

# FULL OF GRACE CAFE

Inspired by Scripture, the "Full of Grace Cafe" (FOGC) is a ministry organized by Our Lady of Holy Rosary Parishioners who are trying to imitate Jesus Christ by entering into intentional relationships with people who are in need and suffering.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." *Matthew 25:35*

All services are **FREE**. (Donations Accepted)

**Sunday:** Coffee and Donuts after 7 AM Mass

**Tuesday:** Hot meal served from 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Haircuts from 2:00 - 5:00 PM (Times are subject to change)

Human Resources 6:30 - 8:00 PM (Resume)

**Wednesday:** Women and the Word (Women's Bible Study /Breakfast) 6:30 - 7:30 AM

**Third Wednesday of each month:**

Widows of Grace (Widows Ministry) 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM Lunch Served

**Thursday:** Hot meal served from 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

**Friday:** Coffee and Christ (Men's Bible Study) 6:00 - 7:00 AM

Food Pantry and Diaper Distribution: Call 225-647-1802 for appointment

Also offering: Tutoring, Legal and Financial Advisory Counseling, Fertility Care, Resumes,

Small Group Meeting Area, Bible Study

Coffee Daily - Cafe is open daily after morning service

**Days and Times are subject to change. Please follow us on Facebook for all updates.**

**Income Tax Preparation provided by VITA : Contact**

**BeBe Landry @ 225-937-0877 or Jennifer Ecker @ 225-939-4496**

## Our Lady of Holy Rosary Catholic Church

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Sunday: 7:00, 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

Weekday Masses:

Tuesday: 5:45 P.M.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 8:00 A.M.

Reconciliation:

Saturday: 3:00 4:00 P.M.

Tuesday 5:00 5:45 P.M.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 7:30 8:00 A.M.

44450 Highway 429, St Amant LA 70774

Café: 225-647-7116 Food Pantry/Diaper Bank 225-647-1802

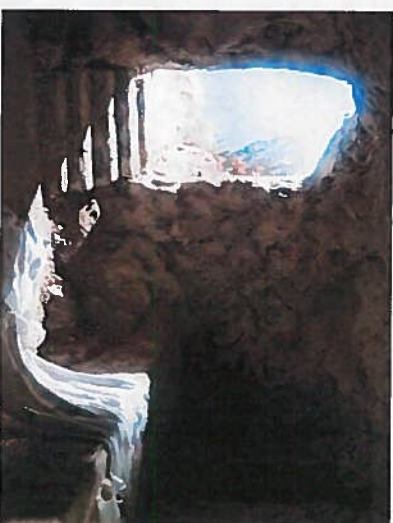
Main Office: 225-647-5321

APRIL

WALKING WITH GOD  
OUR LADY OF THE HOLY  
ROSARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A devotional designed to help you spend time daily with God.

Seeking His Peace, Wisdom, and Love through His Word.



Encounter the gifts He promises for those who love Him.

*It was through my darkest moments that God used what the enemy intended for evil to breathe new life into me. With this new life came an awareness of the importance of a daily relationship with God. Life is not always easy, but rest assured the peace, joy and love He promises is always available. Sometimes, just a prayer away.*

*God is love, and we can never know true love apart from Him. This devotional is designed to bring you through daily time with God. I encourage you to make this time intentional. God desires to pour His love into you. All you have to do is be intentional with Him. It is that easy.*

*A Lay Disciple of Christ*

**A quiet time with the Word is essential.**

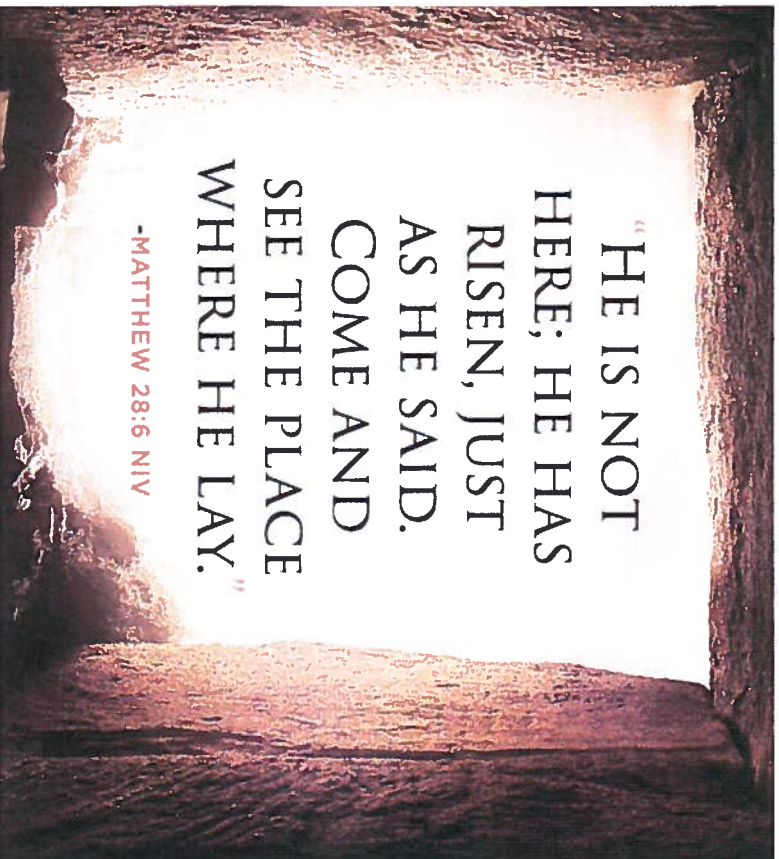
**"I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."**

## God Said It First.

### The Bible and the Water Cycle

The Scriptures inform us, “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the river come, there they return again.” (Ecclesiastes 1:7). This statement alone may not seem profound. But, when considered with other biblical passages, it becomes all the more remarkable. For example, the Mississippi River dumps approximately 518 billion gallons of water every 24 hours into the Gulf of Mexico. Where does all that water go? And that’s just one of thousands of rivers. The answer lies in the hydrologic cycle, so well brought out in the Bible. Ecclesiastes 11:3 states that “if the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” He calls for the waters of the sea, and puts them out upon the face of the earth.” The idea of the complete water cycle was not fully understood by science until the seventieth century. However, more than two thousand years prior to the discoveries of Pierre Perrault, Edme Mariotte, Edmund Halley, and other, the Scriptures clearly spoke of the water cycle.

*(Scientific Facts in the Bible by: Ray Comfort)*



“ HE IS NOT  
HERE; HE HAS  
RISEN, JUST  
AS HE SAID.  
COME AND  
SEE THE PLACE  
WHERE HE LAY.”

-MATTHEW 28:6 NIV

April 29

**1 Chronicles 5: 1**

**Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel for Reuben was the eldest, but because he polluted his father's couch (with Bilahah his father's concubine) his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, son of Israel; so the genealogy is not to be reckoned according to the birthright."**

First Chronicles is full of encouragement to stay faithful to God. As you read through 1 Chronicles you will find that faithfulness has its rewards, and unfaithfulness leads to trouble. Here we read that Reuben's birthright was given to the son of Joseph. Why? Because Reuben let the lust of the flesh get to him with Bilahah. A birthright was an enormous and extremely valuable blessing to a man during Biblical times. Whoever had the birthright, inherited the best from his father. Reuben lost a great inheritance because he could not control his lustful emotions. Reuben did not take into consideration what was at stake when he allowed the enemy to enter into with lustful thoughts. I encourage you today to ask God to help you receive what is truly valuable and to never allow the lust of the flesh or your emotions to cause you to miss out on a blessing that God has for you. Take time today to pray that God will shield you from any and all lusting of the flesh, therefore protecting all your due blessings.

April 30

**Esther 9: 25**

**"Because Haman son of Hammedath, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to crush and consume them."**

Haman allowed the enemy to control his thoughts and ways. He allowed greed, hatred and jealousy to control him. Haman had so much hate in his heart that he was willing to put innocent people to death. Haman wanted not just Mordicai murdered, but he wanted all the Jews put to death. But Esther, a Jewish woman was a woman of faith. Because of her faith, God not only turned the table on Haman so that he had to give Mordicai the honor he had planned for himself (see Ester 6:11-12), God also turned back on Haman the evil plan he had devised. Esther trusted in God to keep her and her people safe. Even when everything in the flesh said differently, God blessed her for her faithfulness. This story reminds us that when we trust God, no matter what the situation seems to be, the evil plans that are against us will come to ruin and God will give us the ultimate victory. Today pray that your faith be as Esther's was and that no matter what we may see in the flesh, we can always have faith that God is there even when we think there is no hope.

April 1

**Matthew 27:26**

**"And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."**

The scourge itself consisted of a short, wooden handle with several 18-24-inch-long straps of leather protruding from it. The ends of these pieces of leather were equipped with sharp, rugged pieces of metal, wire, glass and jagged fragments of bone. This was considered to be one of the most feared and deadly weapons of the Roman world. Romans were professionals at scourging; they took special delight in the fact that they were the best. One writer notes that the mere anticipation of the first blow caused the victim's body to grow rigid. The first blow would tear open a body. Most often, two tortures were utilized. As these dual whips struck the victim, the leather straps extended over his entire back cutting the victim and shredding his muscles and sinew. According to Jewish law in Deuteronomy 25:3, the Jews were permitted to give forty lashes to a victim, but because the fortieth lash usually proved fatal, the number was reduced to thirty-nine. As for the Romans, they had no limit to how many lashes they could give. Jesus' broken body was now marred and nearly beyond recognition. Jesus went through this agony for you! He endured this for your physical, mental and spiritual healings. He wants you well. Pray today that you are determined to walk in total healing because of the price he paid for you.

April 2

**Matthew 27:27-29**

**"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers, and they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had planted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail King of the Jews!'"**

Jesus was then stripped naked in front of 300-600 soldiers. Israelites honored the human body, made in the image of God. Publicly parading someone's naked body was a great offense. Once Jesus stood naked, they put on him a scarlet robe. This robe was most likely an old robe taken from the closet of Pilate. Once they robbed Him, the soldiers planted the crown of thorns upon His head. These thorns would have been extremely painful and caused blood to flow profusely from His brow. After placing the crown upon His head, a reed was placed in His hand. With a discarded robe, a crown of thorns placed painfully upon His head and a reed from Pilates pond or fountain they bowed before Him, again mocking Him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." Wow, little did they know that this man, Jesus, they would one day stand and give an account for all of their actions, and then bow before Him. Everyone will bow low before Jesus on that day. From what place will you bow to Him? Heaven or hell? Pray today that you will desire to live the life God has put you on this earth for, and that you will have the boldness to bring others to Him. Pray that God will empower you to go to others with a boldness telling them the Good News before it is too late.

April 3

**Matthew 27:32-33**

**"But as they were going out, they came upon a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they compelled to take up his cross, and they arrived at the place which is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary."**

According to Roman law, once a criminal was convicted, he was to carry his own cross, weighing approximately 100 pounds, to the place of execution. This was difficult for any human, but especially for someone who was beaten as severely as Jesus. Also, signs were hung on the neck of men being crucified so that the people passing would see what crime they were being charged with. On the cross of Jesus, a sign was placed that read "King of the Jews" written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Although the Bible does not state the reason why, we may assume that the Roman soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus because of the battered state He was in. Today we may not be able to say with certainty where Jesus was crucified, but in our hearts and minds, we should meditate on the scriptures that speak to His crucifixion. Sometimes life moves so fast that we tend to forget the enormous price that was paid for our redemption. Salvation may have been given to us as a free gift, but it was purchased with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Today, take time to meditate on the true sacrifice that Jesus underwent for each of us. Thank Him from the depths of your heart for what no other could do for us. Laying down His life so that we may be free.

April 4

Matthew 27:34-35

**“They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, He would not drink. And they crucified Him.”**

According to Jewish law, if a man was to be executed, he could request a narcotic, mingled together with wine. The word gall, refers to a painkiller. Jesus was offered this anesthetic twice. Once before His crucifixion and once while He was dying on the Cross. In both instances, Jesus refused to drink it, for He knew that He was to fully consume this cup the Father had given Him to drink. Crucifixion was indisputably one of the cruelest and most barbaric forms of punishment in the ancient world. Once Jesus reached the place where the crucifixion was to occur, they laid Him on the crossbeam with His arms outstretched. The soldiers then drove five-inch iron nails through each of His wrist and feet. He was then lifted and dropped into place in an upright position. Jesus experienced all of this torture. When He dropped down with the full weight of His body on the nails that were driven through His hands, it sent excruciating pain up His arms, registering horrific pain in His brain. Added to the torture was the agony caused by the constant grating of Jesus recently scourged back against the upright post every time He pushed up to breathe and then collapsed back to a hanging position. When the Roman soldiers came to determine whether Jesus was alive or dead, they thrust a spear into Jesus' side. The Bible tells us that water and blood mixed together came pouring forth from the wound, evidence that Jesus' heart and lungs had shut down and were filled with fluid. Soldiers near the foot of the cross were casting lots for His garments. At the foot of the cross here they are playing games with no regard to who Jesus actually was. We should always regard the Cross with great reverence, but especially this time of the year. Take time today to let the reality of the Cross sink deep into your heart and soul. Take time today to remember what He actually did for each of us.

April 5

Matthew 27: 50-51

**“Then Jesus, crying out again with a loud voice, gave up his life. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn into two parts, from top to bottom. And the earth was shaken, and rocks were split apart.”**

The Bible informs us that the darkening of the sky started at the sixth hour (noontime). At the exact moment Jesus was breathing His last breath on the Cross, Caiaphas the high priest was standing at his station in the inner court of the temple, preparing to offer blood of the spotless Passover lamb. At this very instant, Jesus exclaimed, “It is finished.” There were two veils inside the temple. One at the entrance to the Holy Place and a second entrance at the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest was allowed to pass through the second veil once a year. The second veil was sixty feet high, thirty feet wide, and an entire handbreadth (2 ½ to 4 inches) in thickness! I once read that it took 300 men to move or manipulate it. It would have been humanly impossible to tear this veil, and yet this veil ripped in half upon the death of Jesus. Imagine how shocked Caiaphas must have been when he heard the ripping of this veil as he watched it hit the floor. What was going through His mind when he saw the Holy of Holies was open and that God's Presence was no longer there? After Jesus' death it was no longer necessary for the high priest to continually make sacrifice year after year, for Jesus' blood had now settled the issue forever. Because of what Jesus did, we can now come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in times of need (Hebrews 4:16). Since this is God's promise to us, let us drop everything we are doing and come boldly before the throne of grace for a few minutes today!

April 27

Ezra 3:11

**“They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, ‘For He is good, for His mercy and loving-kindness endure forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid!’”**

The book of Ezra recounts a period of about eighty years. It tells the story of the Israelites and how they overcame opposition and resistance in order to rebuild God's temple and restore God's glory. Even through their biggest opposition and fear, the Israelites, continued to worship by offering burnt offerings, which was required in the old covenant. God stayed their priority as they stayed focused on God through fear and opposition. The Israelites never lost sight of God's goodness, and the end result was an emotional celebrations. The next passage tells of the joyful weeping the older men showed at the site of the rebuilding of the once “Solomon's temple.” It goes on to say there was so much rejoicing that they could not distinguish the cries from the shouts of joy. We all show emotions in many different forms. Emotions are a normal part of our DNA. But emotions can become a problem if we act solely on them. Remember that when change is happening in the midst of your personal, family, church or work life, don't take this time to make serious decisions during an emotional times. I once heard a saying that makes quite a bit of sense; “Let emotions subside and then decide.” Staying focused on God no matter what situation you find yourself is always the better choice.

April 28

Psalms 3:1

**“Lord, How they are increased who trouble me? Many are they who rise up against me. Many are saying of me, There is no help for him in God. But you, O Lord, are my shield for me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.”**

Psalms is one of my favorite books of the Bible. It is a collection of 150 songs and poems written over a period of many years. Here we read the psalmist saying that despite his distressing situation, he is not despairing or becoming depressed because his confidence is in the Lord. All of us at one time or another will experience troubles, and some will lead to depression and stress if we allow it to. When we encounter things in our lives that lead to disappointment and discouragement we can choose to stay in that mess or we can choose to do like the psalmist did here and “lift up our heads.” We can decide to look at the possibilities and not the problems around us. We can choose to trust Him to lead us into an even better situation, because I can assure you, He has a better one for you. In times as this instead of saying “Oh, what's the use” and just give up, decide to move in another direction. Take this time to take inventory of the blessing instead of the problem. Look to His Word for answers. He tells us to look at Him because He has plans to bless and increase us abundantly. Today I encourage you to make a choice to seek Him in times of trouble. Allow Him to direct your steps and show you the joy even in this trying time.

**"Then, after these things, Joseph from Arimathea, (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews) petitioned Pilate so that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave permission Therefore, he went and took first by night) bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about seventy pounds. Therefore, they took the body of Jesus, and they bound it with linen cloths and the aromatic spice, just as it is the manner of the Jews to bury."**

Joseph of Arimathea had a longing for the Kingdom of God. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin and a secret follower of Jesus. Joseph "boldly" went to Pilate and requested the body of Jesus. Going to Pilate to request that he might remove the body of Jesus before the Sabbath began was an act of bravery on Joseph's part. As a member of the Sanhedrin he was well aware of the exultation the supreme council members felt over Jesus's death. Upon the Sanhedrin finding out that Joseph was the one to request Jesus' body would put him in considerable jeopardy. Nicodemus was a "Pharisee;" Pharisees were the most respected and esteemed religious leaders in Israel. Nicodemus called Jesus "Rabbi;" Rabbi was a name used only in reference to the great teachers of the Law. By Nicodemus calling Jesus "Rabbi," tells us that he had seen the miracles of Jesus with his own eyes and that he and Joseph were opened minded enough to receive from people outside of their circle. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 to 100 pounds in weight. This tells us that Nicodemus was a rich man. These sweet-smelling fragrances were very costly, therefore making Nicodemus a wealthy man to be able to afford these things. This is an amazing story of two people that truly loved Jesus. Although Joseph and Nicodemus lived in circumstances that made it difficult for them to publicly follow Jesus, they chose to follow Him to their fullest capability. Do you treat Jesus with the same honor as these two? If people were to look at your finances, would they be able to see that Jesus is the highest priority in your life? According to Jesus, what you do with your finances really does tell the truth about what you love the most. What would He say your finances reveals about how much you love Him? Pray today that God reveals to you your priority when it comes to finances and that He is put on top of that priority list.

April 7

John 19: 41-42

**"At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid."**

This garden was located in an orchard-like place, near where Jesus was crucified. This tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, most likely the tomb he was going to be buried in. Only royalty or wealthy individuals could afford to have their tombs carved out of a wall of stone or in the side of a mountain. Isaiah 53:9 had prophesied that the Messiah would be buried in a rich man's tomb. Luke 23:55 tells us that after Jesus' body was laid in the tomb, "the women who had come with Him from Galilee, by following, saw the tomb and the manner in which his body was placed." Mark 15:47 identifies these women as Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus. Fearing the words of Jesus, "After three days, I will rise again," the chief priest and the Pharisees went to Pilate and requested the tomb be sealed to prevent this from happening. Along with the stone rolled into place at the entrance, Pilates' seal was placed upon the tomb. Pilate also placed armed soldiers to guard the entrance to Jesus' tomb. They felt sure Jesus would remain in place. Regardless of these efforts to secure the site and keep Jesus inside the grave, it was impossible for death to hold Him. Today the tomb in Jerusalem is empty because Jesus arose on the third day! Now he is seated on His throne at the right hand of the Father on High, where He lives to make intercession for you and for me (Hebrew 7:25). Jesus was raised from the dead for you, and now we can come boldly to Him for help and assistance in our times of need. There are no mountains He cannot move, so today I encourage you to go to Him today to make your request known.

April 25

**Galatians 1:10**  
**Now am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a bondservant of Christ (the Messiah)."**

Paul was no longer in bondage and had a desire of pleasing humans. His purpose in life now was to please God. He was a bondservant to God alone. Bondservants are people bound to service without wages, a slave. Paul was happy knowing He served no man, only God. He found his peace in God. He no longer cared for being popular with people. Paul no longer needed anyone's approval. Just God. It is impossible to always please people and to please God at the same time. Ask yourself, who and/or what are you a bondservant to? Is it God, or is it someone or something else. I was once a bondservant to myself. My only desire was to please me! Don't get me wrong, I still did things to please others, but my ultimate goal in life was to please myself in the end. If I was on a mission to please someone else, there had to be something in it for me. But somehow it always left me feeling empty and longing for more. After finding God, I found out what it was to be His bondservant. You see the thing I found out was, through pleasing Him there was such a joy and peace within myself that I had never felt before God. By me working on pleasing Him, I finally found that peace that I had been searching for all along. So today I ask you, who are you being a bondservant to? Is it yourself, others, things or is it God? We cannot always be pleasers of people and of God at the same time, so choose today who you will please. Will it be a lasting pleasure that God gives you, or the kind that leaves you searching for more?

April 26

**Genesis 4:10**  
**"And the Lord said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.'"**

Here we see God speaking with Cain about his brother Able. Most of us are familiar with this story. Cain became so jealous of his brother that it drove him to killing him. Hatred has existed since the beginning of humanity, and it seems it has never stopped since then. Hating people is hard work and it kills everything in life. We may not agree with what others say and do, but we do not have the right to hate. Hate can come from such crazy places. I have known people to hate someone just because the color of their skin, or their backgrounds. I admit, I too have fallen victim to this crazy thinking. I remember right after the 9/11 attack the anger I had for those people. Because of what had happened I bottled my feelings up and everyone who fit the description of the people who did this unspeakable act fell into the same category. I wish I could tell you that there was some sort of catastrophic event to make me see things differently, but there wasn't. The only thing that made me become aware of my feelings was His Word. He tells us that we should love one another (see John 13:24). He even tells us in 1 John 4:20, that if we say we love God, and hate his brother, we are liars; for if we do not love our brother whom we have seen we cannot love God whom we have not seen. So today ask yourself, do you have hate in your heart? If so, ask God to help you release that hate, and learn to hate the sin and not the sinner. After all we are all sinners, and we all fall short of the glory of God. Choose freedom today by loving in place of hate. Put it under your feet and give it to God. Allow Him to alter your heart to His desires and not of your own.

April 8

Matthew 28:1-2

**“Now on the morning of the Sabbath, when it began to grow light on the first Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulcher. And behold, a great earthquake occurred. For an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and as he approached, he rolled back the stone and sat down on it.”**

Just as the creation shook at the moment Christ died on the cross, now the earth exploded with exultation at the resurrection of Jesus! When the women arrived at the tomb, the stone was rolled away. After two angels proclaimed the joyful news of Jesus' resurrection, they instructed the women to go and tell the disciples. Scripture says they did so quickly. Luke 24:7 says, “And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” Have you ever been in a situation where you were so excited to share something God had done in your life that you couldn't wait to share it with someone, only to be disappointed in their reaction when you told of your good news? This is frustration and we have all felt it at one time or another. We should never forget that although these women seemed to be speaking nonsense and babble, their words were all that was needed to spark an interest in those men, that made them get up and go find out about Jesus themselves. I encourage you today to get up, open your mouth and start telling the Good News. You never know the spark it may start in someone and the lives it may change.

April 9

John 20:3-4

**“Therefore, Peter departed with the other disciple, and they went to the tomb. Now they both ran together, but the other disciple ran more quickly, ahead of Peter, and so he arrived at the tomb first.”**

The “other disciple” they speak of in this passage is John. I find it interesting that when Peter and John race to the tomb, the other disciples apparently just sat and watched them leave. I can imagine their conversation, discussing all of what they just had heard the women explaining. Because Peter and John ran to the garden, they experienced something the other apostles missed by staying home. It is simply a fact that if you want to experience Jesus Christ and His power, you must get up from where you are and start moving in His direction. I encourage you today, no matter where you are, get up and turn toward Him. He is patiently awaiting your arrival.

April 10

John 20:11-13

**“But Mary was standing outside the tomb, weeping. Then, while she was weeping, she bowed down and gazed into the tomb. And she saw two Angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been placed, one at the head, and one at the feet.”**

Stricken with sorrow, Mary withdrew from the tomb just in time to see a man standing nearby. Mary did not recognize Him. Scripture says, Jesus spoke to her saying, “Woman, why are you weeping?” After hearing His voice, although Jesus' appearance was different, she recognized His voice. Mary immediately reached out to Him. Jesus responds by saying, “Do not touch Me. For I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.’” Jesus is saying that everything had changed, all because of the Cross. Now a new relationship with God was available to the apostles and to all who would call upon the name of Jesus. Mary recognized Jesus' voice because she had a relationship with Him. You too can recognize the voice of Jesus, but to do that you have to have a personal relationship with Him. I encourage you today if you don't already, spend daily time with God so that you will come to know His voice just as Mary did.

April 22

Matthew 6:19-21

**“Do not gather and heap up and store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust and worm consume and destroy, and where thieves break through and steal. But gather and heap up and store for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rust nor worm consume and destroy, and where thieves do not break through and steal.”**

Most of us will say that we love God, and we truly want to please Him. We want to follow His commandments and live a spiritual life that reflects Jesus in all we do. But for some reason many of us seem to skip right over the part that tells us we need to give God our treasures as well. As a person that has spent many of my Sunday's in church, even as a young child, I have heard different perspectives on giving to the church. To be honest, for the Catholic Church I have heard very few sermons on this topic, yet God's Word teaches us that we should be cheerful givers (2 Corinthians 9:7). Malachi 3:8 says, “Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.” God is telling us very clearly how we are to treat Him when it comes to our finances. We are not to rob Him! This is not a suggestions from God, this is His Word. I encourage you to take time to look at your finances. His Word says, “Where our treasures are so are our hearts.” Where is your heart? Ask yourself, is God a priority in your life? Do you faithfully tithe and give to special offerings? Make a decision today to make God your highest priority in all aspects of your life, but especially your finances. Ask God to help you become a faithful giver. He will provide with all your needs.

April 23

John 20: 15-16

**“Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you crying? For Whom are you looking? Supposing that it was the gardener, she replied, Sir, if you carried Him away from here, tell me where you have put Him and I will take Him away. Jesus said to her, Mary! Turning around she said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ Which means Teacher or Master.”**

Here we read of Mary as she became aware that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. Mary had heard the stories from Jesus' own mouth of Him having to suffer, die and be resurrected on the third day, yet here it was the third day and she was surprised and unaware of what was happening. He stood right in front of her and she didn't even recognize Him. Mary was focused on her past and what she had lost, and was missing what was right there in front of her. How many times do we read His Word, and He speaks to us, yet we are surprised when what He has already spoken comes to pass? I know from personal experience in my own life, I have had times that God was all around a circumstance and it wasn't until it was over that I came to realize it. Most of the time it is because things were not happening the way I thought it should. Just like Mary, no matter what Jesus said none of them could imagine it happening the way it did. As humans, we miss so much that God has for us because we are unaware of God's presence. Not because He is not there but because we had other plans, or we couldn't see God's grand plan in all of it. Take time today to pray that you will not only hear Him when He speaks to you, but you will recognize His voice and obediently follow what He tells you to do.

April 24

Hebrews 10:24

**“And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up to love and helpful deeds and noble activities.”**

Many times we become self-centered and forget to think of other people's needs. We become fixated on our own problems and forget that we are not the only person in the world who is struggling. In times as this, we need to take our eyes off of ourselves and look around to see who may need a special word of encouragement. Pray today that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes and help you recognize those around you in need. Ask God to use you to encourage them. Decide today to treat others with the greatest of love, care and attention by showing them the love of Jesus Christ. As God to reveal to you those whom you may honored to be a part of His grand plan.

April 20

**1 Corinthians 13:7**  
"Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fearless under all circumstance, and it endures everything."

We has human beings have great imaginations. And sometimes we use that imagination for the wrong purpose. Believing the best about people is very helpful in the process of forgiving others who hurt us. When we are hurt we tend to be suspicious of others and use those imaginations to think of all the things that most likely never took place at all. It is very easy to believe that someone hurt you on purpose when many of times they are not even aware that they hurt you at all. Before I developed a relationship with God, I have a very negative attitude. It became easy for me to focus on all the things that I thought was wrong with people and many of it was just in my mind. It was rare that I would look at the good things in their lives. Over time, as I developed a relationship with God, I became to know the power of a positive attitude. The power of believing the best of people. There are still times when people hurt my feelings than I remember that I can choose to "just get over it." We can choose to believe the best or believe the worst, so why not believe the best? Pray today that God will help you meditate on the best of others until positive thoughts come naturally.

April 21

**Mark 11:26**  
"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your failings and shortcomings."

Yesterday we read how we sometimes focus on others shortcomings. Today we read that we all fail Him and we all have shortcomings. It is easy for us to see the faults in others, but when it's ours we sometimes have difficulties to see them. Here we also read that forgiveness is pretty important if we want to spend eternity with Jesus. Mark 11:22-26 teaches us that forgiveness hinders our faith from working. So what this tells me is that forgiving enables our faith to work. God's Word says that He cannot forgive us if we do not forgive others (see Matthew 6:14-15). Think about that! His Word tells us that if we do not forgive others, we are not forgiven. He didn't say, forgive them if they deserve it. His Word says we are to forgive. Ephesians 4:26:27 tells us not to let the sun go down on our anger or give the devil any such foothold or opportunity. Through my life I have given the enemy many of opportunities to have a foothold on me. I still struggle with this one from time to time, but it has become much easier once I realized the freedom I have in forgiving. It brings a peace and joy that only can come from God. There is no end to the benefits in your life if you will trust God's Word that tells you to forgive. In fact, His Word says, not seven times, but seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:22). Chose today to gain the peace that God has waiting for you. Today decide to forgive, not because they deserve it, but because you do.

April 11

**John 20:22**  
"When he had said this, he breathed on them. And he said to them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Jesus appeared to the disciples at various times and places. It was simply, physically impossible for Him to be at so many different places in one day. . . He was even able to pass through a locked door, (John 20:26). In addition to the appearances recorded in the Gospels, He was seen by many more for a period of 40 days following His death. This same Jesus is also available to you today. All you have to do is ask the Holy Spirit to show you Jesus, and He will be faithful to make Him real to you. I encourage you today to invite the Holy Spirit into your daily lives. He is just a prayer away, always.

April 12

**John 14:27**  
"Peace I leave with you; My peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

Jesus shared this statement after His death and resurrection, before His ascension into heaven. There were many things He could have chosen to share with His disciples, but He chose to speak about peace. That should tell us how important peace is in our lives. So many people, even Christians, lack consistent peace. Through prolonged disobedience, lack of trust, bad habits, and constant worry you can lose your peace. There are so many reasons why people lose their peace, but in order to enjoy peace we must learn to trust in God. We must trust that God is totally and completely just, which means He makes wrong things right if we continue to lean on Him. God is perfect, He never does anything wrong. He is worthy of your trust. If you are asking God for something and don't see evidence of it coming to pass, I encourage you to not let it steal your peace. Trust God in all things and the peace He spoke of in John 14:27, will flow in you.

April 13

**Jeremiah 4:14**  
"O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved! How long shall your iniquitous and grossly offensive thoughts judge within you?"

God is very clear about the state of our purity. He gives much Scripture in reference to cleansing His people? I once read a saying that said, "God accepts you as you are, but loves you too much to leave you there." God created us in His own image, but as life goes on we muddy that image with worldly thoughts, possessions, and things. Things that change the image of our hearts. God loves you too much to allow those things that you brought into the relationship to continue to hold you back. Each one of us are called to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This means that we have to cleanse the things, relationships, idols, and stronghold that are not of God. Ask God today what is He wanting you to cleanse from your life? You may want to actually take time to write them down. Nothing is too small or insignificant in God's eyes. Ask God to help you grow closer to Him in this cleansing process. Remember to thank God, in faith, for the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit within us. Walk today in faith that is already done. Amen!

April 14

Jeremiah 5:14

**“Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: Because you the people have spoken this word, behold, I will make My words fire in your mouth Jeremiah and this people wood, and it will devour them.”**

Here we see God calling Jeremiah to a new level of power. Whatever Jeremiah was doing in the past with this dark kingdom was not aggressive enough to complete God's plan. Jerusalem's people had forsaken God and was now worshipping Baal. Jeremiah condemned people for burning their children as offerings. Jerusalem had deviated so far from God that they had broken God's covenant, causing God to withdraw His blessing. God used a child such as Jeremiah to deliver His message to the people and He gave Him the power to do so. Many of us feel very incapable of delivering God's Word to others. We don't feel that we are qualified. Rest assured, if God is asking you to share His message to others, He will equip you to do so. Have you ever felt a tug on your heart to share God's Word with someone that you just don't think will receive it well? If so, know that if God is tugging on your heart you can rest assured that He will give you the power to do so. Life can be tough, but God promises that we can trust his methods and His will. He will never fail you.

April 15

Ezekiel 11:19

**“And I will give them one heart, a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within, them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh**

**sensitive and responsive to the touch of their God.”**

When we give our lives to God, He says that He will replace the stony hearts with new hearts that are sensitive to His touch. Before I had a relationship with God, my heart had been hardened by the world. By a past of mistakes. Some of my own and some of others. But after I developed a relationship with God, I developed a sensitive heart. Nothing had changed in my past. All the hurt and the things that had happened was still there. But what was there now that was not there before was God. His touch. Without the touch of God, we will not recognize the times He is speaking to us. When you are hard-hearted you are too busy “doing your own thing” to even recognize God's voice. I am truly grateful He has softened my hard-hearted heart. With that softened heart came so many blessings. Many of the gifts He promises us are received through this softening. If you are struggling with the past that has made your heart hardened, I am here to tell you that God can change any heart. There is no heart that is so hard that God cannot touch it. Choose today to allow God to enter into your life and begin the process of softening your heart. It is the one thing that is assured to bring you the blessings He has promised each of us. Invite Him into your life today. It is never too late.

April 16

Zephaniah 1:18

**“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's indignations and wrath. But the whole earth shall be consumed in fire of His jealous 'wrath, for a full, yes a sudden, end will He make of all the inhabitants of the earth.' ”**

Many people are driven by the pursuit of money. We put some sort of scale as to what we are worth by what we own and how much we have. We are convinced that it is both necessary for fulfillment in life and is the protection against disaster. God's Word says that is not truth. God tells us that it is easier for a rich man to pass through a needles eye than for him to enter into the gates of heaven. (See Mark 10:25) Money has been the downfall of many souls. Ask yourself, do you invest more time, effort and importance pursuing money than you do with intimacy with God? Making a living is very important and spending time doing so may be necessary. But a relationship with God can bring the greatest reward and the ultimate security. Ask yourself what is your scale of importance with spending time with God? Do you put Him last on your list, or is time with Him there only if it fits into your other schedules. I encourage you today to check your priority schedule. See where God fits into that schedule. If He is not on the top of the list, I encourage you today to make Him your priority. You might be surprised that with Him on the top of the list, all the other things will work themselves out for your good.

April 17

Acts 20:35

**“It is more blessed to give than receive.”**

Most of us have read, if not have heard this verse before. But do you really believe it? If you do you are most likely being a blessing to others wherever you go. I have always loved being a giver. There is something about giving something to someone that didn't expect it. The smiles you can put on someone's face are priceless. Literally priceless! There are no other jesters you can provide to another person that makes God happier than to love another person enough to give just because. Especially someone you don't even know. If you have never been a giver ask God today to help you become a more generous one. You will be amazed at the joy it will provide you as well. God has called all of us to be generous givers. Trust in Him that He will also supply all that is needed to do just that. Giving does not have to always be material things. You may have many talents that God has given you that you can share with others. I encourage you to search your heart today and ask God, what you can do to bring a blessing to others today?

April 18

Hebrews 4:12

**“For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life and spirit, and of joints and marrow, exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.”**

Conviction is one of the first visible signs of God at work in someone's life. God gave us His Word, so that we may hear from Him. So we may be challenged and encouraged. When we open the Word of God, with a genuine desire to know it and know Him, we cannot escape conviction. Conviction of our faults is a good thing. It is the one thing that can truly change us for the good. His Words has the power to defeat every adversary in our lives. His Words can give us authority against the devices the enemy tries to use against us. If you don't already, I encourage you to take time to read His Word daily. Make a commitment to spend part of your day with His Word, allowing Him to speak to you what He wants you to hear. Confess out loud that His Word is a mighty and sharp two-edged sword that releases His power when you speak it out of your mouth. Claim your victory into any situation you may face. Declare victory by faith in Jesus' name.

April 19

Ephesians 1:4

**“Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and immaculate in his sight, in charity.”**

We has humans often compare ourselves with other people, and when we do not measure up to what we think we should, we tend to think something is wrong with us. This creates problems with self-esteem that often leads to things like depression and stress to name a few. But if we would put our value in what God thinks of us, these issues would diminish tremendously. God loves us unconditionally. There is nothing you can do to earn it and/or lose it. We are loved and accepted by God because we place our faith in Jesus Christ. Today decide to trust God and believe that He loves you just the way you are. There is nothing you have to do to gain His love.