

Unnoticed Joy

Lent 2/Easter 2022 (3 - 30 April)



Our Lenten Daily Worship has been divided into two parts. The first part of our study during the month of March engages with our **Restless Souls**, exploring the idea that we are citizens of heaven with eternity written in our hearts. In these readings we are seeking to minister to the feelings of stress and anxiety that so many of us have had to deal with during the past two years.

Our scripture passages this month seek to help us discover responses of love and hope that will strengthen our faith and give us cause to believe that our restlessness can be used to turn us into active participants bringing about a more generous and just society; a restlessness in pursuit of the joy Jesus speaks of in John 16: 21-24, about the joy that comes through pain.

Augustine – the great Christian thinker, philosopher and Bishop of the 4th century – speaking to God wrote, “You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” So in our March reflections while we wrestle with so much uncertainty, we long to encounter the rest that Augustine speaks of which brings us joy. First we may have to travel through the wilderness like the Children of Israel, or discover that we each have our time like shooting stars living to the praise of his glory, or like a mother in childbirth, we must travel through the pain to enter into the joy.

Part two invites us to consider God’s new thing! The eternal cost borne by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to redeem humanity. In seeking to bring peace to our restless

souls God has displayed his amazing love for us. During the month of April, in part two, we trace the journey that God the Son has made in becoming one of us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We reflect upon the joy that sustained his ministry, through the presence of God the Holy Spirit and the love of God the Father.

During Holy Week as we read and enter the story of our redemption, the road of sorrow, shame and betrayal he chose to travel for us, we find ourselves broken at the foot of the cross. It is there in our brokenness that somehow we get a glimpse of the joy that awaits us in our healing. Evil can never outdo the power of the cross to redeem the restless hearts of a lost and broken humanity or a broken individual.

Peace leading into joy then becomes the dominant theme from Easter Sunday onwards. In a short sub-theme we begin to use the empty tomb to speak to us of the peace that goes unnoticed before us in our everyday lives: ending up with the thought of the unnoticed Saviour. Mary mistakes the identity of Jesus only to find her joy is lifted to another plane as she is reminded of the true identity of Jesus. His time had come to ascend to the Father. Yet he would not leave them comfortless. Joy would be made complete by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Lenten study comes to an end by focusing our attention on the call of the Christian to be ready to give a reason for the hope that lies with us. To be aware that we are treading on Holy ground and that the veil between heaven and earth is thinner than we might ever imagine. We are called to look up and see heaven's open door. To look up in expectancy for the coming of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to transform our restless hearts into hearts stilled by the peace and joy knowing that heaven is our destination.

Let's take time to notice the joy.

Each week of the four week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and prompts for thought.

When Sorrow and Joy Go Unnoticed (3 April)

Our Daily Worship writer is invited to write seven prayers and reflections around the place of joy in the midst of sorrow. The passages below point to the ultimate joy of knowing that God is doing a new thing, pointing to the joy of his coming kingdom. Sorrow and pain are for a season, but the steadfast love of God endures, outlasting pain and sorrow.

1. Isaiah 43:
16-21

2. Psalm 126

3. Philippians
3:4b-14

4. John 10: 9-17

5. Hebrews 12:
1-3

6. John 10: 17-21

7. Romans 15:
5-10,13

1. **God's New Thing.** Use this reading to point to the promise of God's plan to reconcile a broken world and broken individuals.
2. **When Sorrow Turns to Joy.** Link this in with the teaching of Jesus in John 16: 21-24. God's ultimate aim in creation is that we are people who are joy filled.
3. **The Priceless Joy.** Explore what Paul means when he speaks of the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus. Is this joy unspeakable?
4. **Abundant Life.** Comment on the whole purpose of the Christian life. What does it mean to bring glory to God?
5. **The Joy that Outweighs Pain.** Here is an insight into the mind of Jesus.
6. **The Intentional Change Maker.** In laying down his life and taking it up again how did Jesus become the change maker?
7. **Be filled with Joy and Peace.** Here is a summary of what the change maker brings into our lives.

When Love Goes Unnoticed (10 April, Palm Sunday into Holy Week)

These readings are picked out from a week that changed the history of the world. A week when Love went unnoticed. Our Daily Worship writer is invited to write seven prayers and reflections on the passages below, reflecting on the things, people and places we are often too blind to see. And what of the joy we miss out on as a result?

1. Luke 19: 28-40 (Palm Sunday)

2. John 12: 1-8

3. John 12: 20-28

4. John 13: 21-33

5. John 13:3-17, 31-33 (Maundy Thursday)

6. Matthew 27: 32-56 (Good Friday our writer is invited to choose a verse selection from the above range to focus on)

7. John 19: 38-42 (Holy Saturday)

1. **What They Could Not See.** Check out Zechariah 12:10 and the sorrow that John refers to in his prologue John 1:10-12. How easy it is to have religious eyes that are blind.

2. **Comfort and Sorrow Among Friends.** Consider the place of loyal friends in times of great trouble and sorrow.

3. **Sir, we'd like to see Jesus?** In contrast to 1 above, here are some outsiders desperate to meet Jesus. Do we recognise the seekers when we meet them?

4. **The Betrayer at the Table.** How sad to be so close yet so far away from Jesus. In our actions and activities we can even sit at table with Jesus but still misunderstand and become a betrayer.

5. **The Servant Leader.** Here in this action Jesus takes on the role of the servant. True leadership starts at the point of serving. Not only has he come to wash away the dust from our feet — he has come to cleanse us from our sins.

6. **Faces around the Crucifixion.** Consider the faces around the crucifixion. It was the outsider, the Roman soldier, who saw what others couldn't see.

7. **The Burial of Jesus.** In his death once again it was the outsiders, the secret disciples, who in the end showed a devotion which was missing from the twelve who had been chosen. There comes a time when love overrules fear.

When Peace Goes Unnoticed (17 April)

Our Daily Worship writer is invited to write seven prayers and reflections on what happens when peace is overlooked in the midst of fear. And what of Joy waiting in the wings knowing fear has been defeated?

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| 1. John 20: 1-2
(Easter Sunday) | 1. The Unnoticed Peace of an Empty Tomb. Reflect on the peace that undoubtedly filled the atmosphere. The Prince of Peace had arisen but no one noticed. Do we wait long enough to encounter the peace or do we jump to conclusions? |
| 2. John 20: 3-10 | |
| 3. John 20: 11-14 | 2. The Unnoticed Headwear. What do we learn about the Prince of Peace from the folded head cloth? Why did it go unnoticed by John? |
| 4. John 20: 14-16 | 3. The Unnoticed Angels. When heaven touches earth even in a resurrection tomb we humans are so earth bound we can't see the angels. What else goes unnoticed? |
| 5. John 20: 17-18 | |
| 6. John 20: 19-20 | 4. The Unnoticed Saviour. If Jesus had to speak Mary's name before she recognised him — so too perhaps we all need to hear Jesus call our name. Mary couldn't see Jesus for her tears. |
| 7. Zechariah
12:10 &
John 20: 19-23 | 5. The First to Tell the Good News. Something new and wonderful had happened. God was doing a new thing. God and mankind had been reconciled. |
| | 6. The Joy that Flows from the Peace. Here was the joy right in front of Mary's eyes that the writer to the Hebrews speaks of in Hebrews 12: 1-3. |
| | 7. The Peace, the Breath, the Sending. <i>Peace be with you after which he showed them his hands and his side.</i> Write a response to Zechariah 12:10 in the context of John 20: 19-23. A new peace that brings a reconciliation and a sending. The result of "Looking on me the one who they have pierced". |

When Heaven Goes Unnoticed (24 April)

Our Daily Worship writer is invited to write seven prayers and reflections taking into account the unexpected power and presence of the Spirit of God that brings protection and insight in times of great trouble and persecution. The readings for this week remind us that discipleship is not for the faint hearted. Yet it is often to the fainthearted that God appears in order that his glory can be revealed.

1. Acts 5: 27-32

2. Psalm 122

3. Luke 12: 4-12

4. Revelation 2: 8-11

5. Revelation 3: 19-22

6. Revelation 4: 1-11

7. Genesis 18: 1-8

1. **The Peace, the Presence, the Power.** Jesus prepares his disciples to expect persecution (John 16:1-4). He promises the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. All of this will result in the Holy Spirit teaching the believer what to say in times of trial. (John 16:12-15) The presence of heaven is often closer to us in our speech than we ever imagine.

2. **Peace surrounding God's people.** Worshipping in community is worshipping in Spirit and Truth. There is a peace that explodes into Joy when we make our worship focus on the amazing love of God. Let us pray that such expectation might become the norm in our understanding of what it means to worship.

3. **God will give the words to speak.** Heaven truly breaks into our lives and into our language when we learn to trust and live in the company of the Holy Spirit. Learning to trust and let God give us the right words to say can be a great gift and a way of coping with the unpredictable elements of life.

4. **The Cost of Discipleship.** Bonhoeffer once wrote "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." There is no escaping the fact that the Christian life is all about cross bearing but it is also about Joy giving.

5. **Standing at the door.** There is an unnoticed caller at the church door of those who have little self-awareness. The church with lukewarm leadership. It's time to shape up and get a true perspective on your heart. It's time to open up to the one standing knocking. It's time to have a change of heart. It's time to let Jesus into the Church.

6. **Heaven's Open Door.** When we open the door it becomes an open door into heaven. Imagine a stairway into the very throne room of God.

7. **The Heavenly Visitors.** Here's a thought: Are we meant to be more aware of God's messengers? Should restless souls have joy filled hearts because heavenly visitors may move among us unnoticed? Give us Oh lord a sense of expectation, open our eyes to see that which only the prophets of old have seen. (See 2 Kings 6: 15-17.) Abundance, where in him we can find peace and take courage.