

5-Day Easter Devotional: Encountering the Risen Christ

Day 1: While It Was Still Dark

Reading: John 20:1-2; Psalm 30:5

Devotional: Mary came to the tomb while it was still dark—not just the darkness of early morning, but the darkness of grief, loss, and shattered hope. Sometimes our faith journey requires us to move forward even when we cannot yet see the light. The darkness Mary carried was real: the trauma of witnessing crucifixion, the absence where presence had been, the silence where a voice once spoke life. Yet she came anyway. In our own seasons of darkness—the diagnosis, the loss, the broken relationship—we are invited to simply show up, to be present to our grief without rushing past it. God's love is not afraid of our darkness. It knows the way in. Today, ask yourself: What darkness am I carrying? Can I bring it honestly to God without needing to fix it first?

Day 2: Everlasting Love

Reading: Jeremiah 31:3-6; Romans 8:38-39

Devotional: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." The Hebrew word *hesed* describes a love that simply doesn't know how to let go—a covenant faithfulness that persists beneath catastrophe like a river running underground. This is the love Jeremiah proclaimed to exiles who had every reason to believe the story had ended badly. This is the love that holds us when circumstances suggest we've been abandoned. God's faithfulness is not contingent on our circumstances, our performance, or our ability to hold things together. It is prior to our crisis, underneath our rubble, pressing through like a vine through concrete. The resurrection is the ultimate expression of *hesed*—love that will not be stopped by death itself. Where do you need to trust that God's faithfulness is still running, even underground, even unseen?

Day 3: Called By Name

Reading: John 20:11-16; Isaiah 43:1-4

Devotional: The resurrection's first gift is not a proof or an argument—it's a name spoken in a voice that knows that name from the inside. "Mary." One word, and everything changes. She is not a category, not "one of the followers," not a demographic. She is Mary, known, seen, named. In our world of algorithms and mass communications, where we can feel reduced to data points, the risen Christ still speaks our specific, irreducible, unrepeatable name. This is the intimacy of resurrection: God knows you not as part of a crowd but as you. The same voice that called creation into being, that breathed life into dust, speaks your name with tenderness and recognition. You are not invisible. You are not forgotten. You are named and known and loved. Listen today for the sound of your name spoken by the One who has always known you.

Day 4: Planting in Exile

Reading: Jeremiah 31:4-5; Isaiah 61:3-4

Devotional: To people in exile, Jeremiah spoke an impractical word: plant vineyards, build houses, dance again. This is a word for those who have every reason to believe the planting season is over. Yet *chesed* always moves toward something—toward home, toward wholeness, toward fruit. The faithfulness of God is not static; it tends toward restoration. What does it mean to plant when you're still in exile? It means getting your hands in the dirt again even when you're not sure what will grow. It means choosing hope as an act of defiance against despair. It means trusting that God's love is still creating a future even when you cannot see it yet. The resurrection announces that nothing—not even death—has the power to end God's planting season. What small act of planting is God inviting you to today? What seed of hope might you bury in faith?

Day 5: Receive and Go

Reading: John 20:17-22; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Devotional: Jesus breathes on the disciples using the same word from Genesis when God breathed life into dust—this is new creation. But notice: the most intimate encounter becomes a commission. Mary cannot stay in the garden. The disciples cannot hoard the breath. Resurrection is not a private consolation; it's a message to carry. "I have seen the Lord," Mary announces—not a theory, but testimony born from encounter. We are sent not because we have everything

figured out, but because we have been in the garden, because Someone has spoken our name, because the stubborn love of God has found us. The weakest possible force—breath, a whispered name, a testimony—becomes the very life of God pressing into the world. What you have received, you are now commissioned to give. Who needs to hear your testimony today? Where is God sending you to announce that love has had the last word?

The Lord is risen, and love, that stubborn, everlasting, embarrassingly faithful love, has had the last word. Amen.