

Our Hope is in the Resurrection

It is appropriate that we conclude the Old Testament portion of our Bible Study for Married Couples with a set of reflections on the resurrection in the Easter season. Sometimes we are so familiar with the story that we don't pause to examine or reflect on how truly radical and revolutionary is the claim that He is risen, and the tomb is empty!

We begin with what precisely the Scriptures meant by "resurrection." It did not mean simple resuscitation of a dead person or some sort of spiritual, disembodied, ghostly existence. Rather, resurrection meant that our dead physical bodies would no longer be dead. We would come out of our tombs; our bodies would be transformed, and we would never die again. The Jews at the time of Jesus believed that the general resurrection for all the righteous would happen at the end of the present evil age. God would act in a definitive way to set the world to rights. He would defeat his enemies, establish his kingdom, and transform all of creation.

The Jewish and Christian understanding of the afterlife involves two stages. First, there is a period of time between the death of a righteous person and the resurrection of the body. The most we can say about that time is that the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, or that they are alive in a state of peaceful rest with God, waiting for the general resurrection at the end of the present evil age. They are part of the great communion of saints, and their intercession for us is powerful. The second stage is what we commonly call "resurrection from the dead": our bodies will be reunited with our souls, but now in a perfected, glorious form, and after the Final Judgment, we will be united with God and with those who have loved him in this life, seeing his face and experiencing untold and unimaginable joys forever and ever and ever! Resurrection, then, is "life after" life after death!

Remember that the Jews expected that at the end of the present evil age, there would be a general resurrection. From a Jewish standpoint, then, one of the more unusual elements of the Easter story is not resurrection of the body, but the resurrection of only one person. This new way of thinking about resurrection is at the heart of our claim that Jesus is Lord and Christ.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND AND EXPECTATIONS

The doctrine of the resurrection developed late in the history of Israel. We know that the belief in resurrection was not universal at Jesus' time. For example, the Sadducees did not accept it. The first unambiguous expressions of a belief in resurrection don't show up until sometime around the Maccabean revolt (167–165 BC). However, that does not mean there weren't hints and beliefs that prepared the way. The prophets proclaimed that the Creator God who had made a covenant with Abraham, Moses, and David would be faithful to that covenant even when his people weren't. They believed he would act in dramatic and unmistakable ways to set things to right. The prophets used startling metaphors and images to describe what that great day would be like: God's people coming out of tombs, dry bones coming back to life, curing the incurable wound, establishing an unbreakable covenant, etc. Then, gradually, what began as a metaphor for something spectacular became an expression of what would really happen. And one day, on a real day right in the middle of history, it actually happened. One man was resurrected—and that changed the course of human history.

WHY IS RESURRECTION IMPORTANT FOR US TODAY?

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes said, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and a chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14). The short version of his fairly pessimistic book is this: It does not matter what we do in this life because there is no afterlife, and there is one fate for all creatures, and all the good things we build will go to someone else when we die (see Ecclesiastes 2:16–21; 9:1–6).

From one perspective, he is correct. There are today some remnants left of the great Roman aqueduct systems and roads—but for the most part they are ruins. Most human achievements are surpassed at one time or another. It would appear that most of what we do is destined for the junk heap or to be forgotten. That would mean that our labor really is in vain. What led St. Paul to a very different conclusion? What led him to say “our labor is **not** in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58)? Simply put, the Resurrection of Jesus.

I remember a time in my life when I essentially agreed with Ecclesiastes and thought that what I did was important because it was my bus ticket to heaven. I was not thinking necessarily that I would earn my ticket by my own efforts. I knew I needed God—but in the confusing muddle that was my thought process, escaping this evil world was what it was all about. I thought that there would be an end to the space–time continuum. The world would end, and I would be out of here.

I remember when I finally grasped that the Resurrection of Jesus was the resurrection of his real body. I was wondering why Jesus, and by extension we, would need a real body, if we were merely destined to play harps on clouds, or some such thing.

As I came to understand more about the resurrection, I found that it was a dangerous idea with real-life political ramifications. This idea put the fire in the belly of the revolutionaries who resisted Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king, in the Maccabean Revolt in 167 BC and the Jewish revolutionaries who resisted Rome at the time of Jesus. Belief in the resurrection was the hope and belief that the Creator God would act; he would restore their bodies and their lives someday, even if they lost them now. This hope drove them to do remarkable and great things for the Lord, even to sacrifice their lives.

Jesus’ Resurrection gave his followers a taste of what was to come: death was not the last word. But it also transformed the way his followers lived here and now. Hope for the future also changed their present reality, as it had done for the martyrs and revolutionaries before them. Jesus’ followers lived a different way because they too were filled with hope and purpose, not escape and evasion; there was no bus ticket, and they didn’t want one. The early Christians invested in this world, in this life. Why? Because they were convinced that the Creator God loved this world he had created and intended to rescue not only us, but the world as well.

WHY IS RESURRECTION IMPORTANT FOR OUR MARRIAGE?

In the sixth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul expressed concern about the behavior of certain Corinthian Christians. They were behaving badly at the elaborate dinners to which they had been invited, especially around the time of major religious and sporting events. These dinners would have involved copious amounts of food, wine, and sexual favors provided by the host for his guests. There was also the ever-present danger of the pagan cults of Aphrodite, Dionysus/Bacchus, Apollo, Isis, and Serapis. Idolatry and the sacred prostitution associated with these pagan cults was an integral part of civic life and culture. Even celebrating a relative’s birthday, marriage, or graduation could be an occasion for participating in idolatry and sexual immorality.

One can easily imagine some of the Christians wanting to fit in with their neighbors or relatives and being attracted to this kind of behavior. It is equally possible to imagine that they were not sure how to get out of difficult situations without offending a patron, friend, or relative. Once trapped or lured into these situations, some of them appear to have adopted the slogans of the local philosophers as a way to justify their behavior. The excuse would be something like, "It does not matter what we do with our body, because our real self is our soul, and that remains untouched by whatever happens to the body." Paul quotes them this way: "Food for the belly and the belly for food and God will do away with both!" (1 Corinthians 6:13). The same line of reasoning would have justified visiting the prostitutes at the pagan shrines or partaking in the after-dinner entertainment at the fancy banquets. Here too, they might rationalize that the body is not really "them." Or they might have put it like this: "Casual sex was made for the body and the body for casual sex, and since God will destroy both and I will live on, I can do what I want with my body."

They could do anything they wanted with their body because the body really didn't matter; it was not really them. (Sound familiar?) Paul said to these people: NO! God will raise your body because without it you will not be human—even in the afterlife. What you do with your body matters, because it is inseparable from YOU! What your body does, you do.

During this argument in I Corinthians 6, Paul goes on to quote Genesis 2:24: "The two will become one flesh." For Paul, that is proof that what we do with our body matters. It matters because God intends the physical act of intercourse to create and to express the unity of two persons. The two persons really do become one! Intercourse with a prostitute creates an actual unity, where there ought not to be one. And because we are one with Christ in Baptism, we have now involved Christ himself in our sin, for he is one with us! How important then that we be one person, united with Christ, saying with our bodies as with our whole selves that we are his and his alone.

The Resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of our bodies demonstrate that our physical bodies are indeed good, and that without them, we are not fully human persons. Our marriages are concrete signs of the total and complete unity of persons that will one day be the unity of Christ and his bride the Church. Marriage in Christ involves the unity of two people, body and soul.

What we do with our bodies matters. Our love as married men and women expresses, in a way no other human relationship can, the spousal love of God for his people. Our spousal love, because it involves our whole person, is fruitful, faithful, and forever. God's love for us is the same. Alleluia!

We conclude volume one of our Bible Study for Married Couples with the following Old Testament passages and two Easter readings. Enjoy!

Hosea 6:1–6

Isaiah 5:1–2; Amos 9:13–15

Isaiah 25:6–9

Ezekiel 37:1–4, 7–14

Isaiah 65:17–25

Daniel 12:1–3

2 Maccabees 7:13–14, 20–23

Wisdom 3:1–8

Matthew 28:8–15

Luke 24:13–23, 27–32



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Hosea 6:1–6

"Come, let us return to the LORD; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up.² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.³ Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth."⁴ What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early.⁵ Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light.⁶ For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Meditation

Israel had missed the point of their relationship with the Lord. They were doing religious things like going to the shrines of Yahweh and offering sacrifices. But their hearts were far from the Lord. As soon as Sabbath was over, they went back to cheating the poor. They sacrificed to other gods and frequented the sacred prostitutes that worked at those shrines. They presumed on God's mercy and mocked him with their response. In essence they said, "It's no big deal. God will be angry for a little while, then he will welcome us back as he always does." But Israel would indeed suffer and be torn down. The kingdom that Hosea was addressing would be destroyed. They would not be "raised" ever again—until, as St. Paul said, Israel, in the person of her king, the Christ, would suffer and die for our sins. He also saw that in accordance with this passage, Christ Jesus would be raised from the dead (see 1 Corinthians 15:4).

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 5:1–2; Amos 9:13–15

Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.² He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

Amos 9:13 The time is surely coming, says the LORD, when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

Meditation

My brother sent 5 two-year-old grapevines to our father for his 65th birthday. My Dad was retired and living up at the lake. Dad had begun to fancy himself a gardener and was very excited to receive such a delightful gift. He took great pains to plant the vines and care for them. He bought books on how to mulch them, fertilize them, and build the arbor to promote their growth. He tended them with great care. In the second summer, when we would visit him, he would point out the little grapes that were beginning to grow. We watched the delight of our dad as he catalogued the progress of his grapes. He spoke often of how much he looked forward to tasting them. Then disaster struck. Sometime during the night before the big harvest, one or more deer ate every single ripe grape on his carefully tended vines. My dad was heartbroken.

Now imagine three things. First, imagine God's disappointment when he discovered that his vineyard had suffered an even worse disaster: carefully chosen, well-tended vines were producing very sour wild grapes. Second, imagine that after the inevitable punishment for such a transgression, creation itself had been healed. The grapes would do what they were supposed to do and more. Wild animals wouldn't eat the fruit, and the two- to four-year process of growing grapes from seed would be shortened to the point where the treader of the grapes was following the planter of the seeds to harvest the grapes—without even waiting for two-year-old vines! There would be such an abundance of fruit that the mountains would be dripping sweet wine and the hills flowing with it! And finally, imagine the day of resurrection, which will be nothing short of the transformation of creation, the transformation of our bodies and the defeat of all of our enemies, including death. That is our real hope, of which Amos's lush images are only a picture!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 25:6–9

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.⁷ And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations;⁸ he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.⁹ It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Meditation

On "that day" the LORD of hosts will throw a big party. All the best food and best wines (notice he repeated that in case you missed it!). Think of the big banquet in Isaiah 55 and all the meals that Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors. Think of his Last Supper and the meal he ate with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Think of the wonderful wine that Jesus supplied for that young couple in Cana—at their wedding feast. Think of the great wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19). There will be a big party to mark the end of the present evil age and the beginning of the age to come. What will we be celebrating? We will be celebrating the great act of salvation; the marriage of God and his people; Christ and his bride, the Church; and the defeat of death. Death will be swallowed up forever; our ancient enemy will be defeated, and we will have a great big party.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:1–4, 7–14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones. . . . ⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. ¹¹ Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

Meditation

This is one of those magnificent passages where the Lord speaks through a prophet and the message has a double meaning. The prophet is trying to describe what it will be like when God acts to bring Judah back from her long exile in Babylon. It will be such an incredible event that the only thing you could compare it to would be watching a valley full of dead, dry bones coming back to life. It will be like God opening their graves and calling them back to life—unheard of, unimaginable!!! Yet this passage and others gave future generations of faithful people the language and imagery to begin to believe that the Creator of the universe could one day act in such a definitive way that creation would be renewed and our great enemy, death, would finally and definitively be defeated. God will act!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 65:17–25

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—and their descendants as well. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Meditation

How does one try to imagine what will happen at the end of the present evil age? Ancient Israel and the authors of Scripture did not believe that the world would end. God loves his good creation, but something went terribly wrong. Chaos entered the good creation with the rebellion of Adam and Eve, and, quite frankly, it continues to enter the world through our rebellion to this very day. But chaos and sin will not win the day. God will transform his creation. He will make it new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. What will that look like? The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; lion and ox will eat straw together. The rabbits that eat my garden and the coyotes that eat the rabbits will probably both eat my garden—but I won't care, because the thorns and thistles that represent chaos will be gone! There will be enough for all of us! It will be a great and glorious day!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Daniel 12:1–3

"At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.² Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.³ Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Meditation

One of the biggest surprises in the Easter stories is the fact that the risen Jesus did not look anything like what you might expect from reading the story of Daniel, or even from the story of the Transfiguration. The risen Jesus did not shine like a star. He was not glowing white as in the Transfiguration. He was recognizable and not recognizable at the same time. He was physical and able to appear and disappear at the same time. He was able to easily move between two dimensions, the heavenly and the earthly. Daniel began the process of trying to express in words and metaphors what is nearly unimaginable. What would a formerly dead body look like? What kind of transformation would it take? The dead will awaken from their sleep and come back to life. They will be radically transformed and live forever and shine like stars! The biggest surprise, though, would be that one person would awaken from sleep in the dust of the earth well ahead of all the others. No one, not even Daniel, saw that coming!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.

**Pray**

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: 2 Maccabees 7:13–14, 20–23

After he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way.¹⁴ When he was near death, he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!"²⁰ The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord.²¹ She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them,²² "I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you.²³ Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws."

Meditation:

The persecution began in April of 167 BC. In December of that year, the Syrian king, Antiochus IV, erected the Abomination of Desolation in the Temple of Jerusalem. This was a pagan altar that contained or consisted of 3 meteorites that represented the 3 gods of the religion that he imposed. The cult required monthly sacrifices, included ritual prostitution and violations of the purity laws, and it forbade practicing circumcision and keeping Torah. The response of some faithful Jews to this persecution and the imposition of pagan religion and Greek practices was violent revolution. Under the leadership of Mattathias and his five sons, the Jewish revolutionaries succeeded in winning a guerrilla war against vastly superior forces, and in March of 164, they received a letter from Antiochus' co-regent that the persecution would end. The imposed cult ceased, and they were once again permitted to observe Torah. In the summer of 164 they began the process of purifying the Temple, and on the 25th of Kislev (November–December), they rededicated the Temple and began the feast of Hanukkah: the Feast of Dedication. During the three years of persecution and terror, many faithful Jews had been martyred. They were willing to give their lives because they believed in the resurrection from the dead.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Wisdom 3:1-8

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.² In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster,³ and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.⁴ For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.⁵ Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;⁶ like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.⁷ In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble.⁸ They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever.

Meditation

This wonderful passage gives us a consoling hint about the fate of our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Christ before the general resurrection. They are at peace and with God. But more than that, this passage reminds us that our hope is full of immortality. Death looks like a great defeat and indeed it is a great enemy of humanity – even Jesus wept and expressed great anger at the death of his dear friend Lazarus. Death, however, is not the last word. The righteous will return in the resurrection and be seated at the hand of God. They will participate in the judgement of the wicked. They will, as the author says, “shine forth and run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples and the Lord will reign over them forever.”

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 28:8-15

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." ¹¹ While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

Meditation

The Scriptures are very precise. Resurrection means that our dead physical bodies will no longer be dead. We will come out of our tombs; our bodies will be transformed, and we will never die again. The tomb must be empty or it's not a resurrection. That was why this unlikely alliance of the Chief Priests and Pharisees, risked violating Sabbath to ask Pilate to put a guard on the tomb. They knew it wasn't about ghosts and disembodied spirits, it was about the body. Resurrection was such a dangerous idea that they went so far as to bribe the guards to lie, to say that the body had been stolen by his disciples. But it was too late for the lie to change the course of history. The women and many after them saw the risen Jesus. The resurrection changed the course of human history. What are the implications for our marriages?

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

-Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 24:13-23, 27-32

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive...²⁷ Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.³² They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

Meditation

Later that same day, two disciples were walking slowly from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus about seven miles away. It has been suggested that the two disciples were a husband and wife, Cleopas and Mary. A Stranger joined them along the way and asked them why they were so sad. The couple related what had happened. The Stranger broke open the Scriptures for them, and their hearts burned. As they approached the village, the Stranger made as if to go on. But the couple urged him to stay because it was getting late in the day. He consented. They sat down at a table to eat the evening meal. The stranger picked up a piece of bread, blessed it, broke it and gave them each a piece. At that moment their eyes were opened. The phrase in Luke's Gospel reminds one of Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:7). Their eyes were opened, and they saw their nakedness and shame. This time their eyes were opened, and they saw the Lord, the giver of life. This time, the story did not end ultimately with death but with the promise of life.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.