

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, March 31, 2021. Thank you so much for tuning in and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

Today we are in the middle of Holy Week, the week where we follow Jesus' journey from being hailed as the Messiah, entering Jerusalem, to his death on the cross, and eventually rising from the tomb in resurrection new life for us all.

And friends, it truly is a journey, both the Holy Week story and our current season of life. It feels like each step is an event, each step a moment of significance where we deeply need the companionship of God. We remember Jesus' journey, and though Jesus' death was foretold by the prophets, he knew the steps that were coming, I don't think that knowledge made facing death any easier. We may also know that truly difficult things come in our lives, the everyday frustrations all the way to life and death grieving, but what makes that journey slightly more able to bear, is the promise that God is with us in them. God doesn't promise to take away the hard things for us here on earth, but rather promises to journey with us in them. God is faithful to the promise that he will be our God. Sometimes it's hard to find God in the struggles, and even Jesus struggled with this too - crying out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" when he was dying on the cross. Know that it's okay to be frustrated or sad or struggling a bit, especially as the journey in our world out of the shadows of pandemic, slowly into life more open and new after an extremely difficult year plus, continues. We are all carrying something, dear friends, in this Holy Week and beyond, and perhaps the story of Jesus' journey is hitting somewhere closer for you this year. I pray that you are faithful to your own care, that you are tender with yourself in the places that need healing and kindness and hope, and that you find God in all God's faithfulness in every step of the way.

So wherever you are in your Holy Week journey, in your journey of life, really, any grief or hardship or trauma you are processing these days, know that God is with you, even when it seems impossible. God journeyed with Jesus all the way to the cross and risen again in new life, and so God is journeying with you in your daily dying and rising too.

For our scripture this week, I thought the Psalm that inspired so much of Jesus' journey to and on the cross would be appropriate. Not only is it a psalm of lament, but it's also a psalm praising God's faithfulness in the midst of immense pain and hardship. I pray these words fill your cup and feed your spirit. This is Psalm 22:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

3 Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
4 In you our ancestors trusted;

- they trusted, and you delivered them.
- 5 To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
- 6 But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
- 7 All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
- 8 "Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"
- 9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
- 10 On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
- 11 Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.
- 12 Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- 13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- 14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
- 15 my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;
- 17 I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
- 18 they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- 19 But you, O Lord, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!

21 Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

22 I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

23 You who fear the Lord, praise him!

 All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
 stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

24 For he did not despise or abhor

 the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
 but heard when I cried to him.

25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
 my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
 those who seek him shall praise the Lord.
 May your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember
 and turn to the Lord;
and all the families of the nations
 shall worship before him.

28 For dominion belongs to the Lord,
 and he rules over the nations.

29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in[k] the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
 and I shall live for him.

30 Posterity will serve him;
 future generations will be told about the Lord,
31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
 saying that he has done it.

The Word of the Lord.

Let us pray.

Lord God, help us to experience your faithfulness in our journeys, your promise to come alongside us and save us from the sins that threaten to separate us from you. We thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus, who died and rose for our sake. Help us in our humanness, join with us in the grief we feel in our human bodies and spirits these days, give us the healing power of hope. Hope is made possible through your Son Jesus, through this journey of Holy Week. To you we commend all of who we are, and we lay our burdens at your feet. Help us, heal us, hope with us, today and always. In Jesus' name Amen.