

GLENKIRK CHURCH



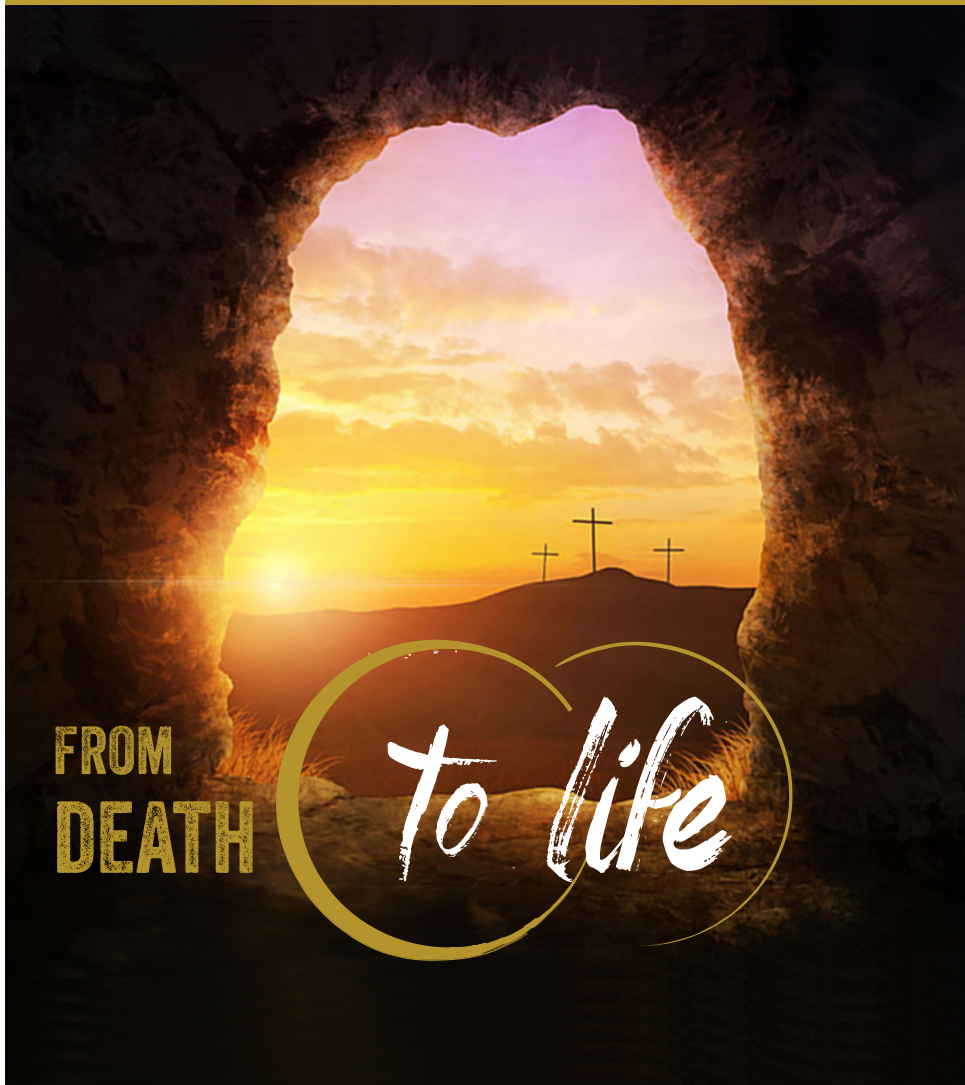
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

APRIL 22 - 26, 2019

FROM  
DEATH

to life





### **Luke 24:13-35; Matthew 28:1-10; John 20:1-18**

I can still remember when I first saw this 1601 work of art by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, “Supper at Emmaus.” I was a sophomore in college and visiting the National Museum in London. It was in a room by itself and it caught me off guard. Maybe that is why I can so identify with the disciples in this picture. They were caught off guard. What do you do with Jesus? Do you hug Him? Do you jump up and down? Do you believe Him? What do you when your whole life is changed so completely? What do we do with Easter?

Reflecting on this passage of Scripture, Mark Buchanan writes: “The heart condition of these people is actually twofold: slow and burning. That is a strange affliction, and, I think, common. One definition of Christ’s followers might be that: people of the slow, burning heart. Sorrow and hope, awe and self-pity, wonder and worry, believing and doubting, yes and no mix loosely in us, tugging us one way, jostling us another. Jesus walks the road with us. But we can look straight at Him and not recognize Him.”

“One of our persistent cultural myths is the myth of fulfillment—the promise that, on earth, the fullness of all I truly need and all I really desire awaits ... The problem is, I don’t see fulfillment this side of the Jordan promised in Scripture. I see joy promised and peace. But also tribulation, soul-piercing. I see that the ‘great cloud of witnesses’ who surround us, cheering us on, have among them those who ‘faced jeers and flogging, and even chains ... were put to death by stoning ... were sawed in two ... went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated ... wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and holes in the ground.’ What’s more, ‘none of them received what had been promised’ (Hebrews 11:36-39).

“The portrait of the faithful is not a portrait of the fulfilled. What defines them—what defines all of us on the road to Emmaus—is hope. What defines them is a slow, burning heart. What defines them is a yearning: knowing in their bones, in spite of loss or sorrow or aloneness, that there is something more, something else, something better. What defines them is a hauntedness, a shaky but unshakable conviction that the Christ they see now through a glass darkly, in little fleeting puzzling glimpses, they will see one day face-to-face. But for now, on this road, their slow hearts burn.” (Mark Buchanan)

What do you do with Easter? It took the disciples at least 40 days to even begin to figure it out. Actually, it took them the rest of their lives. Their lives were still filled with uncertainties, questions, persecutions, and even disagreements. But they now had hope and they rearranged every part of their lives based on this new hope.

Easter is not an end. Easter is a beginning, the beginning of a new way of living. It’s the beginning, as C.S. Lewis stated, of the “great reversal.” With Easter, God is in the process of re-creating

all that was lost in Genesis 3. With Easter, He is re-creating you and me into people who reflect His glory, His love, His presence. It is a re-creation project that will not have its conclusion until Jesus comes again. But, in the midst of our waiting, we have hope and we have a calling to join Him in the re-creation project. As we live as new, born-again people, we will tell others about this hope that is really a certainty upon which we can build our entire lives and futures.

And so, as we proceed from Lent into being Easter people, a few last questions to reflect on:

1. Where do you need to hear Jesus say, “Do not be afraid ... He has risen.” What fears do you have that you can now let go because of the power of Jesus’ resurrection and the hope that is our in His making all things new?
2. Where do you need Him to say, “Don’t hold on to Me. Don’t hold on to the mountain-top high, the time in the safe garden. Go, tell, love others sacrificially as I have loved you?”
3. Where do you need to let go of your agenda and what you think God should do, or what you think He is up to, and just obediently trust Him?
4. Where do you need to let go of the past and let go of what you think He should do so that you can let Him finish His work in His way?

5. Where do you need to let the newness of life in Christ break your old patterns?
  
6. The first disciples to see Jesus after His resurrection did not recognize Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Where have you not recognized His work, His presence in your life?
  
7. The early disciples did not understand the Scriptures; they did not understand what He had tried to tell them all along. Where have you also turned a deaf ear to Jesus because you did not want to hear? Where have you not understood?
  
8. Finally, the disciples had to let go of the old patterns of what it meant to be a follower of Jesus, old understandings of what God was going to do and how He was going to do it. They had to let go of their earth-bound expectations and trust and hope. What old patterns of life do you need to let go of today?
  
9. With Easter all things are being made new. Where do you need to let the new work of Jesus invade your life?

**Source**

All quoted material was written by Mark Buchanan. "Hope for the Journey," *Journey to the Cross: Lent/Easter 2019*. A Christianity Today Special Issue.

# MONDAY

## 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

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*“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” —1 Corinthians 1:10*

The chameleon is best known for its superior ability to hide in plain sight. On a bed of moss, its skin will turn green. But on the ground, it will turn brown. Many creatures blend into nature using God-given camouflage suits to aid their survival. It's natural to adapt to an environment. But followers of Jesus Christ are different; they are new creations, born from above and changed from within by the presence of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17). Believers will have values and a lifestyle that confronts the world and opposes its values and accepted morals. Christians don't blend in very well.

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church because they were struggling against blending in. In a major cosmopolitan city, this urban church was surrounded by corruption and rampant sin pressuring them to conform. Paul had received messages from sources reporting deep struggles that the congregation was having with intense questions about the meaning of their freedom in Christ. Paul will address their questions about idolatry, sexual behavior, marriage, worship and spiritual gifts. He calls them into harmony and unity in thought and purpose (1 Corinthians 1:10).

The struggle to stand out for Christ and not blend in with the world is one that every church has today. I want to make a difference for Jesus! But I still find that I wrestle at times with pride, laziness, and (sadly) apathy.

In this letter Paul calls all Christians to be careful not to blend in with the world and its accepted values. Instead, we are to live Christ-centered, blameless, loving lives that make a difference for God. Part of Paul's final instructions include: *"Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love"* (1 Corinthians 16:13,14).

Lord, help us to be on guard that we not blend in but stand out for You in our homes, churches, schools and workplaces. Give us the courage and strength to do everything with love for Your glory!

## QUESTIONS

If the Apostle Paul were to write a letter to Glenkirk today, what do you think he would say? What are some practical ways you have experienced Christ-centered love in church?

## PRAYERS FOR TUMUTUMU SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Pray for Tumutumu School for the Deaf in Kenya, an institution which identifies, nurtures, and empowers deaf children to fully reach their potential.

# TUESDAY

## 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:3

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A few years ago I received a book, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*, from a mentor. I tossed it aside to read “when I had time.” This last year I noticed my prayer life was unsatisfying and this book surfaced on my desk. Getting comfortable with the language takes time, but its impact is powerful. As I read this prayer, I thought of Paul’s goal for the church in his Corinthian letters.

MIGHTY GOD,

I humble myself for faculties misused,  
opportunities neglected,  
words ill-advised,

I repent of my folly and inconsiderate ways,  
my broken resolutions, untrue service,  
my backsliding steps,  
my vain thoughts.

O bury my sins in the ocean of Jesus’ blood  
and let no evil result from my fretful temper,  
unseemly behavior, provoking pettiness.

**Fill me with an overflowing ocean of compassion,  
the reign of love my motive,  
the law of love my rule.**



O thou God of all grace, make me more thankful, more humble;  
Inspire me with a deep sense of my unworthiness arising from  
the depravity of my nature, my omitted duties,  
my unimproved advantages,  
thy commands violated by me.

With all my calls to gratitude and joy may I remember that  
I have reason for sorrow and humiliation;

O give me repentance unto life;

Cement my oneness with my blessed Lord,  
that faith may adhere to Him more immovably,  
that love may entwine itself around Him more tightly,  
that His spirit may pervade every fiber of my being.

Then send me out to make Him known to my brothers and sisters.

Amen.

## QUESTIONS

What motivates you in your service to God? What holds you back from serving God in your home, church, school or workplace?

## PRAYERS FOR TUMUTUMU SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Pray that the students would feel God's love each and every day,  
that they would know they are valued members of society.

# WEDNESDAY

## 1 John 4:11, 19-21

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*“The more I learn about humans, the more I love my dog.”*  
—Mark Twain

Some people annoy us. They interrupt us when we’re trying to concentrate, ignore us when we need help, or give us unwanted advice. And this is not only at work but at church. Sometimes, it seems, the best we can do is tolerate them.

Tolerating people, however, is not loving them; and God has set a high standard for us in relationships—especially in the family of God. Our love for people does not come from self-effort. God has imparted genuine, unconditional love to us, and He gives us an example of what love looks like: Jesus Christ.

John wrote, *“Dear friends, since God so loved us ...”* If you have experienced this kind of love, if you have been to the cross and felt the overwhelming cleansing of God’s love for you—despite the antagonism, apathy, or hatefulness you have shown Him and despite loving your own way and wanting to do what you like, if you have experienced God’s grace in forgiving and forgetting the past, then you not only can love someone else but you “ought to”—you owe it. That’s where the word *ought* comes from; you “owe it” to love one another.

John continued describing God as the prime mover, the One who initiated love toward us when we were completely unlovable.

He showered us with grace, forgiveness, and affection; and we respond with the affection of a loved child calling Him “Abba Father” (Romans 8:15 NTL).

The love we show others indicates our level of love for God. If we fail to love horizontally, we can assume there’s a problem in our vertical relationship with God. We won’t reach out in love until God has first reached down into our hearts to enable us to love Him.

We show Christ-like love for others by pursuing what’s best for them. When we’re listening, we’re fully present in the moment. When we’re caring, we give everything we’ve got because we’re aware that God has given His all to us. Does this describe you today? The more we experience the transforming love of God, the more His love spills out of us towards those around us.

Father, Your love is amazing! Help us to see where we can reach out in love towards others instead of tolerating them. Thank You for Jesus Christ who is love and gave His life that we can have life in Him.

## QUESTIONS

How can you experience God’s love more deeply? What difference will it make?

## PRAYERS FOR TUMUTUMU SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Pray for the parents of the students at this school. Many do not accept their children as they are. Pray that they would acknowledge them and provide for them.

# THURSDAY

## 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthian 12:31

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*“The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith.”* —1 Timothy 1:5

Just as error can be detected by what it produces, so too can truth be detected by what it produces. You can tell the Gospel is having its effect upon you when you are becoming a more compassionate, loving, patient and tenderhearted person, and you are reflecting those qualities to people around you. That is what Jesus said would happen, and that is why His Great Commandment to us is that we should “love one another” (John 13:34).

Paul in his first letter to Timothy traces the path of love back to its source. Let’s examine the three statements that produce love, starting with “genuine faith.” Faith is believing what God has said about the complete end of your old life and the impartation of your new life, which is identified with the righteousness of Christ—this is what you believe. You are new creation; you are not the same. Everything of corrective nature in Christianity is to come back to this source, Jesus. Love begins with sincere faith that the great facts of the Gospel are personally true of you.

When you believe that, then your actions will begin to change. Believers are not forced to stop things; they begin to see that some of the things they had been doing were inconsistent with a changed life.

Paul calls this a “good conscience.” Conscience is the judge of your behavior. When you begin to be consistent in your actions according to your faith, you see yourself forgiven, restored and accepted, and the past is washed away.

That results in a “pure heart.” Your inner attitudes and thinking begin to change because you are no longer the same person you were, and you do not think of yourself that way. What will be the result? You begin to be a vessel from which flows the love of God. Paul said in Romans 5:5, “*God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.*” Love begins to touch you and all those around you. That is the Gospel.

Lord, thank you that you have given us new life! Help us to be vessels of your love to all those You have placed in our lives.

## QUESTIONS

Where have you seen the evidence of God’s love in your life?

## PRAYERS FOR TUMUTUMU SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Pray for the Tumutumu School team that they would bond and work together for the good of the students.

# FRIDAY

## **John 13:33-34; 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:3**

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Paul has received reports of deeply distressing news that members of the Corinthian church were struggling with issues related to how to live for Christ. The evidence of division and disorder prompted him to write this letter addressing their problems, healing their divisions, and answering their questions. Chapter 13, often called the “Love Chapter,” was penned by Paul to be used in helping solve their specific problem of the destructive manner in which the Corinthians were using their spiritual gifts. Without love the use of spiritual gifts is like a noisy gong and profits no one.

The need for authentic Christ-like love is as great today as ever. Yet, defining love is complex and problematic. Popular culture—in literature, music, advertising, and the visual arts—uses the word “love” to mean just about everything except what the Bible represents. So many Christians today are misled in thinking that love is primarily a feeling, something you are “in or out of.” We equate love with lust or sexual behavior. But Christ-like love is first of all an action, an unconditional commitment, a promise that is never broken.

Jesus said that believers’ love for one another is the litmus test of whether we follow Him or not—and people are watching us. When needs surface (tragedy, accidents, illnesses, divorce, broken hearts, financial distress, etc.), do we really care enough to step in and help? Are we paying attention to others so that they will share their needs with us?

Jesus was saying that people have a right to wonder if our devotion to Him is real, and the true test of our loyalty to Him is our care for one another. God is invisible; needy people are not. Platitudes don't cut it. Arm's-length programs can be sterile and costly. Willing service to those in need speaks volumes about the sincerity of the love of God in us. Are you passing the litmus test?

Heavenly Father, help us to use our spiritual gifts with love so that everyone we speak with, work with, live with and serve will know You. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for the gifts that enable and empower our loving service.

## QUESTIONS

What problems can occur when God's gifts are misunderstood or misused in today's church? Describe your spiritual gifts and how you are exercising them in the church. What new or creative work is the Holy Spirit doing in you this year?

## PRAYERS FOR TUMUTUMU SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Pray for the school's new head teacher, Mr. Henry Nabae, that he will continue to settle into his role and that the transition for all, students and staff, is a smooth one.



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