebel against Rome and rid their Holy Land of a foreign power, was hung between two criminals. The point was clear. Though the sign above Jesus read, "The King of the Jews," all the passersby, the scribes, and the elders thought of Jesus just as they thought of the dirty robbers beside Him. They probably thought Jesus deserved to die next to the very type of sinners He was seen eating with on several occasions.

Though it isn't recorded in these verses, one of the thieves finally recognized who Jesus *really* was. The Gospel of Luke recorded the thief's words when he said about Jesus, "*This man has done nothing wrong.*" He said to Jesus, "*Remember me when you come into your kingdom*" (Luke 23:41-42). Maybe this thief saw how Jesus handled death with courage and peace. Maybe he heard Jesus say, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). Perhaps he had heard stories of Jesus preaching repentance and healing bodies and souls across the whole land. We can't know how the thief came to this conclusion, but we know he believed that Jesus really had a kingdom, and he knew he wanted to be wherever Jesus was.

It is a strange contrast, isn't it? The religious leaders thought Jesus' death was their victory, but a convicted criminal knew that Jesus held Kingdom authority! This thief couldn't even know about Jesus' resurrection. He, like the centurion

who watched Jesus die (Mark 15:39), was one of a select few who realized the mocking label, “Jesus, King of the Jews,” was Jesus’ identity. We know, though, unlike the thief, that Jesus did not stay on the cross; He didn’t even stay in the grave. On the third day, He arose and showed Himself to His disciples, ultimately defeating death and the grave and giving to all who place trust in Him the victory over sin and death forever. It is because of His victory that the words to His disciples are repeated to us, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!”* (John 16:33).

Discussion Questions:

- How did Jesus act in His death that showed others that He was the Messiah?
- Put yourselves in the shoes of those watching Jesus die. Who else do you think witnessed Jesus’ death and left there believing, “Yes, He is the Son of God”? Why do you think so?
- In what ways do you need Jesus’ help to overcome the world right now? Pray together as a family for strength to defeat whatever the enemy is throwing at you right now.

Family Activity:

Take a moment to discuss sins in your life of which you would like to repent and give over to Jesus to help you overcome.

JOIN US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PRAYER TIME TODAY AT 6 p.m.

Week 3, Day 2

TAKE HEART, JESUS HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD

John 1:43-51

Has there ever been a time when you were unsure if God saw you or knew you personally? Let's flip it—has there ever been a time when you were sure God saw you but seemed to miss the evil going on in the world?

Read John 1:43-51 aloud as a family. This is a simple conversation between Jesus and a new disciple, Nathaniel, whom He has called to follow Him. As simple as it is, there is an incredible amount of depth and connection to God's covenant or promises to His people. Read John 1:48-50 again aloud.

In these scriptures, Nathaniel was a little unsure about who Jesus was. Jesus, being aware of this, told him of a specific time when He saw Nathaniel sitting under the fig tree. I have heard it said before that Nathaniel was hiding or he was very upset at the time and that is why it is significant that Jesus says that He saw him during that specific moment. While those things can be true, scripture does not confirm them. What we do know about the culture at the time is that to sit under a tree or vine was to signal that you were enjoying the blessing of God. Either way, Jesus saw Nathaniel in a very specific and intimate way, but He does not stop at a personal moment with Nathaniel; He takes it further. In verse 51 Jesus reiterates to Nathaniel that He is the connection point between heaven and earth. He will overcome the world, sin, and death, and Nathaniel will be there to witness it.

We can take this a step further. Please read Daniel 7:9-14 together. When Jesus referred to Himself as the "Son of Man," He was reminding Nathaniel of these scriptures in Daniel that refer to Jesus' coming. He was telling Nathaniel that he can take heart and follow Him, because He not only saw him individually, but He came for the whole world, and He has overcome the evil in the world, just as God said He would.

Discussion Questions:

- Has there been a time when you were unsure that Jesus would take care of you? What happened? Did you see Him come through?
- Why do you think Nathaniel was unsure of who Jesus was before Jesus reassured him that He saw him?
- How have you seen Jesus overcome a tough situation in someone else's life?

Family Activity:

Over the next couple of days, make it a goal to point out four different ways you see that Jesus has overcome in your life or in the life of someone you know.

Week 3, Day 3

TAKE HEART, JESUS HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD

Psalm 118

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” (v. 24)

Try this exercise: In five seconds, name five things that you are thankful for. Ready? Three... two... one... go!

How did it go? It’s okay if you had trouble coming up with five things. In this verse God is telling us to be thankful. Why? Because being thankful helps us to see God at work in our lives every day. Every day is a gift from God, and every day, even if it’s a tough one, is full, rich and precious, with new opportunities and blessings. Of course, it’s easier for us to recognize God’s hand and accept that it is acting in our lives when everything is going well, when family and friends are in good shape, and when we are not facing hardship.

But what about when life is hard? The writer of Psalm 118 is recounting a season in his life that was filled with hardship and challenges. On the surface the circumstances described do not provide him with reasons to be thankful. Yet right in the midst of his struggles he gives thanks and praise to God. The writer isn’t thankful because life is hard but because God is right there in the middle of it. The truth is that most of us miss God in our hardship because we are not seeing things from the right perspective.

The reality is that true joy never depends on our circumstances. Though we may know this in our head, it can be hard to live out every day. In difficult times we must resist the urge of seeing only how our current circumstances are affecting our comfort and happiness and instead seek to understand what God might be doing in the middle of our difficulties. Learning to choose joy in hard times takes effort and action on our part; it requires our eyes to be on Him and His purposes. When we live life with God’s perspective, we can be assured that in His grace, He has made every day for a purpose and our sanctification, and for that gift we can *“rejoice and be glad in it.”* No matter what we face, we can still believe in God’s goodness and love, for that’s what carries us through the most difficult of seasons.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some blessings you can pause and thank God for?
- Is there any area in your life currently or in the past where you held back thankfulness because life was difficult?
- Like the psalmist, how does clinging to God's promises during hard times change your outlook?

Family Activity:

Make a list of the ways God has blessed you (big or small), and then praise God and thank Him for the blessings.

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

Title: Christ on the Cross

Media: Chalk, pen, ink

Date: 1665



Take

HEART

When the End Draws Near

Week 4, Day 1

TAKE HEART WHEN THE END DRAWS NEAR

Matthew 28:16-20

This passage starts in such a real place, one I think many of us can relate to. Matthew tells us that the disciples went where Jesus had previously told them to meet Him. When they got there, they worshipped Him, *“but some doubted.”* First, it’s important to note that this scripture is clear that the disciples worshipped Jesus as God. They knew Him as God incarnate and not just a good teacher. However, that does not mean they had a perfect understanding of how this all worked. They still had some doubt.

Before we go too far down the road of allowing doubt in our spiritual walk, it’s important to understand what that word in the text means. There is a commonly used Greek word for doubt as we normally understand it—being uncertain or questioning validity. But the word in this passage is a different verb, one used only one other time in the New Testament. That other use refers to Peter’s doubt when he stepped out of the boat onto the water to meet Jesus there. In that instance, Peter believed Jesus could allow him to walk on the water because He was sovereign over the storm as the Son of God. However, though Peter’s heart knew the truth, his mind hesitated and needed time to catch up with the greater truth of his heart. We see that same word, perhaps better understood as “hesitation,” in Matthew 28.

These 11 remaining disciples knew that Jesus was God and ultimately worthy of their worship and of their life’s devotion. At the same time, they hesitated because their mind needed time to catch up with the reality of what the life of a disciple of Jesus could and ultimately would mean for them—a life of counting Jesus worthy even if it meant broken relationships, exile, or even death because of the assurance that Jesus is better. When Peter hesitated on the water, his body followed and began to sink in the turmoil around him. Jesus’ answer then was the same as his answer in John 16:33, *“Take heart.”* When you know what God has called you to do, but your mind hesitates in counting the potential costs, take heart! He has overcome the world. He has overcome the turmoil around you. He has overcome any rejection you face because of His name. He has overcome death itself! So, take heart!

Discussion Questions:

- Are there areas of your life where your heart knows what is true of Jesus, but your mind hesitates to fully invest in what He has called you to?
- What do you need to do to overcome your hesitation and fully invest in His calling in your life?

Family Activity:

Choose one thing from the list of things you are hesitant to do and then do it!

Week 4, Day 2

TAKE HEART WHEN THE END DRAWS NEAR

Revelation 7:9 – *“After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands.”*

Learning to live the way Jesus wants means learning to live with forever in mind. When Jesus’ mission comes to completion, life on earth will be as it is in heaven, which begs the question: What is heaven like?

In Revelation 7 the Bible makes three clear statements about what heaven is like.

First, countless people from all over the world live together (Revelation 7:9). What an amazing image! We will stand in a crowd of people from nations we’ve never even heard of before. It will be uncommon unity in its most perfect form of humility, unity, and love.

Second, everyone is united in worship (Revelation 7:10). Though we will all differ when it comes to where we lived or how we were raised, we will be united in how we worship God as we proclaim, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

Finally, in heaven we will share the same passion (Revelation 7:9-12). In heaven, we will not worry about who should have apologized or whether we were successful. Instead, we will be consumed with our worship for the Lord, and in that worship, we will be united people whose goal is to give God all the honor and glory and praise.

Revelation reminds us that having a kingdom mentality has a lot less to do with having answers and a lot more to do with having the right attitude. When we’re living with forever in mind, our lives are marked by Jesus’ character: humility, unity, and love. In addition, we recognize suffering on earth is temporary, and in eternity there will be no pain, hunger, or thirst. When we live with eternity in mind, a bad day or even a devastating day can be tempered with the thought that 10,000 years from now, it will be just a memory. Eternity will be spent in the presence of God, and that is an encouraging thought.

Discussion Questions:

- How much of your time, energy, and effort goes to things that won't last forever?
- What's one thing you can do today to adopt a kingdom mentality and live as if you were preparing yourself for eternity?

Family Activity:

Write a letter of encouragement to one of our missionary families and turn it in to Missions Pastor Ross Wellman.

Week 4, Day 3

TAKE HEART WHEN THE END DRAWS NEAR

Psalm 130

In life, we often find ourselves waiting—waiting for answers, waiting for healing, waiting for peace. The psalmist in Psalm 130 speaks to us about these moments of waiting. “*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord*” (v. 1). The depths refer not only to physical darkness but to spiritual despair and emotional exhaustion. We’ve all been there, caught in the struggles of life, feeling overwhelmed, and searching for hope.

I remember lying in bed one night as a young boy feeling terrified. I grew up in west Texas, and you wouldn’t believe the high winds that can blow through! I had already witnessed our antenna blowing over and knocking down our barn, our trampoline blowing across the yard, and wind blowing so hard it ripped tree limbs from trees! This night the wind was howling like crazy, so much so that it was literally whistling through my window like a train running through the house! I remember wishing so much that my parents would come to my room or that morning would come. I must have fallen asleep eventually, but it seemed like one of the longest nights of my life.

In that moment of terror, I was like a watchman waiting for the morning (v. 6). I just wanted the night to end!

Just as I was desperate to escape the danger I thought I was in, the author of this psalm was desperate to receive the Lord’s mercy. “*Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!*” (v. 2). As I think of times I have been in extreme distress and desperation, I can almost hear the cries of the author. He knew he would be struck dead immediately if he faced the Lord based on his merit alone. So he wrote in verse 5 that he hoped in God’s word. He hoped and waited for an innocent verdict like a defendant waits on the judge’s final decree.

At the end of Psalm 130, we can feel the author’s sigh of relief as he realized the “*steadfast love and plentiful redemption*” of the Lord (v. 7). We can see the author’s tense body relax as his clinched fists open to the Lord’s provision of redemption. The end of the author’s waiting is over. The verdict has been given, and no one can ever hold his sins, his fears, and his worries against him again.

Perhaps you are in a place of waiting today. Are you crying for the Lord's help? Are you praying for the morning to come? The end of your waiting is near. The God of the psalms is the same God we worship today. He is full of "*steadfast love and plentiful redemption*" that is available to you if you ask. Confess with the author of this psalm that God is the Redeemer of souls, that He is the One who forgives. Ask the Redeemer to come into your life, to answer as you cry for help, and He will come. Take heart; the end is near!

Family Discussion

- If you have never accepted the redemption that has been paid for your sins through the blood of Jesus, take this opportunity to ask Jesus to save you by confessing in your heart that He died for you, and that God raised Him from death, defeating sin and eternal death. If you choose to, pray this prayer in your heart or aloud, "Lord Jesus, I believe You are who the Bible says You are. I believe You died to pay for my sins so that I can be forgiven and live eternally with You. I confess that I am a sinner and cannot please You without faith in Your death and resurrection. I believe that You rose from death to save me. I will follow You all the days of my life."

If you prayed this prayer, please talk to a follower of Jesus to tell them about your decision. If you are willing, contact the church office and let a pastor know about your decision so we can talk about next steps. Rejoice in the salvation that has come to your household!

- Pray for the strength of God to keep hoping firmly in Him through every season of life.



HARMONY HILL
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