

HIGHLAND COLONY BAPTIST CHURCH

If My People...

A Devotional Guide for Lent

Dr. Jim Denison

Introduction

A great spiritual revolution is sweeping the world. More people are becoming Christians today than at any time in history: more than 82,000 a day, according to recent surveys. More Muslims are making Christ their Lord than ever before, many after seeing visions and dreams of Jesus. The “Fifth Great Awakening” is sweeping South Korea, Australia, Cuba, Central and South America, sub-Saharan Africa, and China.

Of this astounding number of daily conversions, however, only 6,000 are in Western Europe and North America, combined. We know that our country needs a moral rebirth. A recent survey asked Americans what one problem they would fix if they could. Not surprisingly, their first answer was restoring economic stability to the nation. But tied for first place was restoring morality to our society. How can we rebuild the moral and spiritual foundations upon which our democracy depends?

This Lenten guide is one response. During these days we will focus on spiritual awakening as we claim God’s promise to King Solomon: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We have designed this Lenten guide to help us join the global awakening. We will walk each day with wise King Solomon as he led his nation to God. We begin with his dedication of the newly-completed temple and end with God’s famous response to his servant. Along the way, we will learn from Solomon’s example as we make his commitment our own.

Christians around the world are using these meditations as we humble ourselves before God, pray for our city and nation, seek his face personally, and repent of our sins each day. Please join us.

**Solomon's
Commitment
to God**

Day 1: Ash Wednesday, Wednesday, February 14

Would you come to God in worship and confession?

It was the most magnificent worship structure the nation had ever seen. Its interior was covered with pure gold (2 Chronicles 3:4). Even its nails were made of gold (v. 9). As the Ark of the Covenant was put in its place, 120 priests sounded trumpets while others sang praises to God. In that moment, “the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud,” and “the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God” (2 Chronicles 5:13, 14). Can you imagine a more glorious sight?

By contrast, today is Ash Wednesday. This day marks the formal beginning of Lent, observed each year on the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday. Its name comes from the ancient practice of placing ashes on worshippers’ foreheads as a sign of humility. They are made from palm branches used in the previous year’s Palm Sunday and call us to mourn for our sins, remembering that our transgressions caused the death of Jesus.

As we begin preparations for spiritual awakening, we should combine both the worship of ancient Israel and the repentance of Lenten observers today. To approach the King of Kings, we “enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise”

(Psalm 100:4). As we do, we recognize our sin and need for mercy and forgiveness.

Our culture considers us “spiritual” if we are religious. The truth is, the closer we draw to God, the further away we realize we are.

Would you take a moment now to praise your glorious King and then to ask his forgiveness for your sins? Would you pray for a spiritual awakening that would empower his people for worship and confession?

Day 2: Thursday, February 15

Have you claimed God's promise for awakening?

After Solomon completed the temple, he stood on a bronze platform in the center of its outer court. He knelt before the entire nation of Israel and spread his hands toward heaven (2 Chronicles 6:12-13). Then he thanked God because “you have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today” (v. 15).

Our president promised to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Your King has promised to give you eternal life if you would make his Son your Lord (John 3:16). He now promises that if his people will approach him with humility, collective prayer, personal passion, and genuine repentance, he will hear us, forgive, us, and “heal our land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

On this second day of Lent, let's continue our preparation for spiritual awakening by taking a moment for gratitude. Our culture confines God to church buildings and religious activities, but those who know the Lord personally know better. What was the last promise God kept in your life? Would you offer him your thanks? Would you pray for a movement of his Spirit that would fulfill his promise to heal our land today?

Day 3: Friday, February 16

Would you submit to the Spirit of God?

The Shwedagon Paya is a Buddhist temple constructed of gold and covered with more than 5,000 diamonds and 2,000 rubies. The Golden Temple in Punjab, India is covered with gold and precious stones. However, neither is the most glorious temple ever built. Nor was the Parthenon in Athens, the Taj Mahal in India, or the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. Not even the temple constructed by Solomon: when the wise king finished his magnificent structure, he asked:

“Will God really dwell on earth with men?” (2 Chronicles 6:18).

His word says that he will. In fact, “God’s Spirit lives in you” (1 Corinthians 3:15). You are God’s most significant temple. Now he wants to use you as a catalyst for a great spiritual movement in your city and our nation. However, we must be submitted to the Spirit before we can be used by him. Scripture calls us to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)—to “be filled” means to be controlled or surrendered.

On this third day of Lent, take a moment for submission. Would you yield your mind and body to the Spirit of God right now? Would you ask him to take control of your life this day and to use you as his catalyst for awakening?

Day 4: Saturday, February 17

Would you commit to daily prayer for awakening?

Benjamin Franklin was a great pragmatist. When his father was returning thanks over their family dinner, which was comprised of food stored in their smokehouse for the winter, Franklin suggested that they pray once over the storehouse and be done for the season.

Solomon would have disagreed. As he continued his service of dedication for the new temple, he prayed, "Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when

you hear, forgive" (2 Chronicles 6:21). Today the Jewish people continue this tradition at Jerusalem's Western Wall, where someone is praying 24 hours a day every day of the year.

Why is continued prayer important to God? He knows what we need before we ask him (Matthew 6:8), and yet he calls us to "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Prayer does not inform God or change his character. Rather, it positions us to receive all that his grace intends to give. And it connects us with the Holy Spirit as he molds us into the character of Christ (Romans 8:29).

On this fourth day of Lent, would you make a commitment to pray every day for spiritual awakening in our nation?

Day 5: Sunday, February 18

Have you wronged your neighbor?

The Day America Told the Truth is a revealing look into our nation's soul. Its authors asked thousands of Americans about their personal lives and habits. The confidential answers they received tell us more about ourselves than we may want to know. For instance, 74 percent of us say, "I will steal from those who won't really miss it." And 91 percent of us admit that we lie regularly.

As Solomon continued his service of dedication at the temple, he prayed: "When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath and he comes and swears the oath before your altar in this temple, then hear from heaven and act" (2 Chronicles 6:22-23). How many of us need such repentance today?

Jesus defined our "neighbor" as anyone who needs us (Luke 10:25-37). His second Great Commandment is to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, quoting Leviticus 19:18). Would your neighbors say that you are obedient to this command? When was the last time it cost you something significant to help someone in need?

On this fifth day of Lent, would you ask the Spirit to show you any relational sins in your life? Would you then confess them to the Lord, asking him to cleanse you so that you might be an instrument of spiritual awakening?

Day 6: Monday, February 19

Could God use war to promote awakening?

Most people don't know that our government still officially calls the President's Day holiday "Washington's Birthday." The day was originally celebrated on February 22, our first president's actual birthday, but was moved to the third Monday in February and now honors all U.S. presidents.

Without the military leadership of Gen. Washington, there would be no nation to remember his birthday. America needs such heroes today, as we continue the War on Terror against radical Muslims who are convinced that killing us is a defense of Islam required by the Qur'an. Why has God allowed this persistent threat against our people?

When Solomon dedicated his temple, he prayed, "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you and when they turn back and confess your name, praying and making supplication before you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to them and their fathers" (2 Chronicles 6:24-25). The king knew that God allows and uses military enemies to show us our need for his protection and grace.

On this sixth day of Lent, would you ask God to protect our military as they protect us? Would you ask him to redeem the War on Terror by making it a catalyst for spiritual awakening in America and the world?

Day 7: Tuesday, February 20

Could God redeem suffering for his glory?

As Solomon continued his temple dedication, he prayed,

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance (2 Chronicles 6:26-27).

Despite the technological sophistication of our day, drought shows us how dependent on nature we are. We have methods of finding and using water that were unknown in Solomon's day, but our economy is as reliant on water as his. And we need our Father's spiritual "showers of blessing" even more desperately.

On this seventh day of Lent, would you ask God to send rain on your county and nation? Would you pray for spiritual awakening as fervently as you pray for material provision?

Day 8: Wednesday, February 21

Would you confess whatever grieves God in your life?

What most grieves you today? The loss of someone you love? A tragedy in your community or on the news?

King Solomon knew that our sin grieves our holy God. That's why, during his temple dedication, he interceded on behalf of his sinful people:

When a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel - each one aware of his afflictions and pains, and spreading out his hands toward this temple - then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of men), so that they will fear you and walk in your ways all the time they live in the land you gave our fathers (2 Chronicles 6:29-31).

To follow his example, make time today for a "spiritual inventory." Take a sheet of paper and pen, and get alone with God. Ask his Spirit to show you anything in your life that grieves your Father, and then write down what comes to your thoughts. No one will see what you write, so you can be specific and honest. Confess what you have written, claim God's promise to forgive all you confess (1 John 1:9), and throw the paper away.

Do this regularly, and you will stay close to your Holy Father. Would you begin this important preparation for awakening today?

Day 9: Thursday, February 22

Would you ask God to lead the nations to faith?

I have been eight times to Cuba, where more than a million people have come to Christ in the last decade. Ministers in the People's Republic of China report that 100,000 people come to Christ every day in their country. God's Spirit is advancing awakening across the nations of our day, because he loves the entire world (John 3:16).

Do you? When last did you pray for a great global awakening to continue across the nations? When last did you pray for Muslims to come to Christ? For Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews to make Jesus their Lord? For atheists and agnostics to turn to faith?

As King Solomon continued his dedication of the temple, he prayed:

As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name (1 Chronicles 6:32-33).

A wise missionary once asked God “break my heart for what breaks yours.” Would you make his prayer your own?

Day 10: Friday, February 23

Would you pray for awakening among our troops?

The Third Great Awakening is dated to 1858. The year before, a Presbyterian layman named Jeremiah Lamphier called for a prayer meeting at his church, Old North Dutch Church in New York City. Six people met together on Wednesday, September 23, 1857, to pray for awakening in their land. The next week, 14 gathered, then 23. "Businessman's prayer meetings" began to spread across the land. The result was an awakening that brought a million people to Christ (out of a total population of only 30 million).

One of the most significant results of this awakening was among the nation's military. During the Civil War, more than 150,000 troops on both sides of the conflict came to Christ. Today God is using chaplains, missionaries, and new technology to bring his word to soldiers around the world.

Solomon prayed for a similar blessing from God:

When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to you toward this city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause (2 Chronicles 6:34-35).

Would you ask the Lord for a spiritual awakening among our troops this year?

Day 11: Saturday, February 24

Have you prayed for America to repent?

When our oldest son was a small boy, he would regularly ask if he could join the church. When Janet and I asked why he wanted to make this step, he would say that he wanted to take the Lord's Supper or be baptized. We were glad for his interest but felt that he was not yet ready. Then came a day when he asked if he could become a Christian; when I asked why he wanted to do this, tears came to his eyes as he said, "I've done some bad things and need to ask God to forgive me." We prayed together in that moment and he asked Jesus to forgive his sins and make him the child of God.

Repentance is a work of the Spirit. We can feel sorry for our sins, but only the Holy Spirit can convict us of them. Do Americans need to repent of our sins? Does King Solomon's prayer apply to us?

When they sin against you - for there is no one who does not sin - and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity and say, "We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly"; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name; then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you (2 Chronicles 6:36-39).

Would you ask God to bring a spirit of repentance to our nation?

Day 12: Sunday, February 25

Would you pray for your spiritual leaders?

The Apostle Paul was by any measure one of the most courageous and spiritual Christians in history. Yet he knew that he needed God's people to pray for him: "Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should."• (Colossians 4:2-4).

Paul was not the first to emphasize such intercession. As King Solomon continued his prayers for the nation, he said to God:

Now arise, O Lord God, and come to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.

May your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation,
may your saints rejoice in your goodness (2 Chronicles 6:41).

As he prayed for the "priests" of his day, the spiritual leaders of his nation, so we should pray for the "priests" of our day. Peter taught the "shepherds of God's flock" to serve "not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."• (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Would you take time today to pray for your minister and the spiritual leaders of our day? Ask God to help them depend on his Spirit and join the awakening of our day. We cannot lead further than we are willing to go, or give what we do not have. Pray for the spiritual leaders of your city to join the Great Awakening, to the glory of God.

Day 13: Monday, February 26

Would you pray for your secular leaders?

Nero was one of the cruelest emperors in Roman history, ordering the beheading of Paul and the crucifixion of Peter. And yet we find this statement from the Apostle Paul:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

He wanted God's people to pray for their emperor and other leaders, knowing that God wanted them and all people to come to salvation.

Solomon offered a similar prayer for himself: "O Lord God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember the great love promised to David your servant." (2 Chronicles 6:42). "Your anointed one" was the king himself. He prayed that God would not "reject" him, despite his sins, but would bless and use his life and rule.

Have you prayed today for spiritual awakening in Washington, D.C. and your community? Have you prayed for your president by name and for his advisors, for your governor, mayor, and city council? If they were to join the awakening, what would be the result for your community and country?

Day 14: Tuesday, February 27

Would you ask God to empower your worship?

When I was a preacher in college, I once conducted a youth revival. During the fellowship after the service, we heard the sounds of nearby fire engines. To our shock, they stopped at the church. Someone had left a lit candle in the sanctuary, which set off a smoke detector and alerted the firemen. People came running from around the neighborhood to see what was happening. I thought of evangelist Charles Finney's pronouncement, "If the church is on fire, people will come from miles around to watch it burn."

His words once came true, literally:

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever." (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

When last did you encounter God in worship so powerfully that your life was changed? Would you pray for such "fiery" worship for your congregation and soul during these weeks of preparation for awakening?

Day 15: Wednesday, February 28

What price would you pay for awakening?

Cash is going the way of the phone booth. Merchants are replacing cash registers with hand-held devices. Web-based retailers don't accept cash at all. Toll booths are fading on the highways. The next generation of adults has grown up with debit cards, prepaid cards, and iTunes accounts. Many don't know what "ATM" means.

Convenience is the expectation of our day. A discerning Christian leader once said of his church, "We have all of Jesus we want. Not all we need, but all we want." By contrast, when Solomon and his nation completed their dedication of the temple, "the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord. And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand head of cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats" (2 Chronicles 7:4-5).

When last did it cost you something significant to serve Christ?
Would you pray with passion and work with dedication for awakening?

Day 16: Thursday, March 1

Have you thanked God for his grace today?

If we were to shrink the world's population to a village of 100 people, it would contain the following: 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western hemisphere, and 8 Africans. Fifty-two would be female, 48 male. Six would possess 59% of the world's wealth. Eighty would live in substandard housing; 70 would be unable to read; 50 would suffer from malnutrition. Do you know how many would have a college education? One. How many would own a computer? One.

Did you deserve to live in the prosperity of your community and not the deprivation of North Korea? Did you deserve to hear the gospel, a privilege more than a third of the world has yet to experience? Did you deserve the physical abilities you enjoy?

All people who come to God seek him for one of two reasons: either so he will help us or because he already has. Either so he will love us, or because he already does. Solomon and his nation concluded their week of temple dedication with gratitude for all God had done for them:

So Solomon observed the festival at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. On the eighth day they held an assembly, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the festival for seven days more. On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart for the good things the LORD had done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel (2 Chronicles 7:8-10).

God wants us to experience awakening no matter who we are. Have you thanked him for his grace today?

**God's
Commitment
to Solomon**

Day 17: Friday, March 2

Do you believe that God hears your prayers?

When Alexander the Great died, his generals discovered that they had marched off their maps. They had no idea where they were. Their leader knew where he was going and how to get there, but they didn't. They were lost, with no idea what to do.

Do you sometimes feel that way with God? Shakespeare spoke for us all, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; words without thoughts never to heaven go." Does it sometimes seem that your words ascend no further than the ceiling, that God has turned a deaf ear to your prayers?

He has not. Your Father hears your every prayer, whether you have understood his answers yet or not. As we pray for awakening in our nation, be encouraged by God's response to Solomon's prayer of dedication:

When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, the Lord appeared to him at night and said: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices" (2 Chronicles 7:11-12).

Solomon was wise, to be sure, but he was still a fallen human. God heard his prayer, not because Solomon is more deserving than us, but because our Lord is gracious. As you pray for awakening, know that your Lord listens to your every cry and will answer in his perfect will.

Day 18: Saturday, March 3

Will you choose to join the awakening?

What was your favorite Christmas gift as a child? Mine was a chrome-plated, black-leather-seated Mattel Stallion bicycle built to imitate a motorcycle. I rode it until the tires went bald and the springs broke.

One fact all Christmas gifts have in common is that they must be opened. My bike wasn't much good under wrapping paper. 2 Chronicles 7:14 begins: "If my people, who are called by my name . . ." Note its first word: "if."

The Lord of the universe chooses to honor the freedom he has given us. He will not make us love him, or obey his word, or join the awakening his Spirit is bringing to the world. Jesus tells us that "whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life"

(John 3:16)—but we must believe in him. He invites us: "Come, to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)—but we must come to him.

Would you decide today to join the Fifth Great Awakening?

Day 19: Sunday, March 4

Will you surrender your life to Jesus?

The London Times once asked a number of famous authors to write on the topic, "What's wrong with the world?" G. K. Chesterton's answer was the shortest essay submitted: "Dear Sirs, I am. Sincerely yours, G. K. Chesterton."

It is clear that our nation desperately needs moral renewal. America leads the industrialized world in teenage pregnancy—one in three girls in our country becomes pregnant before the age of 20, 81 percent out of wedlock. Pornography makes more money each year than Apple, Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, eBay, Amazon, and Netflix—combined.

And yet God says that renewal begins not with our culture but with his people: "If my people, who are called by my name . . ." Spiritual awakening transforms nations and cultures, but it begins with God's people. It starts when Christians choose to crown their Father as their King, submitting themselves completely to him as their Lord and Master.

Have you surrendered your life and day to Jesus?

Day 20: Monday, March 5

Will you join the global movement of God?

David Barrett's World Christian Encyclopedia states that 82,000 people are becoming Christians every day around the world, the largest number in Christian history. More Muslims have come to Christ in the last 15 years than in the previous 15 centuries, many after seeing visions and dreams of Jesus.

Our Scripture continues, "If my people, who are called by

my name . . ." A movement that began with a dozen men now encompasses more than two billion people, and is the fastest-growing religion in the world. Every believer is part of one faith family: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

There are more Christians in Africa than in America. Christianity is growing most quickly among people who don't look like Anglo-Americans. More than 82,000 people come to Christ every day, but only 6,000 are in Western Europe and North America, combined. What will you do today to help your church join this great awakening?

Day 21: Tuesday, March 6

Have you accepted the invitation of God?

I was once invited to a meeting at the White House. Before I could make plans to attend, I had to complete an extensive biographical document and submit to a background check. I passed through three security stations on my way to the room where our group met. An armed security guard was present every moment I was on the grounds.

By contrast, we can gain admission to the throne room of the King now. Our past failures are no hindrance to his grace. We can speak to him whenever we choose. He is as close as our knees.

Our Scripture continues, “If my people, who are called by my name . . .” The Hebrew word translated “called” means to be invited or called by name. Before we invited Jesus into our lives, he first invited us to himself: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

A Fifth Great Awakening is growing around the globe, spreading to every heart which welcomes Jesus as Lord and King. You can consider this Lenten guide to be your personal invitation to join this movement. How will you respond to the call of God?

Day 22: Wednesday, March 7

Will you pay the price of holiness?

When a deserter was brought to Alexander the Great, the general asked the soldier his name. "Alexander," came the trembling reply. The general roared: "Change your life or change your name!"

Our Scripture continues, "If my people, who are called **by my name** . . ." The "name" of God denotes his personality, power, and presence. To be called by his "name" meant to be associated personally with him, in the same way a surname identifies a person with a particular family. There is no greater honor than to be included in the family of the King of Kings.

Now our King invites us to join the movement of his Spirit in bringing awakening to the nations. As "Christians," we bear the name of our Messiah and Lord. To honor his name and join his movement, do you need to change your behavior? What step into holiness is your holy God calling you to take today?

Day 23: Thursday, March 8

Will you repent of self-reliance?

“All roads lead up the same mountain,” we’re told today. Our culture views “truth” as personal and subjective, insisting that “you have no right to force your morals on me.” By that logic, any key would start your car; any medicine would treat your illness; any road would lead to your home.

Yesterday we considered God’s declaration that spiritual awakening begins with “my people, who are called **by my name**.” Peter declared, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”

(Acts 4:12). The moral and spiritual renewal we need can be found in Christ and nowhere else.

Tragically, self-dependence is the religion of our day. We believe we can do anything if we’ll get up earlier, stay up later, work longer and try harder. But human words cannot change human hearts. We cannot convict anyone of sin, save anyone’s soul, or change anyone’s eternity. Self-sufficiency is spiritual suicide. God cannot give us what we will not receive, or lead us where we will not go. We can experience spiritual awakening only by making Christ our Lord and King.

Do you need to repent of self-reliance in order to join the Fifth Great Awakening?

Day 24: Friday, March 9

Will you pay the price of awakening?

When I first began studying great awakenings, I was surprised to discover their unpopularity. Each was viewed with suspicion by religious authorities. For instance, George Whitefield, the renowned British evangelist of the First Great Awakening, had to preach in the open air because no church would allow him to speak from its pulpit. When God moves, the enemy always responds.

Our Scripture continues, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves . . .” “Will” implies the possibility of “won’t.” Not all will accept God’s invitation to join the Fifth Great Awakening. Some Christians will choose self-sufficiency over the Spirit’s power, the status quo over spiritual renewal.

Not to decide for Jesus is to decide against him. Have you decided to join the Fifth Great Awakening, whatever its cost? If so, know that “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). There is a great encounter with the living God waiting for those who pay its price.

When last did it cost you something significant to make Jesus your King?

Day 25: Saturday, March 10

Are you humble enough to join the awakening?

Billy Graham preached to more than 210 million people in 185 countries, and was named to Gallup's "most admired people" more often than any American in history. But here's what he says of himself: "I have often said that the first thing I am going to do when I get to Heaven is to ask, 'Why me, Lord? Why did You choose a farmboy from North Carolina to preach to so many people, to have such a wonderful team of associates, and to have a part in what You were doing in the latter half of the twentieth century?' I have thought about that question a great deal, but I know also that only God knows the answer."

Spiritual awakening begins when "my people, who are called by my name, will **humble themselves** . . ." "Humble" translates kana, a Hebrew word which means to "subject" or "be subdued," in the sense that an inferior army subjects itself to a superior force. It is used 18 times in a military context, as when a person or nation submits to a superior power. The other 18 times, it refers to spiritual subjection, submitting to God as King and Lord.

Someone asked St. Augustine to identify the first of the religious virtues. He replied: "Humility." When asked what was second, Augustine replied, "Humility." When asked what was third, he replied, "Humility."

Have you humbled yourself before your King yet today?

Day 26: Sunday, March 11

Will you seek awakening for your soul?

Daylight Savings Time was first implemented during World War I as a way to conserve coal. While sports and retailers benefit, farmers have been less enthusiastic. Time change has presented challenges for computer programmers over the years, and has been linked to sleep disruption and health issues.

Today, we have smartphones that adjust the time for us. But no one can reset our clocks spiritually—this is something we must each do for ourselves. Our Scripture continues: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble **themselves** . . .” God’s invitation is addressed personally to you. You cannot humble your neighbor or pastor or mayor. The only person whose relationship with God you can determine is your own.

Gypsy Smith, a great evangelist of an earlier generation, was once asked how revival begins. He suggested: “Take a piece of chalk and draw a circle around yourself. Pray until everything inside that circle is right with God, and revival will be upon us.”

Would you take his advice today?

Day 27: Monday, March 12

Are you desperate for awakening?

I was once asked by a journalist if spiritual awakenings have a common denominator, a condition that is necessary for those who experience them. I answered immediately: “desperation.”

Before the First Great Awakening, only seven percent of colonial America went to church and many claimed that Christianity was a leftover European institution. Before the Second Great Awakening, depravity was rampant—banks were robbed daily, alcoholism was epidemic, churches were in decline. The economic collapse of 1857 preceded the Third Great Awakening. The Fourth Great Awakening was sparked by a spirit of repentance that swept the churches.

This phenomenon should not surprise us. The first step to awakening is admitting that we need awakening: “If my people, who are called by my name, will **humble** themselves . . .” So long as we believe that our churches are winning enough people to Christ, that our nation is sufficiently moral and spiritual, we will not pay the price to join the global movement of God’s Spirit.

Complacency is the enemy of awakening. Philip Yancey was right: God goes where he’s wanted. Does your country need a mighty movement of God in these days? Do you?

Day 28: Tuesday, March 13

Will you take your next step with God?

No one in the Bible gets a five-year plan. Paul thought he should go east when he was called west (Acts 16:6-10). The Bible says of the first patriarch, "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).

God is always calling us forward by faith. However, change comes at a cost. The reason we have not taken our next step with God is that the price of change is greater than the price of staying where we are.

Humility, admitting that we need a great movement of God's Spirit, is the first step to spiritual awakening, but not the last. Our Scripture continues: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves **and** . . ."

Are you seeking to know God more intimately today than you did yesterday?

Day 29: Wednesday, March 14

Have you prayed for awakening today?

According to the FBI's "Crime Clock," a person is assaulted every 7.2 seconds in our country. A home is victimized by theft every 2.3 seconds; someone becomes the victim of identity theft every 8.7 seconds; someone is killed in an alcohol-related crash every 29 minutes; someone is murdered every 31 minutes.

Abraham Lincoln, facing the grave challenges of his day, testified: "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day."

What can we do about the moral direction of our nation? Our Scripture continues: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and **pray** . . ." The Hebrew word means to "entreat, supplicate, beg." It describes a person seeking God with earnest, heart-felt commitment.

When was the last time you sought God for awakening with passion?

Day 30: Thursday, March 15

With whom are you praying for awakening?

The First Great Awakening began with the prayer meetings of Theodore Frelingheusen. The Second Great Awakening was sparked by Isaac Backus' call to prayer. The Third Great Awakening was birthed in Jeremiah Lamphier's prayer meeting at Old North Dutch Church in New York City on September 23, 1857. The Fourth Great Awakening began in a prayer meeting led by Evan Roberts.

What did they have in common? A commitment to unified prayer, calling God's people together as they sought awakening for their nation. In the same way, our Scripture calls God's people to

“humble themselves and **pray** . . .” The Hebrew word means to pray in the collective, for the entire nation.

Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest theologian and key leader of the First Great Awakening, observed: “When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people . . . when God is about to accomplish great things for his church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplication.”

With whom are you praying for awakening?

Day 31: Friday, March 16

Is prayer an activity or a lifestyle for you?

Why does an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful God need us to pray for awakening? We do not inform him of our need, for “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8). We do not convince him to do the right thing, for he promises, “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3). We do not coerce him into action, for our Lord is the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16).

Rather, prayer positions us to receive what grace intends to give. When we pray, we enable God to mold us into the character of Christ (Romans 8:29). We draw close enough to him that we

can hear his Spirit’s voice in our hearts. And we join him in the awakening now sweeping the nations.

Our Scripture calls believers to “humble themselves and **pray . . .**” The tense indicates an ongoing, habitual lifestyle. God instructs us to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It has been observed that “all who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives.” The more time we spend with God, the more we can do for him.

Did you begin yesterday with your Father in prayer? Did you pray when faced with opportunities and challenges? Did you voice prayers of gratitude for God’s blessings and seek his strength

for your temptations? Did you practice the presence of Jesus through the day? Will you today? Martin Luther believed, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” Is prayer an occasional activity or a daily lifestyle for you?

Day 32: Saturday, March 17

Are you seeking intimacy with God?

The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius stated, “The true worth of a man is measured by the objects he pursues.”

I’ve been reading Oswald Chambers’ *My Utmost For His Highest* every morning since 1993, and find that God speaks through it to my soul every day. Here is the most powerful paragraph in the entire devotional to me:

There is only one relationship that matters, and that is your personal relationship to a personal Redeemer and Lord. Let everything else go, but maintain that at all costs, and God will fulfill His purpose through your life. One individual life may be of priceless value to God’s purposes, and yours may be that life (November 30 reading).

Our Scripture continues: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face . . .” “Seek” translates the Hebrew *baqash*, which means to search out, strive for, beg, beseech, run hard after. God wants us to seek his presence with passion.

How important is spiritual awakening to you?

Day 33: Sunday, March 18

How close are you to Jesus?

St. Patrick was born around A.D. 389 in England. At the age of 16, he was kidnapped and sold as a slave in Ireland. Six years later he escaped and returned home, but became burdened for the spiritual condition of the Irish. He eventually returned to their land as a missionary, where he established more than 200 churches and led more than 100,000 to faith in Christ. His death on March 17, 461 is remembered each year as St. Patrick's Day.

Our Scripture continues: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek **my face** . . ."

"Face" translates the Hebrew *panim*, which denotes the personal presence of God. To seek God's "face" is to seek an intimate, personal, passionate relationship with our Father.

In seeking God's face, consider this prayer of St. Patrick:

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me: God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me, God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise. Christ in the heart of everyone one who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every one who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. I arise today through mighty strength.

Amen?

Day 34: Monday, March 19

Are you grieving the Spirit today?

Do you remember fold-out maps stuffed in your car's glove box? Today, GPS is found in vehicles and on smartphones the world over. The first GPS units were hand-held units used by the U.S. military. Today such technology is supported by 24 satellites orbiting the earth, with three available at any one time for your device to use.

However, the most sophisticated directional technology in the world is not much help if we won't follow its directions. It is the same with the leading of God's Spirit. Our Scripture continues:

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and **turn from** their wicked ways . . ."

"Turn" in the Hebrew original means to "turn back," to stop going the wrong direction and turn back to the way we should be traveling.

God's word cautions us, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"

(Ephesians 4:30). Before we can experience spiritual awakening, we must first remove anything which hinders his transforming work in our lives.

Is an attitude or action in your life grieving the Spirit today?

Day 35: Tuesday, March 20

Have you made a spiritual inventory lately?

Privacy experts now call cell phones “trackers.” That’s because they reveal our location and much more to law enforcement and anyone else with the necessary technology. As a result, more and more people are buying disposable phones or purchasing expensive privacy protection.

No matter how sophisticated our technology becomes, we cannot shield our thoughts and ways from the omniscient Lord of the universe: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13).

Our Scripture continues: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from **their wicked ways** . . .” “Wicked” translates the worst Hebrew word for sin. “Ways” translates a Hebrew word for roads or journeys.

Are you walking in God’s will today? In week one of this study we made a “spiritual inventory.” Let’s make another one today. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind any attitudes or actions which displease your Father. Write them down, specifically and honestly. Confess them to God, claiming his forgiveness and grace (1 John 1:9). Throw the list away, and ask the Spirit to help you live in God’s ways.

Will you keep this discipline regularly?

Day 36: Wednesday, March 21

Have you sought an audience with God yet today?

The White House receives more than 65,000 letters each week, 100,000 emails, 1,000 faxes and an average of 3,000 phone calls a day. Of course, the president is able to respond only to a few of these requests for his time. By contrast, the God of the universe is able to hear each of the billions of prayers offered to him through the day. This is because he is not bound by time. He literally has all of eternity to listen to your next prayer.

Our Scripture continues: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, **then will I** hear from heaven . . .” Not “might I” or “can I.” God unconditionally promises to hear the prayers of his people when they are humble, seeking an intimate and obedient relationship with him. Spiritual renewal is his gift, the work of the Spirit in our lives: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6).

Alfred, Lord Tennyson believed that “more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” E. M. Bounds agreed: “God shapes the world by prayer. Prayers are deathless. They outlive the lives of those who uttered them.” Leonard Ravenhill insisted, “Preaching affects people; prayer affects God.” John Wallace claimed, “Prayer moves the hand which moves the world.”

Have you asked the Spirit to bring spiritual awakening to your soul and nation yet today?

Day 37: Thursday, March 22

Is God waiting on you?

On April 6, 1966, Time magazine published a cover with three words: "Is God Dead?" A reporter asked Billy Graham to respond. He smiled and said, "I can assure you that God is not dead. I spoke with him this morning."

Our Scripture continues: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I **hear from heaven** . . ." "Hear" translates a Hebrew word which means to "listen, give attention to, understand." God hears every prayer for spiritual awakening we offer to him.

His word paints a wonderful picture of this reality: "Another angel . . . was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:3-4).

Is God waiting to receive the incense of your intercession today?

Day 38: Friday, March 23

Have you been cleansed by God's grace?

During the Cold War, some sympathetic West Germans threw food and clothes across the Berlin Wall to their starving, shivering neighbors in the East. The Communist government was enraged, and threw mounds of trash across the Wall to the West. The West Germans put a sign on the trash which read, "Each gives what he has."

We are fallen people living in a fallen world. Each of us has

"sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But our holy God is also our loving Father (1 John 4:8). He stands ready to forgive every sin we confess to him with genuine repentance (1 John 1:9). And so our Scripture continues: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and **will forgive their sin . . .**"

If we receive this gift, we can say with the Psalmist, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Then God will "tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Then we can claim his promise: "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

Repentance and forgiveness are essential to spiritual renewal. Have you been cleansed by the grace of God today?

Day 39: Saturday, March 24

Will God bring awakening to your community?

A revival changes a person or church; spiritual awakening transforms a nation. When the Fourth Great Awakening swept Wales, for instance, saloons went bankrupt and police formed barbershop quartets to sing in churches since there was no one to arrest.

We will know that the spiritual awakening has come to your community when its people are transformed by the gospel and grace of Jesus. Our Scripture concludes: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin **and will heal their land.**"

30,000 Americans commit suicide every year. 1.3 million abortions are performed annually in our country. Some 16 million Americans use illegal drugs; pornography is a \$10 billion annual business in our nation. Do we need for God to "heal our land"?

The Fifth Great Awakening is sweeping the nations. Does God want it to come to your community? Do you?

Palm Sunday: Sunday, March 25

Is Jesus your King?

On the first Palm Sunday, more than two million people crowded into the Holy City, many of them with special excitement.

The question on everyone's lips was, "Will Jesus come?" If we could combine the excitement of a presidential election with

the anticipation of Christmas Day, we'd have something of the electricity in the air that day.

The crowds lined the narrow streets of Jerusalem like a parade and threw their cloaks on the road. They cut palm branches and spread them out before him as a king. They shouted at the top of their lungs, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" But on Good Friday, their cheers would turn to taunts, their worship to cries of "Crucify him!"

Meanwhile, the authorities were outraged. He was a threat to their power and position. They were in charge of Jerusalem and the nation, and they didn't want to share their power with anyone, least of all a country rabbi from Galilee.

On this Palm Sunday, where are you in the story? Is Jesus your Lord even when he's unpopular? Is he your Lord even when he threatens your plans? Is he your Lord even when he doesn't do as you wish? Our theme Scripture calls us to "humble ourselves." Would you humble yourself before Jesus, crowning him King over every part of your life? Is Jesus your Sunday hobby, or is he your Monday King?

Day 41: Monday, March 26

Is your heart a 'house of prayer'?

On Monday of Holy Week, Jesus found money changers at work in the temple area. They sold sacrificial animals to the crowds that came for Passover. In addition, they changed Roman currency

(with its idolatrous images of the emperor) into temple currency. However, they charged exorbitant prices for their animals and inflated exchange rates for their money.

So Jesus "overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves" (Matthew 21:12). He then said,

"It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers'" (v. 13, quoting Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11). God did not call his temple a "house of preaching" or a "house of programs," but a "house of prayer."

Our theme Scripture calls us to "pray" for awakening. Your life is now the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Are there "moneychangers" at work there? Or is your heart a "house of prayer" today?

Day 42: Tuesday, March 27

Are you seeking God's face?

Current federal laws fill more than 23,000 pages. Texas' Constitution has grown from 23,500 words at its adoption in 1876 to nearly 90,000 words today. Which of our laws is the most important?

On Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus returned to the temple to continue teaching the people. Here a lawyer asked Jesus to identify the most important of their 613 laws. If he named one, they would accuse him of rejecting the others. Jesus responded with the Great Commandments: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31). The highest priority in life is loving God, then loving others.

Jesus' opponents were the most religious people in the land. On Holy Tuesday we learn that religion is not enough. Going to church or even preaching sermons and leading congregations is not enough. God wants a personal, intimate relationship with every one of us. He wants to be King of every part of our lives, not just our religious activities.

In our theme Scripture, God calls us to "seek my face." His word tells us to "look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always" (Psalm 105:4). Have you sought his face for awakening today?

Day 43: Wednesday, March 28

Have you listened to God today?

In the 1970s, we were exposed to 500 advertisements a day. Today the number exceeds 5,000. Between smartphones, tablet computers, laptops, and hundreds of 24-hour television channels, our world is never silent.

Today is Holy Wednesday. On this day, there is not a single recorded event in the life of the Lord Jesus. He apparently spent the day in Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem where he had been staying in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Here he rested with his disciples and friends in quiet and solitude, preparing for the horrific events soon to come.

We all need a “quiet Wednesday” in our lives, a time of solitude where we draw close to our Father. Our theme Scripture calls God’s people to “turn from their wicked ways”—this commitment requires us to listen to the Spirit as he shows us our sins and leads us to confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

The “desert fathers” were a medieval group of men who forsook their homes to live alone in desert solitude. Someone asked one of them why he had made such a drastic change in his life. The monk poured water and some sand into a jar. As he shook the jar, the water became clouded and murky. But as he allowed the jar to rest, the sand settled to the bottom and the water became clear again.

How clear is your soul today? How clear would you like it to be?

Maundy Thursday: March 29

Would you be a catalyst for awakening?

“Maundy Thursday” comes from the word for “mandated.” On this night during Holy Week, Jesus did a very strange thing.

After the Last Supper, he took off his outer robe and wrapped a slave’s towel around himself. He then crawled on his knees to the first disciple. He took the man’s dirty, smelly, mud-caked feet in his hands. He poured water over them and dried them with the towel wrapped around his waist. He then crawled to the next, and the next, and the next. He washed the feet of Peter, who would deny him, and Judas, who would betray him, and the other disciples who would abandon him.

Now comes the “mandated” part of Maundy Thursday. Jesus told them, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:14, 35).

If God is moving in your life, will you share what you are experiencing with those you influence? By addition, if I were to help one person encounter spiritual awakening every day until I retire at age 65, more than 4,000 people would be empowered by God’s Spirit. However, if I could lead one person to make God his or her King today, then tomorrow each of us helped one person to be a Kingdom Christian, then the next day each of us helped one more, how long would it take for awakening to circle the globe? Thirty-three days. Growing by multiplication, more than eight billion people would join the movement of God’s Spirit.

Whose feet will you wash today?

Good Friday: March 30

Are you grateful for grace?

“Good Friday” should be called “Black Friday.” On this day the most scandalous betrayal of justice in human history took place. But when we remember what happened on this day we’ll know why we call it “Good Friday” today.

After Jesus’ illegal trials, he was stripped and tied to a post, then scourged with a long whip in which were imbedded nails, lead balls, and pieces of shell. They ripped the flesh from his back; many men died under such torture.

A crown of razor-sharp thorns was pressed onto his head, impaling his scalp and forehead. He was forced to carry a wooden cross to Calvary. There nails were driven through his wrists and ankles into the wood and he was left to die. He could have called ten thousand angels to his side, but he refused. Instead, he died there for you and for me.

Never again wonder if you are loved. God thought your eternal life worth the death of his only Son. If you had been the only sinner on the planet, Good Friday would still have happened, just for you. Someone asked Jesus, “How much do you love me?” He answered, “This much,” as he spread out his arms and died. All for you. Just for you.

Have you joined the Fifth Great Awakening in gratitude for such grace?

Holy Saturday: March 31

Will you crown the King?

On this day, Jesus' body lay in its borrowed tomb, awaiting the resurrection that would prove that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). Today we know what happened on Easter Sunday. Has it happened in your heart today?

When a monarch is crowned king or queen in England, four steps take place. First, the previous monarch dies. In that moment, the next ruler becomes king or queen. Second, the new sovereign is presented to the people, who acclaim him or her their ruler. Third, the monarch swears an oath to uphold the law and the Church of England. Last, the ruler is anointed with oil, crowned, invested with regalia, and receives the homage of the realm and its subjects.

It is the same with making God our King. First, the previous king must die. We choose to die to ourselves and live for him. Second, we make Jesus our ruler each day. We begin each morning by giving it to him. We ask his Spirit to take control of our lives, to lead us and use us that day. Did you do this today?

Third, we trust his plan and purpose for us. As the English monarch promises to uphold the law and the Church of England, so our monarch has promised to lead us in his "good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Romans 12:2). We trust him to do what is best with our lives all day long. Have you surrendered your life to his perfect plan for this day?

Fourth, we worship him as our King and ruler. Not just on Sunday, but every day. The Bible says that we "enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise" (Psalm 100:4). When we worship him, we connect our lives to his power and purpose. Then he guides, empowers and blesses us as his subjects.

Have you joined the Fifth Great Awakening? In other words, is Jesus your King today?

Easter Sunday: April 1

Will you serve the King?

The day that changed history began like any other. The sun arose over the Holy City as millions were still crowded into Jerusalem from Passover. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not an unusual event—Rome crucified its enemies and insurrectionists all the time. The authorities were certain that their plot had succeeded, that this upstart was dead and gone. But with that single sunrise, the crucified carpenter became the resurrected Lord.

The stone rolled over his grave was but a pebble compared to the Rock of Ages inside. Hardened Roman guards trembled and fainted. Cowardly disciples became fearless apostles. A fledgling band of frightened followers became the mightiest movement the world has ever seen. Eleven men became more than two billion believers today. All because of Easter.

His disciples' changed lives are testimony to the reality of the resurrection. Men who denied Christ to servants now preached him to the highest authorities in the land. People don't die for a lie, but more than a million Christians died in the first generations of their movement, all of them for the One they knew to be their risen Lord. On the day he returns to this planet, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

A poet said it this way:

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While he was dying his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth – his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty long centuries have come and gone, and today he is the centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

Is he your King? Where will you serve in his Kingdom?