



# ***The Holy Week in Lockdown***

---

**REFLECTING ON  
THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION  
DURING A PANDEMIC**

*As our whole world is consumed by a novel coronavirus and the fear and suffering it has brought to millions of people, we enter the final week of the Lenten season. This is “Holy Week”—the week when we remember Jesus’ last week of life on earth, his death on the cross, and his resurrection to life on Easter Sunday.*

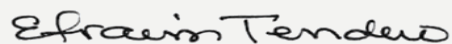
*These were the darkest days in Jesus’ life, yet he gave comfort and hope to his fearful disciples. Then, to their shock, he died. But what appeared to be a failure and a curse from God turned into the greatest victory as Jesus rose to life!*

*How can we apply what happened two thousand years ago to our lives today? How can we find hope and encouragement in a world overrun by uncertainty and fear?*

*We have prepared a brief devotional for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday (April 5–12), following the Gospel of John from chapter 12 to chapter 20. Each devotional connects an element of what Jesus said or did to the current crisis and includes a few questions for you to reflect on or discuss with friends or family. Each day also offers a brief look at what is happening in different parts of the world as believers and churches respond to the pandemic in various ways. We will also be posting short videos on our Facebook page ([fb.com/worldea](https://fb.com/worldea)) that will be a great way for you to start the devotional.*

*We encourage you to spend a few minutes each day with this guide. We trust that it will give you a new perspective on the current situation. May it be enriching to you, may it give you hope and strength, and most of all, may it bring you closer to God!*

*Sincerely,*



*Bp Efraim Tendaro  
Secretary General / CEO  
World Evangelical Alliance*

## **How to use it?**

- 1) Check out the daily video on *Facebook: [fb.com/worldea](https://www.facebook.com/worldea)*
- 2) Then start with the Bible reading. If you do not have a Bible on hand, just Google “online Bible” or download a Bible app to your phone. Go to the book of John (the fourth book in the New Testament) and start in chapter 12.
- 3) After reading the passage, read through the devotional and then the story.
- 4) Finally, read the reflection questions. You can think about (and act on) them on your own or discuss them with others.

## **Table of contents**

**Palm Sunday, April 5** ..... **Believe in the Light!**

**Monday, April 6** ..... **Love One Another!**

**Tuesday, April 7** ..... **Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled! Remain in My Love!**

**Wednesday, April 8** ..... **Let Them Be One!**

**Thursday, April 9** ..... **My Kingdom Is Not of This World!**

**Good Friday, April 10** ..... **It Is Finished!**

**Saturday, April 11** ..... **You Will Grieve, But Your Grief Will Turn to Joy!**

**Easter Sunday, April 12** ..... **As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You!**



# Believe in the light!

## TODAY'S READING: JOHN 12:1-50

Today, people all over the world are gripped by anxiety and fear. Fear of being infected by the coronavirus, fear of losing a loved one, fear of losing their job and the resulting financial suffering. Daily news updates paint a bleak picture of increasing infections and deaths, and hope for a vaccine seems far away.

In this passage, Jesus was facing the darkest moment of his life. He entered Jerusalem knowing that these would be his last days on earth. Darkness was closing in as religious leaders plotted to kill him and his disciples still did not understand what was about to happen (verse 16), yet Jesus fully and unshakingly trusted in God. He was the light that the darkness could not overcome.

In the midst of the darkness of the pandemic today, we are called to be a light bringing hope, comfort and peace to the lives of many.



### Happening Now:

Churches and individual believers all around the world are stepping up to support those in need through prayer and in very practical ways, like shopping for their neighbors, distributing medicines to the elderly, offering a hotline where people can call if they want to talk to someone, or providing practical tips and tools for the many families confined to their homes.

### Have You Thought About...

- Is there an opportunity for you to reach out to someone and share the hope you have in Christ?
- How could you respond to your neighbor, friend or colleague who may be in fear right now?
- Jesus says we can be a light by doing good deeds for others (Matthew 5:14-16).  
What can you do today to let your light shine?

# Love One Another!

## TODAY'S READING: JOHN 13:1-38

Jesus washing his disciples' feet is among the best-known scenes in the Gospels. The first verse captures the essence of the chapter: "he loved them to the end." Washing guests' feet was a task usually assigned to slaves, but Jesus modeled what it meant for him to lower himself and humbly serve his followers by washing the dusty feet of his twelve disciples. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet," he says. In verses 34-35 he adds, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

At this time when millions of people are confined to their homes and have to live with each other 24 hours a day, remaining loving and kind at all times becomes a challenge. When Jesus used the words, "as I have loved you," he reminded the disciples that they had received love first, and that with this love they should love others. When we remember the love we have received from God and others, we are strengthened and our hearts are renewed, so that we can extend grace and love to those around us.



### Happening Now:

Churches in Argentina are collaborating with the government and health organizations by opening their buildings as special hospitals at this time of increased need. They also help to disseminate medicine for the vulnerable and offer many other practical services to their communities as an expression of love to those around them.

### Have You Thought About...

- Try to remember a moment where you felt loved by God or by others around you. How about saying a prayer of gratitude to God right now?
- Do you find it difficult to love those who are around you these days? If you have fallen short of loving them as Christ has loved you, it may be helpful to ask for forgiveness and reconcile. This is also an expression of love.
- People are created to love and be loved. At this time when anxiety and fear abound, how could you express your love to someone today in words and deeds?

## Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled! Remain in My Love!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 14 AND 15

Even though Jesus knows that he—and not the disciples—will soon face the suffering of the cross, he is the one comforting his disciples in these chapters, telling them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (14:1). He is not concerned about himself but fully focused on his disciples’ spiritual and emotional well-being, comforting them in their distress. Later in the passage he says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (14:27).

The world news does not give us hope or peace at this time; instead, it can make us feel anxious and afraid as we hear about the spread of a pandemic across every region of the world. But Jesus gives us a peace that the world cannot give. In chapter 15, he uses the image of the vine and the branches and says, “Remain in my love!” Remaining in him—spending time in the Word of God and in prayer—is necessary so that we can bear fruit. What fruit? Galatians 5:22–23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**” All these appear increasingly in our lives as we rely on Jesus Christ and spend time in God’s Word, the Bible. Not only does the fruit of the Spirit show up despite difficult circumstances, but it is especially revealed in our lives at times like these.



### Happening Now:

People in more developed regions of the world are implementing “social distancing” measures and isolating themselves at home. But in many parts of the world, such as the slums of large Global South cities or refugee camps in Africa and the Middle East, social distancing is impossible and water for washing hands is not readily available. Churches and Christian relief organizations are among those reaching out to these struggling areas. Would you offer a prayer for them right now, asking God to give them comfort, strength and hope today?

### Have You Thought About...

- It is important to stay informed and know how the current situation is developing, but following the news constantly may increase our anxiety. Do you spend as much time reading the Bible and in prayer as you spend reading the news?
- Are you seeing the fruit of the Spirit in your life? Do others see it as well? The more time you spend reading in the Bible, the more you will grow in love, joy, peace and all the expressions of the fruit of the Spirit.
- Whom could you reach out to today to give comfort and assurance? Even small words of encouragement or simply a listening ear can strengthen someone in such a time as this.



## Let Them Be One!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 16 AND 17

After explaining the work of the Holy Spirit and reminding the disciples that their grief will turn into joy, Jesus then looked toward heaven and prayed for them (John 17:1). This was the last prayer that Jesus would share with his disciples before his arrest, so he emphasized his greatest concerns regarding the time when he would no longer be with them physically. In verses 20–24, he emphasizes the importance of the unity of believers: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so **that the world may believe** that you have sent me.”

There are reportedly more than 40,000 denominations in the world today, and many people are critical of the Christian faith because of divisions among believers. God has created us in beautifully diverse ways, but it is not always easy to be united in diversity. It has been very encouraging to see churches come together across denominational lines and geographic boundaries during this pandemic, through joint prayer initiatives and collaborative approaches to reaching those in need. In this unity, the world can see the love of God revealed today.



### Happening Now:

Evangelical churches of diverse backgrounds in Italy have come together as never before in prayer and common concern for their suffering nation. The same can be said of a recent 12-hour online prayer initiative in New Zealand. The entire continent of Latin America had a joint day of prayer, and many more stories could be told of pastors, church leaders and individuals praying and working together in their neighborhoods, cities and nations.

### Have You Thought About...

- Jesus prayed for unity not just for unity's sake, but so that the world may see and believe in him. If unity is so important to help people find Christ, why do we find it so difficult sometimes to be united as followers of Jesus?
- What obstacles do you experience with regard to uniting with other believers? Are these essential matters for our faith, or are they related to differences in tradition or style of worship?
- How could your words and deeds today contribute to unity, starting in your own household?



## My Kingdom Is Not of This World!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 18

*In this chapter, Jesus is arrested after his betrayal by one of his own disciples. The trials that follow—first by the religious leaders and then by a worldly authority—are based entirely on lies, include false witnesses and do not follow the proper legal process. Driven by jealousy, hatred and greed, these people wanted to silence him once and for all. Jesus, however, was not shaken in the face of this injustice; his faith and trust in God were unmoved. He knew and testified that his Kingdom is not of this world (verse 36).*

*Around the world, many Christians are persecuted simply because they believe in Jesus Christ. They are discriminated against, falsely accused, arrested, imprisoned and even killed because society or those in power want to silence them—often out of jealousy or hatred, or because they are afraid of those who speak the truth. During the pandemic, this situation has only worsened for many. One reason is that prisons are among the most dangerous places in an epidemic and no protection is available. The Bible describes all believers in Christ as forming “one body,” and it goes on to say that “if one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 26) Today is an opportunity to remember and pray for those within our body who are suffering.*



### Happening Now:

*Iran has been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, and prisoners have been especially vulnerable to infection because of the lack of open space and poor hygiene. Therefore, Iran has allowed tens of thousands of prisoners to be temporarily released. According to recent media reports, however, the Iranian government has refused to release many Christians. Please pray for their protection, and for comfort and strength for them and their families at this time.*

### Have You Thought About...

- *Jesus could overcome the injustice he experienced because he looked ahead to the Kingdom that is not of this world. How could this perspective be helpful in the current crisis to you or someone you know?*
- *Has your trust in God been shaken because of an unjust situation? How do you think God felt about Jesus being betrayed, arrested and put on trial?*
- *When persecuted Christians are asked how we can help them, their first response is “please pray for us.” Would you take a moment today to pray for those who suffer because of their faith?*

## It Is Finished!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 19

Jesus was flogged, ridiculed, beaten and ultimately crucified. He who was without sin was treated like the worst sinner and died through the most painful punishment that humans ever invented. But what were Jesus' final words? "It is finished" (verse 30). The disciples did not understand the meaning of his death. Was death not the ultimate failure? Besides, dying on a wooden cross was considered a curse from God (see Deuteronomy 21:22-23). However, the apostle Paul explains how God took away our sin through Jesus' sacrifice: "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). In another of his letters, Paul says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Jesus told his disciples, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). This is exactly what he did: he gave his own life, so that we could be saved.

The history of God's action in our world is marked by many powerful events in which he turned evil into good. Jacob's son Joseph was tragically sold by his brothers, but God would use Joseph to save his family's lives during a famine. Jesus was crucified, but God used it as a sacrifice that allowed forgiveness. Amidst this pandemic, there is suffering and crisis, but also hope as many people have become open to the Gospel and are seeking God in prayer.



### Happening Now:

During the pandemic, there have been frequent reports about the lack of medical equipment available as hospitals fill up with patients. Ventilators that help sick people to breathe are often crucial to survival. The media recently reported about a priest in Italy who gave up his ventilator and asked that it be given to a younger patient. The priest died, but the young person survived.

### Have You Thought About...

- In the midst of tragedy, God is still very much at work in visible and invisible ways. Have you experienced God's intervention in a time of crisis?
- Jesus was not afraid to give his life for us. What does this sacrifice mean for you personally today?
- If you had to decide whether to give up your life so that someone else could live, how would you decide?

## You Will Grieve, But Your Grief Will Turn to Joy!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 16:22

The Saturday between Jesus' death and resurrection is not mentioned in the Bible, but much must have gone through the minds of the disciples. They had just seen Jesus suffer the most painful death possible. Three years earlier, Jesus had called them to follow him. They had seen his miracles and listened to his amazing teaching. They had been filled with hope for the heavenly Kingdom. But now, so suddenly, he was dead. They still did not understand. Confusion flooded their minds and anxiety gripped them. They were afraid and ashamed of having run away from Jesus; Peter had an especially pained conscience after having denied the Lord three times. Jesus had told them, "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy" (John 16:22). But how could they possibly hope for joy when their hearts were filled with grief?

The coronavirus has taken thousands of lives: grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, wives and husbands, friends and colleagues. For many, the loss came suddenly with no time to prepare, sometimes with no chance even to say goodbye. The grief and sadness are deep. How can we comfort these people? Descriptions of future hope may be hard for them to hear at this time, but a listening ear and a reminder of God's goodness today may help them carry on. "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23).



### Happening Now:

During the current pandemic, the tragedy for many families grieving the loss of a loved one is intensified because they have not been permitted to see the dying or deceased due to the risk of infection. In many places, even a proper funeral is impossible because gatherings are prohibited, making it more difficult to process the grief. Believers can come alongside suffering families, offering comfort and encouragement and sharing the hope that sustains us because death does not have the last word.

### Have You Thought About...

- How do you think the disciples felt on Saturday? Have you ever experienced such a time "in between"? What gave you hope?
- Do you know someone who has lost a loved one because of the coronavirus? Maybe you could send a note saying that you are thinking of and praying for them. Maybe you could call them just to listen and be present in their time of grief.
- When Jesus said, "Your grief will turn to joy," he was referring to his resurrection. Our faith tells us that death is not the end, but the beginning of eternal life. Is there an opportunity for you to share this hope with someone today?



## As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You!

### TODAY'S READING: JOHN 20

Early on the first day of the week, the third day after Jesus' death, Mary went to the tomb and found it empty. She quickly reported this to the disciples. They too went and saw the empty tomb. How could this be? Of one of the disciples, John says, "He saw and believed" (verse 8).

Later that evening, Jesus appeared to his gathered disciples and said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (verse 21). What was he sending them to do? To proclaim the Good News that Jesus had taken the punishment for our sins onto himself, but then had risen again on the third day, overcoming sin and death.

The Greek word *euangelion* (in English: Gospel or Good News) was used for the news of victory in a war. Jesus Christ did not accomplish a worldly victory, but a spiritual victory over sin and evil. The news is a message of reconciliation with God and forgiveness of sins for those who accept him into their lives.

A fitting analogy today would be the much longed-for news of the discovery of a vaccine or cure for the coronavirus. Such a discovery would remove many people's fear and anxiety at once. Sin—the failure to live a life that reflects the love of Jesus Christ—is much like a virus, spreading fear and anxiety and overwhelming our hearts and minds with arrogance, anger, jealousy and envy. But the cure is here! It is found in Jesus Christ who died and rose again. So "stop doubting and believe" (verse 28).



### Happening Now:

The coronavirus pandemic has awakened a great longing in people's hearts for something more than what the world offers. Google reported that use of the search term "prayer" has skyrocketed since the outbreak, and people whose hearts have been closed to the Gospel are warming up. Jesus sent his disciples to share the Good News, and they went. Today Jesus is sending you; will you go?

### Have You Thought About...

- If you read today that a cure for the coronavirus had been found, would you not immediately rejoice and share the news with as many people as you could? The news of Jesus Christ is something greater than that; it does not just save our bodies for this life but saves our souls for eternity. Whom could you tell about the Gospel today?
- Can you feel how Jesus' words "Peace be with you!" (verse 19) enter the disciples' hearts and turn their grief, anxiety, guilt and fear into joy at once? Have you experienced this joy in your heart? If not, or if you have not felt it for a long time, take a moment to pray and ask God to fill your heart with this joy and peace right now.
- Growing in faith is not a sprint, it is a marathon. And it starts with the right habits. Why don't you commit to reading at least one chapter in the Bible every day? You will be surprised by the change that occurs in your life.