

40 Days of Depth

LENT SPIRITUAL GROWTH
DEVOTIONAL GUIDEBOOK

BE TRANSFORMED THROUGH

CONNECTION
PRAYER
DEVOTION



KOBE UNION CHURCH



KOBE UNION CHURCH 2025

INTRODUCTION

THIS DEVOTIONAL IS DESIGNED WITH THE INTENT TO TAKE YOU INTO A DEEPER WALK WITH THE LORD DURING THESE 40 DAYS LEADING UP TO EASTER.

AS YOU JOURNEY THROUGHOUT THIS DEVOTIONAL, ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK TO YOU. WE HOPE THAT AS YOU MEDITATE ON THE WORD OF GOD, REFLECT UPON THE DEVOTIONAL, AND CONNECT WITH SOMEONE ABOUT WHAT YOU READ; YOU WILL BEGIN TO WALK IN CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

LET'S JOURNEY TOGETHER!
JOIN US ONLINE OR IN-PERSON
THROUGHOUT THE 40 DAYS!

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

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40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK ONE

CALM
WATERS

MARCH 6TH - MARCH 8TH

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 1 | Calm Waters (March 6th)

Scripture: Joel 2:12-13

"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity."

The way of people is ever wandering, but the way of God is steadfast. People drifts like the tide, swayed by the currents of their own desires. But in every age, the Lord calls, "Return to me with all your heart." This is not a superficial call, nor one that permits a divided heart. The Lord does not seek the ripping of garments, an outward show of sorrow—He desires the rending of the heart, the breaking of self-will before Him.

We often think repentance is merely sorrow for sin. But true repentance is more than emotion; it is a turning, a forsaking of all that is not of Christ. It is not enough to weep before the altar and return unchanged. The Lord seeks a heart that breaks for what He breaks for, a heart that turns wholly to Him.

Many attempt to return to God while holding onto themselves. They desire

to be near Him yet remain in control of their own lives. But the Lord does not share His throne. To return to Him fully is to surrender all, to allow self to be crucified, that Christ may reign.

The beauty of this call is the character of the One who calls. He is gracious. He does not despise the broken heart; He welcomes it. He is slow to anger, patient with our failings. He abounds in love, for love is His very nature. If He relents from judgment, it is not because of our worthiness, but because of His great mercy.

The time to return is always *now*. We do not wait for a more convenient season; we do not wait for feelings to move us. *Even now*, declares the Lord. Let us return with our whole being. Let us yield fully, that He may have His way in us.

"You will never know the fullness of Christ until you know the emptiness of everything else."

— Charles Spurgeon

(March 7th)

Scripture Reading- Matthew 8:8

"Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed."

There are moments in our spiritual journey when we are confronted by the vastness of God's authority, and our response reveals the depth of our faith. The centurion, a man accustomed to authority and command, understood something profound that many of us fail to grasp: that Jesus does not need to be physically present to change our circumstances. It is enough for Him to speak, and what He speaks is done.

We tend to limit God's power by our need for His tangible presence. Yet here, in this encounter, Jesus shows us that His Word is not bound by space or time. The centurion knew that Jesus' authority transcends human limitations, and his faith rested in the simple yet staggering reality that Christ's spoken word alone could bring about healing.

Faith is not about what we can see or touch; it is about what God has already spoken. It is easy to believe in God when everything aligns with our expectations. But the true test of faith comes when we are called to believe in His unseen power, trusting that His word will accomplish what we cannot fathom. To say, "Only speak a word," is

to acknowledge that the authority of Jesus is sufficient, no matter how distant or impossible the situation seems.

The call of Christ demands a response that does not depend on visible proof but rests solely on the understanding that **God is the ultimate authority.** What is your response to His word today? Are you waiting for Him to "show up" in a physical sense, or have you placed your trust in the simple truth that His voice alone is enough to change everything?

Jesus' words to the centurion: "As you have believed, so let it be done for you." (Matthew 8:13). **This is the crux of discipleship:** not merely following Jesus with our lips, but with our lives. Faith that says, "I believe You, even when I cannot see You" is the kind of faith that pleases God and moves His hand. The centurion did not need Jesus to be physically present; he needed only to believe that Jesus' word held the power to accomplish the impossible.

Are you prepared to take Jesus at His word today?

"The greatest test of faith is that it is willing to let God be God."

– O. Chambers

(March 8th)

Scripture: Psalm 51:10-12

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

The greatest work God can do in a person is not through him, but within him. Many seek to serve the Lord with an unrenewed heart, thinking that outward works can cover an inward need. But David understood the truth—no work, no effort, no sacrifice could cleanse his heart. Only God could do this work.

People may reform themselves, but only God can create a pure heart. The old cannot be patched; it must be made new. And the man who has been truly broken sees this clearly: there is nothing in him that can be trusted. His strength, his zeal, even his repentance—none of these are sufficient. He does not ask for mere correction but for creation.

Yet David does not ask for a pure heart alone. He prays also for a steadfast spirit, for what use is cleansing if the heart soon turns back to sin? The one who truly seeks after God does not desire forgiveness alone but the power to walk in righteousness.

"Do not cast me from your presence." Here lies the true sorrow of sin—not merely its consequences but the loss of God's presence. To the one who has tasted His nearness, nothing is more bitter than distance from Him. This is the longing of a soul that has known intimacy with God and cannot bear to be apart.

Yet the mercy of God is greater than our failings. Though sin may dim the joy of salvation, it cannot erase the work of salvation. Thus, David prays: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation." For salvation itself is not lost, but the joy of it can fade when sin separates us from Him. When we turn back to God, He not only forgives but also restores—restores joy, restores strength, and restores the desire to follow Him.

Let us then, in this season of Lent, cease from striving to fix ourselves and instead yield fully to the One who can create, renew, and restore.

"God does not fill with His Spirit those who believe in the fullness of the Spirit, or those who desire Him, but those who obey Him."

— A.W. Tozer

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK TWO

RISING TIDES

MARCH 10TH - MARCH 15TH

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 2 | Rising Tides
(March 10th)

Scripture: Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

God's invitation is clear: *Come*. He does not wait for people to purify themselves, to prove themselves worthy, or to mend their ways before approaching. He calls the sinner while they are still in his sin. It is not the righteous who need this cleansing, but the broken, the stained, the guilty.

Scarlet and crimson—deep, unerasable stains. In the ancient world, scarlet dye was permanent, binding itself to the fabric so deeply that no washing could remove it. This is how sin marks the soul, staining it beyond human repair. No effort, no moral striving, no ritual cleansing can erase its presence. But what we cannot do, God can.

Here, God does not offer partial cleansing; He promises

transformation. Sin as red as crimson will become *white as snow*, unstained, pure, and new. This is not the result of human effort but of divine grace. The Lord does not negotiate sin—He washes it away entirely.

Yet, this promise is not automatic; it comes with an invitation: *Come now, let us reason together*. God does not force salvation upon anyone. He calls, He invites, He offers—but we must respond. To reason with God is not to argue with Him but to yield to His truth. It is to acknowledge our sin, accept His mercy, and allow Him to do the work we cannot. The hands once pierced now reach out with the same invitation: *Come*.

Will you come?

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

— Psalm 103:12

(March 11th)

Scripture: Luke 9:23-24

"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.'"

When Christ calls people, He bids us come and die. Discipleship is not an invitation to religious sentiment or a pathway to self-improvement—it is a call to surrender everything to Christ. There is no half-measure, no middle ground. To follow Jesus is to forsake the security of self and entrust oneself entirely to Him.

"Deny yourself." The world preaches self-fulfillment, but Jesus commands self-denial. The disciple does not set his own terms; he places his entire life under the lordship of Christ. He does not ask, What will I gain? but What must I surrender? This denial is not a rejection of personal identity but a total abandonment of self-will.

"Take up your cross daily." The cross is not an ornament but a declaration of death. It is not something we carry for our own

glory but something under which we are crucified with Christ. The cross is taken up daily, not as a momentary decision but as a way of life. The disciple follows his Lord, not into ease, but into suffering, rejection, and even death if necessary.

"Whoever wants to save their life will lose it." The one who clings to comfort, status, or self-preservation has already lost what he hopes to keep. But the one who relinquishes all for Christ finds true life—life that is eternal, abundant, and free. This is the great paradox of the kingdom: in losing ourselves, we are found; in dying, we truly live.

The world will mock such a life. It will call it foolishness. But the disciple does not look to the world for approval.

"The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise godly and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(March 12th)

Scripture: John 8:12

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

The world is filled with darkness—spiritual blindness, confusion, and despair. Men stumble through life, grasping for truth but finding only shadows. Into this darkness, Jesus speaks: "I am the light of the world." He does not simply bring light; He is the light. He is not a guide among many; He is the only true illumination in a world lost in sin.

To follow Christ is to step out of the shadows. He does not promise a life without struggle, but He promises that we will never be left to grope in the dark. Those who walk with Him do not live in uncertainty or fear; they are guided by the light of truth, grace, and life itself.

But this light demands a choice. There is no neutrality when Christ is revealed. Some, loving darkness,

reject Him, preferring the comfort of their own ways. Others see the light and follow, leaving behind their sin and self-rule.

Light exposes; light transforms. The presence of Christ is not an option to consider—it is a reality that changes everything. To walk in His light means to surrender our own wisdom, our own righteousness, and our own way. It is to live as those who have been awakened, who see the world as it truly is, and who move forward in the certainty of His truth.

"Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness." This is both a promise and a command. Christ does not call us to admire the light from a distance but to follow—to step forward in obedience, to trust Him fully, and to live in the radiance of His presence

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

— C.S. Lewis

(March 13th)

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:21

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

The call to follow Christ is not a call to ease but to endurance. Peter does not say that suffering *might* come—he says it is what we were *called* to. This is not suffering for its own sake, nor is it meaningless pain. It is the path Christ Himself walked, and we are called to walk in His steps.

Christ's suffering was not accidental; it was purposeful. He bore insults without retaliation, endured injustice without complaint, and submitted Himself fully to the Father's will. He did not demand His rights but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly. In doing so, He left us a pattern—not just to admire but to imitate.

"That you should follow in His steps." The disciple's path is not self-made; it is already marked by the footprints of Christ. He has shown us how to respond to suffering—with patience, humility, and unwavering faith. The way of the cross is not an option for the Christian; it is the very road we must walk.

This is the cost of discipleship. We do not seek suffering, but when it comes, we do not shrink back. We endure it as Christ did, trusting that in our suffering, we are being conformed to His image. The world resists this message, preaching self-preservation instead of self-denial. But the one who follows Christ does not fear loss, for he knows that to share in Christ's suffering is to share in His glory.

"If you suffer for having done what is right, you are walking the road of the prophets and the saints and of Christ himself."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(March 14th)

Scripture: Isaiah 55:6-7

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

In this quiet moment, the Lord invites us to seek Him, to draw near to His presence. How often do we get caught up in the rush of our days, distracted by the noise and demands of life? Yet, here in Isaiah, we are reminded that God is near—His mercy is available for the seeking, His grace ready to be received.

"Seek the Lord while he may be found." This is an invitation, not just to search, but to pause, to listen, and to rest in His nearness. God is always calling us to Himself, but we must be intentional in responding. There is a time to seek, a time to turn our hearts fully toward Him, and that time is now.

"Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts." This is a call to repentance, a turning away from

the patterns that lead us away from God. It is not merely about changing our behavior but about shifting the orientation of our hearts and minds. God desires our hearts, not just our outward actions.

And then comes the beautiful promise: "He will have mercy on them, and he will freely pardon." No matter how far we've gone, no matter how often we've wandered, the Lord is always ready to forgive, to restore, and to welcome us back. His mercy is a gift, not earned by our own efforts but given freely, without condition.

As we seek the Lord today, let us remember that His mercy is waiting for us. There is no need to fear, no need to hesitate—God is near, and He is ready to pour out His grace upon us.

"The heart that seeks God is the heart that will find Him, for He is already near."

— Henri Nouwen

(March 15th)

Scripture: Matthew 6:16-18

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

In our spiritual lives, there are practices meant to deepen our relationship with God, such as prayer, fasting, and giving. Fasting, in particular, is often misunderstood or misused. In this passage, Jesus teaches us the true purpose and heart behind fasting. Fasting is not about appearing righteous to others. The hypocrites in Jesus' day made sure that everyone knew when they were fasting—they wanted the approval of men. But Jesus calls us to a different way, a secret way, where our fasting is between us and God alone. When we fast, we are not to make a show of it. We are not to wear our sacrifices on our faces or in our actions. Instead, we are to do so with quiet humility, seeking the

Lord and His will without concern for what others might think.

"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face." Jesus' instruction is simple yet profound: we are to go about our day as normal, not drawing attention to our sacrifice. The focus is not on the outward appearance but on the inner posture of our hearts. The Father who sees in secret is the one who rewards us—not with praise from others, but with a deeper intimacy with Him and a spiritual reward that is far greater than any earthly recognition.

True fasting brings us closer to God, not by showcasing our deeds, but by humbling ourselves before Him in secret.

"Fasting is the abstinence from anything that would divert us from seeking God's face."

— Richard Foster

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK THREE

HIDDEN DEPTHS

MARCH 17TH - MARCH 22ND

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 3 | Hidden Depths
(March 17th)

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

In these two powerful verses, Paul calls us to a life of radical devotion and transformation. The invitation is clear: we are to present ourselves—not just our actions or our outward appearances, but our very lives—as living sacrifices to God. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were offerings made to God, often involving the giving up of something of value. But Paul flips the script. Instead of dead offerings, we are called to be living sacrifices. This is not a one-time act but a continual offering of our lives, our choices, and our hearts to God.

"In view of God's mercy." Our response to God is not out of obligation or fear, but out of a deep understanding of His grace and mercy toward us. He has given us everything—His Son, His forgiveness, His love—and in

return, we offer ourselves back to Him. This is our true and proper worship. It is not about rituals or external actions; it is about surrendering ourselves fully to God.

But this offering is not without purpose. The second part of the passage urges us to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Transformation is the fruit of offering ourselves to God. We are no longer to be shaped by the patterns of the world—its desires, its values, its ways. Instead, as we surrender to God, He renews our minds, reorients our desires, and aligns our hearts with His will.

The result of this transformation is clear: "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

"The world is not to be taken as it is, but to be transformed by the power of God."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(March 18th)

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8-9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

In these verses, we are confronted with the most foundational truth of the Christian life: salvation is entirely a work of God. It is not the result of our own striving, nor is it something we can claim credit for. Salvation is a gift—a divine and unearned gift given by God's grace alone.

Let us pause and consider what this means: grace is not something we can manufacture or make happen by our own effort. It is God's work, not ours. To believe that we can add anything to grace is to misunderstand its very nature. We must come to terms with the fact that salvation is a free gift, and there is nothing we can do to either earn it or lose it once it is given.

"By grace you have been saved, through faith." Here, grace and faith are inseparable. Grace is

the divine power that saves us, and faith is the means by which we receive it. Faith is not our work; it is simply our response to God's invitation.

Remember, when we speak of salvation, it is not a one-time act. The life of a believer is a continual receiving of grace. Every day, we must learn to receive from God, to trust that He will provide all we need, and to rely on Him for every step of the journey. This is the life of a Christian—not a life of self-effort, but a life of dependence on God's grace.

Let us not forget that salvation is not just a past event but a present reality. We must live each day as those who have been saved by grace—not by our works, but by the work of Christ.

"Grace is God's richest treasure bestowed on the most unworthy. To receive grace, we must empty ourselves of all that is self-assertive and self-occupied."

— Watchman Nee

(March 19th)

Scripture: Hebrews 4:15-16

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

In these verses, the writer of Hebrews reveals the beauty and power of Christ's high priestly role. Jesus is not distant or indifferent to our struggles; He is intimately acquainted with our weaknesses. He knows the temptations we face, the burdens we carry, and the trials that threaten to overwhelm us. He is not a high priest who stands aloof but one who has shared in the human experience, fully understanding what it means to be tempted, tested, and weak. Yet, He remains without sin.

This is a profound comfort for us. Jesus did not merely come to sympathize from afar; He entered into our experience, bearing the full weight of human suffering, so that He could truly represent us before God. His empathy is not passive; it is active, powerful, and redemptive. The high priest of the Old Testament could never fully understand the depth of human

experience, but Jesus, the sinless Son of God, is the perfect mediator.

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence." This invitation is one of the most remarkable aspects of the Christian faith. We are not called to approach God with fear or hesitation, but with boldness. The throne we approach is not a throne of judgment, but a throne of grace. We are invited to draw near to God in our weakness, knowing that we will find mercy, not condemnation, and grace, not rejection.

There is no condition of heart too broken, no need too great, that can keep us from God's throne. Because of Christ, we are assured that our requests will be met with mercy, and our hearts will be filled with grace. This is the true heart of the gospel: we approach not on the basis of our own worthiness but on the merit of Jesus Christ, our compassionate high priest.

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

— John Piper

(March 20th)

Scripture: Psalm 103:8-12

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

The mercy of God stands as a magnificent reality in the life of the believer—an unmerited and overwhelming kindness that draws us back to Him despite our failures. In Psalm 103, David proclaims the vastness of God's mercy, a mercy that is not fickle or temporary, but steadfast, everlasting, and entirely based on His nature, not ours.

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." These are not qualities that God possesses in small measure but are characteristics that overflow from Him, shaping everything He does. How incredible it is to realize that God is not quick to condemn, nor is His anger swift to rise. His first response to us, even in our sin, is compassion. In the face of our deepest failures, God's love abounds far more than we can fathom.

The Psalmist continues, *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the*

west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." This description is both beautiful and humbling. God's love is not limited by the earthly conditions we experience; it is limitless, boundless, and immeasurable. And the removal of our sins—*as far as the east is from the west*—is a powerful image. There is no distance greater, no separation more profound, than the distance God has placed between us and our sins. He has not only forgiven us but has completely removed our transgressions from His memory.

In our human experience, we may recall past offenses, even our own, but God in His mercy casts them away and remembers them no more. This is the depth of God's grace—He chooses to forget what He has forgiven. When we return to Him in repentance, He does not drag up our past sins but sees us through the lens of His eternal love and grace.

(cont.)

We must ask ourselves: do
we comprehend the vastness of
God's mercy?

*“God’s grace is not given to those who deserve it, but to those who
understand their need of it.”*

— O. Chambers

(March 21st)

Scripture: Romans 8:1-2

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

In the profound declaration of Romans 8:1-2, we are introduced to one of the most liberating truths of the Christian faith. *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* This is not a conditional statement nor a possibility—this is a reality. For those who are in Christ, the weight of guilt, the punishment due for sin, has been forever removed. Our condemnation, which once hung over us like a dark cloud, has been lifted, and we stand free. But let us pause for a moment to consider the full depth of this truth.

To be in Christ means that the punishment for our sin has been taken upon Jesus. His sacrifice on the cross, His perfect obedience, has become our righteousness. This is not merely a pardon but a transformation. The law of sin and death, which once ruled over us, has been displaced by the law of the Spirit who gives life. Through the Holy Spirit, we have been brought into a new realm—one of freedom, one in which we are no longer bound by the old powers that enslaved us.

The law of sin and death once had dominion over us. It dictated our actions and held us in bondage to the consequences of our sin. But in Christ, that law has been rendered powerless. The law that condemned us has been replaced with the law of the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who gives life, who empowers us to live in the freedom that Christ has secured. We are not left to our own efforts; we are now participants in the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live victoriously over sin and death.

But let us not forget the importance of what it means to live "in Christ." It is not enough to simply acknowledge the truth of Romans 8:1-2; we must continually abide in Christ, resting in His completed work and walking in the freedom He offers. This freedom calls us not to live however we please but to live in the power of the Spirit, who leads us in holiness and righteousness. The call to freedom is also a call to a new life—one that is empowered by the Spirit and marked by the love of Christ.

"Christ is the end of the law, not because it is abolished, but because He fulfilled it." — John Stott

(March 22nd)

Scripture: 1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

In the beautiful simplicity of 1 John 1:9, we find one of the most comforting promises in Scripture: if we confess our sins, God will forgive us. This verse contains no complicated conditions or complex formulas—just a simple invitation to come before God in honesty and humility. It reveals the heart of God as one who is both faithful and just, always ready to forgive and to purify.

The act of confession is not merely the acknowledgment of wrong, but the recognition that we are in need of God's grace. It is an admission that we cannot cleanse ourselves, that we are helpless apart from His mercy. Sin, as Scripture teaches, is not just a series of actions but a state of separation from God. It disrupts our relationship with our Creator, but God, in His boundless grace, offers reconciliation. When we confess, we are not informing God of our

sins; rather, we are agreeing with Him about our brokenness and turning toward His love.

God not only forgives but also purifies us from all unrighteousness. He cleanses us thoroughly, completely, leaving no stain behind. This is not a superficial cleansing but a deep, transformative purification that restores us to a right relationship with Him. Through confession, we experience both forgiveness and renewal—a fresh start, a new opportunity to walk in the light of God's grace.

It's essential to note that this promise isn't just for once-off sins but for ongoing failure. We do not have to shy away from God when we fall short. The process of confession is not a means of defeating us or reminding us of our inadequacy but is God's way of drawing us closer to Him in the very moment we need it most.

"The Christian life is not the absence of sin but the awareness of sin and the willingness to confess it."

— Billy Graham

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK FOUR

CRASHING WATERS

MARCH 24TH - MARCH 29TH

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 4 | Crashing Waves (March 24th)

Scripture: Titus 3:4-7

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

In this passage from Titus, we are reminded of the immeasurable mercy of God, a mercy that surpasses our understanding. It is a mercy that is not contingent upon anything we have done, not based on our goodness or our works, but solely upon God's grace and love. *"Not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."* This is the foundation of the gospel. God does not act toward us based on our merit but according to His own unchanging nature—He is kind, loving, and merciful.

The world often operates on the principle of "you get what you deserve," but with God, it is radically different. He gives not because we deserve it but because He is good and full of compassion. The kindness and love of God our Savior, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, have appeared

to us, and through His appearance, we are saved. The salvation we experience is a direct result of God's mercy and grace, not our works.

It is through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that this abundant grace is poured out generously upon us. The gift of the Holy Spirit, given freely, is the guarantee of our future hope—eternal life. This hope is not a vague wish but a certainty, grounded in the finished work of Christ and His promise of everlasting life.

This passage calls us to reflect on the deep richness of God's mercy. It is not earned but given freely; it is not limited but abundant. As heirs of eternal life, we are invited to live in the fullness of God's mercy, embracing the new life He offers through His Spirit and rejoicing in the hope of glory that awaits us.

"Grace is the free, undeserved goodness and favor of God."

— Billy Graham

(March 25th)

Scripture: John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16 is the heart of the gospel, a verse that encapsulates the depth of God's love and the profound gift He offers to the world. In these words, we see the true nature of God's love: it is not limited, nor is it self-serving. "For God so loved the world..." This is a love that extends beyond borders, beyond cultures, beyond time. It is a love for the entire world, a love that seeks the lost, the broken, and the undeserving.

The magnitude of God's love is shown not in a vague affection but in a concrete, sacrificial act. He did not merely express His love with words; He gave His one and only Son. The gift of Jesus is the ultimate demonstration of love, a love that costs everything. Jesus, sent by the Father, took on flesh, entered into our broken world, and bore the weight of our sin. His sacrifice on the cross was the price of our salvation, and through His death and resurrection, the way to eternal life was made open to all who believe.

This passage is also a call to believe—that is, to trust in the work of Jesus Christ. "Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Belief here is not simply intellectual assent but a deep, transformative trust in who Jesus is and what He has done.

The promise of eternal life is not just about quantity of life, but quality. Eternal life is not simply living forever; it is living in the presence of God, experiencing His love and grace forever. It is a life of relationship with the Creator, filled with joy, peace, and fulfillment that nothing in this world can offer. Eternal life begins the moment we believe and continues through all eternity, not as a future hope alone but as a present reality.

As we reflect on this verse, we are invited to marvel at the overwhelming generosity of God's love. It is a love that gives, a love that sacrifices, and a love that calls us to a new way of living. And it is a love that promises us eternal life, not by our works, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

"God's love is not based on what we do, but on who He is."

— Max Lucado

(March 26th)

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!"

Philippians 2:5-8 presents a profound picture of the humility of Christ. Paul calls us to have the same mindset as Jesus, whose humility and obedience became the model for all believers. The first truth that stands out in this passage is that Jesus, who was in very nature God, did not hold onto His divine privilege. In the incarnation, Jesus did not see His equality with God as something to be grasped or used for His own advantage, but rather chose to set aside His glory. His humility is not just an attitude but a choice, an active decision to take on human form and live among us.

This is the essence of Christian humility. It is not about thinking less of ourselves but about thinking of ourselves less, as C.S. Lewis once said. It is not self-deprecation, but a willingness to surrender our rights, our comforts, and our desires for the sake of others. Jesus' humility was not born out of weakness but out of strength—

strength in knowing who He was and the purpose for which He came.

In taking the form of a servant, Jesus demonstrated that true greatness is found in service, not status. He didn't just appear as a human; He came as a servant. He lived among the outcasts, the poor, and the marginalized, embodying the servant-hearted love that He preached. His entire earthly ministry was marked by service, from washing His disciples' feet to ultimately laying down His life for the salvation of the world.

As followers of Christ, we are called to imitate His humility, not in superficial gestures, but in the core of our hearts. We are called to give up our privileges, our positions, and our desires in service to God and others. The cross challenges us to surrender not just outwardly but inwardly—to put others' needs above our own, to sacrifice our time, resources, and even our reputation for the sake of the gospel.

"The Christian is not the one who serves, but the one who is willing to serve even when it costs everything." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(March 27th)

Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

In our world today, humility is often misunderstood. We think of it as weakness or self-denial, but the humility of Christ speaks of strength, love, and self-sacrifice. Philippians 2:5-8 paints a powerful picture of the kind of humility that Jesus modeled for us. He did not cling to His divine rights or privileges. Instead, He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant, showing us that true greatness is not in being served, but in serving others.

Jesus' humility was not just about His actions, but about His heart. He could have chosen to remain in His glory, but He chose to step into our world with all its struggles, its pain, and its imperfections. He could have held tightly to His divine status, but He gave it all up for our sake. This is the radical love of God—unconditional, selfless, and sacrificial.

As followers of Christ, we are called to adopt the same mindset in our own lives. We are invited to lay

aside our own desires and ambitions in order to serve others.

When we reflect on Jesus' willingness to endure the cross, we are reminded that humility often comes with a cost. Humility is not always easy—it means putting aside our pride, our need for recognition, and sometimes our own comfort. But in doing so, we experience the love and grace of God in deeper ways. The cross, the ultimate symbol of Jesus' humility, is also the ultimate symbol of His love for us. It is through His sacrifice that we are made whole, forgiven, and restored.

In this season, may we be inspired to live with the same humility that Jesus displayed—serving others, giving up our rights, and loving without expecting anything in return. And may we remember that in our humility, we become more like the One who humbled Himself for our sake.

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."

— C.S. Lewis

(March 28th)

Scripture: Isaiah 53:3-5

"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds, we are healed."

Isaiah 53:3-5 is a powerful reminder of the depth of Jesus' sacrifice and the cost of our salvation. These verses paint a picture of the suffering servant, one who endured rejection, pain, and immense suffering on our behalf. The imagery of Christ as despised and rejected speaks to the loneliness and agony He experienced, both physically and emotionally. He was not only rejected by the world but also misunderstood in His purpose. Despite all He endured, He did not come to avenge Himself or demand justice but to bear the weight of the world's sin.

In these verses, we see a stark contrast between how the world viewed Jesus and the reality of His sacrifice. The people believed that He was stricken by God for His own sins,

but in truth, He was suffering for the sins of others. He bore the punishment that should have been ours, taking on the pain, suffering, and separation from God that our transgressions deserved. Yet, in His suffering, there is healing. The punishment that brought us peace was placed upon Him, and by His wounds, we are healed.

This is the beauty of the gospel: in His suffering, we find peace. In His wounds, we find healing. The pain He endured was not in vain. It was for our redemption, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the restoration of our relationship with God. Jesus' death on the cross was not just a historical event; it was the turning point of human history, the moment when God made a way for us to be reconciled to Him.

"The cross is the place where our deepest sorrow meets God's greatest love."

— Max Lucado

(March 29th)

Scripture: Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul encapsulates the profound mystery of the Christian life—union with Christ. To be "crucified with Christ" is not just a theological concept, but a radical way of life. Paul is expressing a deep reality for every believer: the old self, marked by sin and rebellion, has been crucified. We no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ, who lives within us by the power of His Spirit.

This verse challenges us to rethink how we view our lives in light of the gospel. If we have been crucified with Christ, our old desires, our selfish ambitions, our sin, and our pride no longer have dominion over us.

What does it mean to live by faith in the Son of God? It means that our lives are no longer driven by our own strength or willpower, but by the faith we place in Jesus—

His love, His sacrifice, His power. Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, now lives in us, empowering us to live the life He has called us to. We are no longer defined by our past mistakes or failures, but by the new life we have in Him.

When we live with this truth in mind, we are freed from the endless pursuit of self-validation and are instead called to live for something greater—the glory of God. Our lives are a reflection of His love and grace, and every action, every decision, every thought is to be centered on Christ, who lives in us.

This is not a life of striving in our own strength, but a life of resting in the power of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. And as we live by faith in Him, He transforms us day by day, making us more like Himself.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live is the life of the risen Lord Jesus in the believer. This is the highest privilege of a Christian."

— Oswald Chambers

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK FIVE

STEADY CURRENTS

MARCH 31ST - APRIL 5TH

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 5 | Steady Currents
(March 31st)

Scripture: Isaiah 53:3-5

"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds, we are healed."

These verses from Isaiah 53 reveal the profound suffering of the Messiah—Jesus Christ—and the tremendous cost of our salvation. He was not only physically tortured but emotionally and spiritually crushed as He took upon Himself the weight of the world's sin. The imagery of being "despised" and "rejected" speaks to the isolation and mockery He endured. In His suffering, Jesus identified with the deepest pain of humanity, making Him the perfect Savior for all who are broken, rejected, or despised. Jesus' death was not just an unfortunate end to a good life; it was the necessary sacrifice for our sins. He was pierced for our

transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that was rightfully ours was placed upon Him. The result of His sacrifice is our peace. Not the fleeting, temporary peace of the world, but a lasting, eternal peace with God.

In light of this, we are invited to reflect on the great love of Christ and His willingness to endure such suffering for our sake. How often do we take for granted the peace He offers us, failing to consider the cost? This passage calls us to a deeper understanding of the gravity of Christ's sacrifice and the peace we now enjoy through His atoning work.

"The wounds of Christ were not the result of chance, but of God's deliberate plan of love and redemption."

— John Stott

(April 1st)

Scripture: 1 John 4:9-10

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

In 1 John 4:9-10, we are given the clearest picture of what love truly is—the love of God. It is not a vague or abstract concept but a tangible, life-giving reality revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. God's love was not demonstrated through feelings or words alone; it was shown through action. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, into a broken world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is the greatest love anyone could ever know.

What is extraordinary about this love is that it was given to us when we were still far from God. It is not that we loved God first, but that He loved us first. Our love for God is always a response to His love for us. The fact that He loved us even in our sin and rebellion is what makes this love so radical and beautiful. It is unconditional, undeserved, and sacrificial.

This love is also life-changing. John tells us that through Christ, we might live. This is not merely physical life, but spiritual life—eternal life with God. In sending Jesus to die for us, God was offering us a way back to Him, a way to be reconciled, to have peace with Him, and to experience the fullness of life that He designed for us. The cross, where Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice, becomes the defining moment of God's love, transforming us and our relationship with Him forever.

As we reflect on this love, we are called not just to receive it but to reflect it. This love is not just for us to enjoy, but for us to share with the world. When we truly grasp the depth of God's love for us, it compels us to love others in the same sacrificial way, with the same grace and mercy that He has shown us.

"God's love is not a sentiment, nor a fleeting emotion. It is a decision—a deliberate act of the will to pour out His heart for the undeserving."

— Tim Keller

(April 2nd)

Scripture: 1 John 4:9-10

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

In these powerful verses from 1 John, we are confronted with the ultimate revelation of love—God's love for us. This love is not abstract or passive; it is active, tangible, and sacrificial. God didn't just say "I love you" from a distance—He proved it in the most profound way possible. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, into a broken and fallen world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is the love that saves, the love that transforms, the love that offers life.

It's important to notice how John defines love here. He doesn't define love as human affection, nor is it based on our love for God. Love, according to this passage, is God's initiative toward us. It's not about us loving God first, but about God loving us first—when we were still His enemies, when we were still lost in sin. This is the love that defines the gospel: God reaching out to us

in our brokenness and extending grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

The sacrificial love of God in sending His Son is the foundation for our very lives. Through Jesus, we have the opportunity to live—not just physically, but spiritually, eternally. Through His death on the cross, He made a way for us to be reconciled to God, to have our sins forgiven, and to experience true life in relationship with Him. This is love in its purest form—a love that gives everything for the good of the beloved.

As we reflect on this love, it compels us to love others in the same way. The more we understand and receive God's love, the more we are called to reflect that love to a world that desperately needs it. The love of God is not a commodity to be hoarded but a gift to be shared, a message to be proclaimed.

"The highest love is not that which loves because it is loved, but that which loves when it is not loved."

— Watchman Nee

(April 3rd)

Scripture: Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

In this powerful verse, the apostle Paul describes the heart of the Christian life: "I have been crucified with Christ." These words may seem simple, but they carry profound significance. To be crucified with Christ is to identify with His death—acknowledging that our old, sinful self was put to death with Him on the cross. It is no longer the old "I" that lives, but Christ who now lives in us. This is the foundational truth of the Christian life: our identity is no longer rooted in our past or in our own strength, but in the indwelling life of Christ.

The crucifixion of Jesus was not just an event in history; it is an ongoing reality for every believer. To be crucified with Christ means that we participate in His death, and thus, in His resurrection.

The life we now live in the body is marked by faith in Jesus Christ. It is a life of surrender and dependence, acknowledging that every moment is sustained by His love and grace. We no longer live for our own purposes or ambitions, but for His glory, reflecting His love and holiness in the world. This is a life that requires constant trust—faith in the One who loved us enough to give Himself for us.

As we meditate on this verse, we are invited to reflect on what it means to be crucified with Christ. Are we living with the awareness that our old selves have died with Him, and that it is He who lives in us? How does this reality shape the way we live our lives, our relationships, and our purpose in the world?

"The cross is the way to life, the way to freedom, and the way to peace. It is the way of suffering, but it is also the way of victory."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(April 4th)

Scripture: Luke 22:39-40

"Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.'"

In these verses, we witness Jesus, knowing the weight of the coming trials, seeking solitude and prayer on the Mount of Olives. His disciples followed Him there, yet, in the midst of this critical moment, Jesus' focus was not on the coming storm but on the necessity of prayer. The battle He was about to face was one of the soul, but He understood that for His disciples—and for us—prayer is the key to overcoming temptation and remaining strong in the midst of trials.

Jesus' words, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation," serve as both an invitation and a warning. The disciples, unaware of what was about to unfold, were being prepared in a way they did not fully understand. Jesus knew that their weakness—like ours—would be exposed in moments of temptation, and He urged them to pray, to seek strength from God.

The phrase "fall into temptation" is a stark reminder that without the help of God, we are vulnerable to the pressures and trials of life. Temptation is not always a sudden attack; often, it is a slow, insidious process that works its way into our hearts when we are spiritually weak or complacent. Jesus, knowing this, calls His disciples to pray—not just for protection but for strength to stand firm in the face of temptation.

In our own lives, how often do we underestimate the need for prayer in our moments of weakness? Prayer is not a passive activity, but an active surrender to God's power, asking Him to give us the strength to resist, to remain faithful, and to trust in His leading. Jesus knew that prayer was the key to overcoming, and it was through prayer that He would be empowered for the trial ahead.

"The most important thing in life is not to know what will happen, but to know Him, and to learn to stand firm in the midst of all the circumstances He allows."

— A.W. Tozer

(April 5th)

Scripture: Luke 22:42-44

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."

In these verses, we find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, facing the most profound struggle of His earthly ministry. His soul is overwhelmed with sorrow, knowing the suffering that awaits Him. He prays to His Father, asking if there is another way, but ultimately submits His will to God's. "Yet not my will, but yours be done," is the essence of true surrender.

This moment in the Garden is not merely about physical agony but also the emotional and spiritual turmoil of the weight of humanity's sin and the cost of redemption. Jesus, fully divine yet fully human, wrestles with the pain of what is to come, but He chooses submission.

He doesn't ask for the suffering to be taken away out of fear, but out of love for the Father and for us.

This is the example we are called to follow. How often do we struggle with God's will for our lives, wanting to avoid suffering or hardship? Yet, Jesus shows us that the way of obedience, though it may be painful, leads to the glory of God and the fulfillment of His eternal plan. In His darkest hour, He trusts in the goodness and wisdom of the Father's will.

Jesus' submission here is a powerful reminder of what it means to trust God fully, even when the path is difficult. The path to victory is paved with surrender.

"To be a Christian means to be one who is ready to follow Christ in everything, even to the point of suffering. Only when we are willing to give up our own desires can we truly experience His glory."

— John Stott

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK SIX

OPEN HORIZON

APRIL 7TH - APRIL 12TH

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 6 | Open Horizon
(April 7th)

Scripture: Luke 22:48-51

"But Jesus asked him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?' When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, should we strike with our swords?' And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, 'No more of this!' And he touched the man's ear and healed him."

The scene in the Garden of Gethsemane takes a dramatic turn as Judas arrives with a crowd to betray Jesus. With a kiss—the symbol of friendship and affection—Judas seals the fate of the One who loved him unconditionally. Jesus, in the midst of His betrayal, speaks with a mixture of sorrow and rebuke: "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" Jesus recognizes the depth of the treachery but also does not retaliate with anger or violence.

In the immediate aftermath of Jesus' arrest, His disciples, caught in confusion and fear, react impulsively. One of them strikes the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. But Jesus, ever compassionate, rebukes the violence: "No more of this!" and

heals the servant's ear. His response is not one of retaliation but of restoration. In that moment of chaos, Jesus brings a moment of peace and healing.

This act of healing in the face of betrayal and violence is profound. Jesus, who had every right to condemn His betrayer and those who would harm Him, instead chooses to demonstrate the very love and grace He came to offer. His willingness to heal even His enemies teaches us that our call as followers of Christ is not to retaliate in anger but to reflect His love, even in the midst of betrayal, misunderstanding, or injustice.

How often do we, when wronged, want to lash out in anger or defend ourselves? Jesus' example shows us that true strength lies in responding with grace.

"To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine."

— Joseph F. Newton

(April 8th)

Romans 5:3-5

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

Lent invites us into a season of reflection and repentance, drawing our hearts closer to the cross of Christ. In this season, we are reminded that suffering is not an enemy to our faith but a part of its very foundation. Paul speaks powerfully in Romans 5:3-5 about the transformative power of suffering in the life of a believer. But the apostle does not stop at mere endurance; he calls us to glory in our sufferings, to recognize them as the very crucible through which perseverance, character, and hope are refined.

We often try to avoid suffering at all costs, seeking comfort in everything from material goods to fleeting pleasures. Yet, God's Word challenges this natural instinct. When we lean into suffering, not with self-pity but with a trust in the process God has ordained, we find that perseverance emerges. And with perseverance, our character deepens.

It's not a mere survival; it's a transformation. The hard times do not break us; they build in us a resilient hope—a hope that does not disappoint because it is grounded in God's eternal love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

This is where the true beauty of Lent lies—not in the avoidance of hardship but in the redemptive work that God accomplishes within us as we follow the way of the cross. It is in the suffering of Christ that we see the full picture of hope. We, too, are invited into that story. Through our own trials, we discover the depth of God's love, a love that never fails, never disappoints.

In what ways can you embrace the suffering in your life today, trusting that God is working perseverance, character, and hope within you? How can Lent become a time not of mere avoidance but of spiritual transformation?

"The greatest thing anyone can do is to be with God in the midst of suffering, for that is where hope is most fully realized."

— Elisabeth Elliot

(April 9th)

Romans 7:21-23

"So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."

In Romans 7:21-23, Paul gives us an honest, raw look into the internal struggle that every believer faces. He writes about a "law at work" within him—a constant battle between the desire to do good and the presence of evil. Even though his heart delights in God's law, there is another force at play, waging war against the law of his mind. This inner conflict is the experience of every Christian who longs to live in holiness, yet is constantly aware of their own weaknesses and failures.

This tension is one we know all too well. We set out with good intentions, desiring to love God fully, obey His commands, and live according to His ways. But, like Paul, we find that evil is right there with us, pulling us away from what we know to be good. This is the paradox of the Christian life: a life

redeemed by Christ, yet still wrestling with the remnants of sin. The war is not just external but internal, waged in our thoughts, desires, and decisions.

Paul's honesty in this passage is both comforting and convicting. It reassures us that this struggle is not a sign of failure but a sign of spiritual growth. The very fact that we are aware of this battle is evidence of God's work within us, enabling us to recognize what is right and what is wrong. The war within us is a reminder of our need for God's grace and His constant help in our struggle against sin.

Are you aware of the inner conflict Paul describes in your own life? In what areas of your life do you feel the battle between good and evil? How can you rely more on God's grace to help you win that war?

"The Christian life is not about avoiding the battle, but trusting that Christ has already won the war."

— Tim Keller

(April 10th)

Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

In Romans 15:13, Paul offers a beautiful prayer for the believers: a prayer that they would be filled with joy and peace as they trust in God. This verse is a reminder of the profound relationship between trust in God and the abundant hope that He provides. Hope is not something we manufacture on our own; it comes from God, who is the source of all hope.

Paul's prayer is that as we trust God more fully, our hearts will be filled with joy and peace. These are not fleeting emotions or circumstantial comforts, but deep-rooted, supernatural gifts that only God can provide. Joy and peace are the fruits of knowing that God is in control, that He loves us unconditionally, and that our future is secure in Him.

This hope is not something that simply resides within us; it is meant to overflow. As we experience God's joy and peace, we are called to share this hope with others. The power of the Holy Spirit enables this overflow, helping us live out the hope we have in a world that often feels hopeless. It is through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives that we can be a witness of the hope we have, not just in our words but in our actions and attitudes.

How can you cultivate deeper trust in God to experience His joy and peace? In what ways can you allow the hope you have in God to overflow to others, especially those who are struggling?

"Hope is not a wishful longing, but a confident expectation based on the character and promises of God."

— John Piper

(April 11th)

Romans 12:9-13

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."

Romans 12:9-13 is a powerful exhortation for the Christian community to live out their faith in tangible, loving, and sacrificial ways. Paul begins with a call for sincere love—a love that is authentic and deeply rooted in God's character. It is not just a feeling, but an action that rejects evil and clings to what is good. This love is the foundation for all the other commands Paul gives in this passage.

The Christian life is marked by a radical love for others. Paul tells us to be devoted to one another, honoring each other above ourselves. This is not a love that seeks recognition or status but a humble, self-giving love that looks out for the interests of others. In a world that often encourages selfishness and rivalry, the call to honor one another above ourselves is a counter-cultural command that reflects the heart of Christ.

But Paul does not stop with love; he connects love with service. He encourages believers to never lack zeal, to keep their spiritual fervor, and to serve the Lord in all things. This fervor is not for the sake of personal gain but for the glory of God and the good of His people. It is a joyful hope in the Lord, a patient endurance in the face of affliction, and a constant devotion to prayer.

Finally, Paul highlights the importance of generosity and hospitality. Sharing with those in need and practicing hospitality are practical ways to live out the love and service Paul speaks of. This is a love that is not just spoken, but acted upon. It reaches out to those in need, welcomes strangers, and demonstrates the heart of God to the world.

How can you live out sincere love in your relationships with others?

"The Christian life is not a matter of feeling love, but of acting in love."

— C.S. Lewis

(April 12th)

Scripture: Luke 22:60-62

"Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly."

In this poignant moment, Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, denies his Lord three times, just as Jesus had predicted. The depth of Peter's failure is marked by the sound of the rooster crowing, signaling the very moment that he had betrayed his Master. At that instant, Jesus turns and looks directly at Peter, and their eyes meet.

It is important to note that the look of Jesus is not one of condemnation but one of love. It is a look that conveys the understanding of Peter's weakness and the sorrow of the moment. It is not an angry glance, but a gaze that draws Peter back to the very words Jesus had spoken to him earlier. In this look, there is an invitation to repentance, a gentle nudge toward restoration.

The moment that Peter realizes his failure, he weeps bitterly, filled with regret. His weeping signifies true repentance—the kind that comes

from the realization of how deeply we have failed the One who loves us unconditionally. Yet, in this moment of sorrow, there is also hope. For this weeping is the first step toward restoration. Peter's tears are the beginning of his healing.

We, too, often fail. We deny Jesus through our actions, our words, and our choices. But in the midst of our failure, Jesus' look of love and mercy is always present, calling us back to Him. His grace is not given based on our worthiness but on His love and His desire to restore us.

Peter's story does not end with his tears. It is just the beginning of a journey of restoration. Jesus, after His resurrection, would specifically reach out to Peter, asking him three times if he loved Him, and commissioning him to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). Peter's failure did not disqualify him from being used by God—it was part of the process of his transformation.

"The Christian life is not a life of perfection, but a life of repentance, where every failure is an opportunity to experience the grace and mercy of God." — R.C. Sproul

40 DAYS OF DEPTH

WEEK SEVEN

LIVING SHORES

APRIL 14TH - APRIL 19TH

KOBE UNION CHURCH

Week 7 | Living Shores
(April 14th)

Scripture: Luke 22:67-69

"If you are the Messiah, tell us." Jesus replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

In this passage, we find Jesus standing before the religious authorities, accused of blasphemy and facing the interrogation of those who seek to discredit Him. They demand, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." It is not a question seeking truth but a challenge to His authority, meant to trap Him in His words. Jesus, knowing their hearts, responds with wisdom and restraint. His words, though true, are also an indictment of their unbelief. He knows that they will not believe Him, even if He tells them the truth.

But Jesus does not shy away from proclaiming the truth. He declares, "But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." In this powerful statement, Jesus affirms His divine authority and sovereignty, even as He faces rejection and impending suffering. He boldly points to His future exaltation at the right hand of God,

despite the mockery and violence that awaits Him.

This moment is a reminder of the challenge we often face in our own lives when we are called to testify to the truth of who Christ is. Like Jesus, we may face opposition, misunderstanding, and even rejection. Yet, we are called to stand firm in the truth, knowing that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, ruling with all authority and power. His testimony is unshaken, and we are called to align ourselves with that same unwavering truth.

In our own moments of trial, we are invited to remember that the truth of the Gospel is not dependent on human belief or approval. Jesus proclaimed the truth even when He knew it would be rejected, and He calls us to do the same. Our testimony is not to be shaped by the responses of others but by the eternal truth of who Christ is.

"The truth is not what is popular, but what is eternal."

— A.W. Tozer

(April 15th)

Scripture: Luke 23:3

**"So Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'You have said so,'
Jesus replied."**

In this moment of Jesus' trial before Pilate, the question posed is one of great significance: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate, representing worldly authority, asks this question not out of curiosity for truth but in an attempt to understand the political nature of the man before him. He is looking for a reason to either condemn or absolve Jesus based on the Roman concept of kingship.

But Jesus, in His quiet and confident response, reveals a deeper truth. "You have said so." In these words, Jesus does not deny the title, but neither does He conform to the worldly understanding of kingship. His kingdom is not of this world, and His reign is not like the power structures of human rulers. Pilate's question is rooted in the political, the temporal, and the material, while Jesus' answer points to a far greater reality—the eternal kingdom of God, which is not bound by time or place but by the will of the Father.

There is a profound difference between the way the world views authority and how the Kingdom of God operates. Pilate, as a Roman governor, understood kingship as power and dominion, control and force. He could not comprehend a King who had no intention of seizing power through violence or manipulation, a King who would rather be mocked, beaten, and killed than raise a sword in self-defense.

Jesus' statement here is an invitation to understand that His kingship is not defined by earthly standards. His authority is revealed through humility, sacrifice, and obedience to the will of the Father. In His apparent weakness, He is the greatest King the world has ever known, and His kingdom is one that transcends all earthly kingdoms.

As followers of Christ, we must ask ourselves: Do we truly understand the nature of His kingship?

***"The Christian life is not a matter of what we know but of who we know
and to whom we yield."***

— Watchman Nee

(April 16th)

Scripture: Luke 23:18-21

"But the whole crowd shouted, 'Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!' (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again, but they kept shouting, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate argued, 'Why? What crime has this man committed?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'"

The scene before us is one of profound irony and sorrow. Pilate, a Roman governor, seeks to release Jesus, the innocent man, but the crowds demand the release of Barabbas, a notorious criminal who had committed murder and led an insurrection. The choice between these two men—Jesus, the righteous King, and Barabbas, the rebel—is a pivotal moment in the history of salvation. The crowd's decision to choose Barabbas over Jesus is not just an historical event but a reflection of the human heart's rebellion against the truth.

In this moment, we see the human tendency to reject Christ and embrace what is false. Barabbas, whose name means "son of the father," is a counterfeit figure of the true Son of the Father, Jesus. Barabbas offers a version of freedom that is based on violence,

while Jesus offers true freedom—freedom from sin, death, and the grip of evil.

Pilate's repeated questioning—"What crime has this man committed?"—reveals the innocence of Jesus. He has done nothing wrong; He is blameless. Yet, the cries of the crowd grow louder, demanding His crucifixion. This is the tragic reality of the human condition: we reject the very One who offers us life and choose the path of destruction.

The choice between Barabbas and Jesus is not only a decision faced by the crowds that day, but it is a daily decision that we must make. Will we choose the rebellion of sin, the counterfeit freedom that comes with it, or will we choose the submission to Christ, the King who offers true freedom?

"The root of all our failure is in the self-life, the 'I' that will not yield to God's will."

— Watchman Nee

(April 17th)

Scripture: Luke 23:34

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."

As Jesus hung on the cross, suffering unimaginable physical pain, He offered one of the most profound and grace-filled prayers in all of Scripture: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." These words reflect the heart of the Gospel—the boundless forgiveness of God even for those who actively participate in His suffering and death.

At this moment, Jesus is not only speaking to the soldiers who are mocking Him, the crowd that is jeering at Him, and the religious leaders who have falsely condemned Him. He is speaking to all of humanity, to you and me. His prayer is one of deep compassion, understanding that the root of their actions is ignorance—the blindness that comes from sin.

Christ's forgiveness on the cross is not just an event in history; it is a constant, living reality for each of us who would choose to

receive it. Jesus, in His perfect submission to the will of the Father, models the ultimate act of forgiveness, and He calls us to follow in His steps.

Forgiveness is not just a matter of letting go of personal offenses. It is a powerful act of grace that mirrors the love of God. The forgiveness Jesus offers from the cross is not conditional; it is unconditional and extended to those who are unaware of the gravity of their actions. Jesus doesn't wait for the soldiers to repent; He forgives them before they can even acknowledge their wrongdoing. This act of radical love and grace is a call to us as well.

We too, as followers of Christ, are called to extend forgiveness in such a way—to those who may not ask for it, who may not even recognize their wrongs, or who may never understand the depth of the hurt they have caused.

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

(April 18th)

Scripture: Luke 23:40-43

"But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

In one of the final moments of Jesus' earthly life, a profound exchange takes place between two criminals hanging beside Him on the cross. One of them mocks Jesus, but the other, in a moment of deep conviction, rebukes his fellow criminal and acknowledges Jesus' innocence. This criminal, who had been condemned for his own sins, recognizes something extraordinary in Jesus: that He is the King who reigns over an eternal kingdom.

In his simple, heartfelt plea, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," the criminal expresses the core of the Christian faith—a recognition of Jesus' divine kingship and the hope of salvation.

Jesus' response is immediate and full of compassion: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." There are no conditions, no requirements, and no need for the

criminal to prove his worth. In his final moments, he receives the promise of eternal life with Jesus, not because of his deeds, but because of his faith in the Savior.

This exchange is a beautiful reminder of God's incredible grace. It teaches us that it's never too late to turn to Jesus. No matter how far we have gone, no matter the wrongs we have committed, if we come to Jesus in repentance and faith, we can receive the promise of eternal life.

Just as the thief on the cross didn't have the chance to do good works or live a life of righteousness after his encounter with Jesus, we are reminded that our salvation is not based on what we can do but on what Jesus has done for us. He extends the same offer of grace to each of us today—paradise with Him, freely given to those who believe.

"God's grace is greater than all our sin."

— Julia Johnston

(April 19th)

Scripture: Luke 23:44-46

"It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last."

In the final moments of Jesus' life on the cross, the world falls into a mysterious darkness. From noon until three in the afternoon, the sun stops shining, and an eerie silence envelops the land. This physical darkness mirrors the spiritual darkness that hung over humanity as Jesus bore the weight of our sins. Yet, in the midst of this profound suffering and the shrouding of the earth, Jesus speaks words of trust and surrender: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

These words are a declaration of Jesus' complete surrender to the will of the Father. Even as He endures the unimaginable physical and emotional pain of the cross, He entrusts Himself entirely to God. Jesus is not simply giving up His life; He is releasing His spirit into the hands of the Father in perfect trust, knowing that His death will fulfill God's redemptive plan for the world. In these final words, we see the intimate relationship

between the Son and the Father, a relationship grounded in obedience, trust, and love.

For us, this moment on the cross represents the ultimate act of surrender. Jesus shows us the way—when we face trials, suffering, and even death, we too can entrust our lives into the hands of a loving Father. Our own struggles may not always make sense, but we can be assured that when we place our lives into God's hands, we are trusting in His sovereignty and His goodness. Jesus' act of surrender on the cross is not just a model of obedience but an invitation for us to trust God with our lives, knowing that He is faithful.

The tearing of the temple curtain symbolizes the removal of the barrier between humanity and God. Through Jesus' sacrifice, access to God is made possible for all people. No longer do we need a priest to stand between us and God—through Jesus, we can now come boldly into His presence. The curtain is torn, the separation is

broken, and the way to the Father is open.

As we reflect on Jesus' last words, we are reminded that true

peace and rest come only when we commit ourselves completely to God, knowing that our lives are safe in His hands.

"The essence of the Christian life is not to try to live for Christ, but to let Christ live in us."

— A.W. Tozer

(Bonus)

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:21

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

In the heart of the gospel lies the incredible truth of 2 Corinthians 5:21: the great exchange. Christ, who was sinless, took on the full weight of our sin, and in return, we receive His righteousness. This verse encapsulates the entire message of redemption—God's perfect plan to reconcile sinful humanity to Himself.

Jesus, the sinless Son of God, bore the penalty for sin that we could never bear. He, who knew no sin, became sin on our behalf. His perfect life was given as a substitutionary sacrifice so that, through His death and resurrection, we could be made right with God. This exchange is not just a transaction; it is the very foundation of our faith. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, not because of anything we've done, but because of His grace and mercy.

We are not simply forgiven of our sins, but we are also clothed in the righteousness of Christ. This is the astounding beauty of the gospel: not only does God forgive us, but He also gives us the standing of righteousness in His eyes. In Christ, we are declared righteous, not by our own works, but by His perfect life and sacrificial death.

As believers, this truth should humble us and fill us with awe. We did nothing to deserve this righteousness, and yet, God freely offers it to us. It is the ultimate demonstration of His love and grace. Our response should be one of gratitude, recognizing that our salvation is entirely the work of Christ, and not of our own doing. This grace should also lead us to live differently—to live in a way that reflects the righteousness we've been given, bearing witness to the love and grace of God in our daily lives.

"God's righteousness is a gift, not something we can earn. It is the heart of the gospel that God gives us righteousness because of Jesus, not because of our merit."

— Timothy Keller

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