

Passion Week *Devotionals*

Easter Sunday
by Ethan Kirk

Read | Luke 24

When I think of emptiness, I often picture something negative: an empty gas tank, an empty wallet, or an empty social media page. In fact, I often see emptiness as being stuck, stranded, or even abandoned. There are other kinds of emptiness such as emotional or spiritual. It can appear in our lives when relationships end, when expectations aren't met, or when we can't feel God's presence as strongly as we once did. Sometimes, the emptiness we feel is a combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual. I don't know how you feel this Easter Sunday whether it be empty or full, but I'd like to share how I personally witnessed the beauty of emptiness.

On July 27, 2022, I had a surgical procedure to address a fairly common problem. However, things did not go as planned. This led to multiple, sometimes weekly, doctor's visits and involved various painful treatments. This went on for a year and a half. I tried to continue my life as normal: I played football, lifted weights, went on vacations, and went to school. I had what some might call a "full plate" and I tried to keep it that way. But it started to weigh on me. The physical and emotional pain compounded and I could not feel the closeness of God. I knew that there were people who had much bigger problems than I did and I didn't want to bother God with my issues. However after dealing with this for a year and a half, I was empty: physically, mentally, and spiritually. I no longer felt like myself and people noticed. I am so grateful for our youth group leaders. They provided me so much support. They prayed over me and I realized that even though my circumstances were not as bad as many other people, God is able to handle all of our prayers, no matter how big or small they may seem to us. Through the power prayer and the support of my family and friends, God began to move in remarkable ways. I was able to get in with a world renowned surgeon who specialized in correcting my problem. This did not happen by chance or luck: it was God. On March 18, 2024, I had my second surgery, far away from home, in Wisconsin.

Easter Sunday| Page 2

by Ethan Kirk

Many of you prayed for me and my healing. You prayed for my family: for strength, safe travels, and for things I may never know. I can't tell you the difference it made. In June of the same year, I was fully released from my doctor's care. I learned a lot through my experience, and I witnessed my cup be filled by the source, Jesus.

Through the writing of this devotional, I have had time to reflect on the emptiness the people closest to Jesus must have felt in the days following His crucifixion. Let's take a moment to place ourselves with them at what must have seemed at the time to be the darkest moment the world had ever seen. Imagine that it is Sunday morning after the crucifixion. You are on your way to the tomb, where Jesus was placed to anoint His body. Your heart is heavy, and your grief is deep. All hope seems lost. You are empty. As you arrive, you notice something is wrong. The large stone that had sealed Him inside has been rolled away. When you rush inside, you see the tomb is empty. Luke 24:3-9 states, "But when they went in, they did not find the body of Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and all of the rest. "

It is at that moment, you realize that Jesus has fulfilled his promise. Your heart is no longer heavy with grief, but full of joy.

The empty tomb is the most powerful symbol of hope in human history. In our world today, we are occupied with filling every aspect of our lives, often with things only of earthly value. However, as Christ followers, we understand that we will never experience complete fulfillment, except through our relationship with Christ. Because He was raised from the dead, we no longer live bound by sin or death. Because of the empty tomb, we have these hopes: our past can be forgiven, death no longer has the final word, and no matter how broken you feel, resurrection is possible. Because He lives, we have deep, unshakable confidence that God is who he says he is, and will do what he says he will do.

Easter Sunday| Page 3

by Ethan Kirk

As Christians, we must share the gospel with others as we are told to in The Great Commission. Matthew 28:18—20, states “And Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven, and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This Easter I am thankful for the greatest empty of all: the empty tomb. Jesus has conquered death, He has fulfilled every promise and has given me hope that will never fade. He will never leave us, He will never forsake us, and He works all things for good. If you find yourself in a season of emptiness, my prayer for you is that God will move in your life in ways you never thought possible and that you too will witness the beauty of emptiness. Remember, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, lives inside of you.

Prayer & Reflection:

- *As you think about the empty tomb, what does it reveal about God’s ability to turn failures into victories?*
- *What circumstances are you facing currently that call you to apply resurrection power?*
- *How can you share the hope of the risen Christ with others?*