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Remembering Resurrection

Mark 11:1-9

Prayer: *Father, again we just thank you and praise you for the privilege we have of meeting, of being able to gather together still freely, we just praise you and thank you for that privilege. We thank you for the incredible gift that we are going to be unpacking of what you've done at Easter and what this week means. I just continue to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, give us the unction that you alone can give and to make this of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I just want to revisit that scripture that we read this morning, which is our text this morning, this again is Mark 11:1-9. It says: *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will*

send it back here immediately.'" And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Now every year, every year for this specific day, we go out and get palm branches. You see them, you have them, they've been distributed to the pews, they represent the leafy branches that had been cut from the fields that was placed on the road before Jesus as he entered into Jerusalem. And so we ask a simple question: What is the point of passing out pieces of leafy branches? I mean as far as I can tell God never said anything about gathering up palm branches just to celebrate Palm Sunday. So why do we do it? I mean why do we even call it Palm Sunday? Why not call it Triumph Sunday or Hosanna Day or something like that? Well, you see the palms are there to help us remember because it turns out that we humans have a long history of using props and using aids to jar our memories because we are all in the habit of forgetting. God knows

that as well. And so this morning I want to revisit some of the steps that we've talked about in the past, some of the steps that God used particularly with Israel to help them to remember and to discuss why remembering is so incredibly important.

So Israel. Israel's forty years of wandering in the desert was coming to an end. Moses had died, his successor Joshua had the task of leading the Jews into the promised land but in order to do that he had to cross over the Jordan River which was at that time at flood stage. It was going to take a miracle, but that was by design. You see, Joshua was to lead them in an impossible task so that God could lift Joshua up because he was going to be the new Moses. *Joshua 3:7* says: *The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."*

So God instructs Joshua to have the priests bear the ark of the covenant right up to the banks of the Jordan as a test. Verse 13 says: *"And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap."* So as soon as these priests' feet touched the river, well the waters parted and they piled up as a heap on either side,

and the entire nation of Israel passed through the Jordan just like their ancestors had passed through the Red Sea and they passed on dry ground. But consider what Joshua did next. It says: *Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. And Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."* So Joshua has one man from each tribe go into the middle of the Jordan and there from this newly dried out ground they were to fetch a stone, a large stone in order so that they could build a memorial. Again why did Joshua command that? Because one of our greatest of human failings is forgetting. Joshua wanted to ensure that that would not happen.

Now if you had crossed over a major river in the middle of its flood stage, and if you saw with your own eyes a river held back and piled high by the hand of God, do you think you would ever forget that? Well the answer is yes. No matter how spectacular

the event, eventually our memories dim, diminish and disappear. You may think that's impossible but consider this statement of just how short the memory was of the Israelites. This is in *Exodus 16*. It says: *They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."*

Two and a half months, just think about it, it took two and a half months for the Jews to so completely forget the frogs, the flies, the water turned to blood and all the other miracles that had gotten them out of Egypt. I mean they were witness to ten different supernatural plagues that broke the will of Pharaoh and then they marched out of Egypt right through the Red Sea on dry ground only to see their enemies swallowed up by the very same sea. And in less than three months since God worked those miracles, God was so completely forgotten that he was accused of bringing the Jews into the wilderness to kill them.

Well, it's now forty years later. Joshua's going to lead the children of those who had been born of these very same people and he knew how easy it was to forget. So Joshua said: *"These stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."* See, a memorial is a reminder and Israel desperately needed one. Over their forty-year journey in the desert they had repeatedly, pointedly and willfully chosen to forget the God who would warn them in *Deuteronomy 6: Take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.* Consider what they had forgotten. They had forgotten the manna and the quail miraculously delivered, they had forgotten the bitter water turned sweet, even the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. I mean the Jews were not careful. They had forgotten their God.

And we don't often think of forgetting as something sinful but God does. David in *Psalms 103* said: *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* *Proverbs 3:1* says: *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.* See, the reason why we don't see forgetting as a sin is not because it's something that we don't do, it's because it's something we all do. It is so common a failing, so common a sin that we don't even categorize it as a sin. I mean we think of forgetfulness as roughly akin to being left-handed or color-blind, and yet

forgetfulness can range from simply being annoying to profoundly sinful. It all depends on what is forgotten and who's affected by it. I mean, if I forget to feed my goldfish, it's no big deal. If I forget to feed my newborn baby, it's a much bigger deal. I mean forgetting to show up at a company picnic is not the same as forgetting to show up at your own wedding, and again it has to do with what is forgotten and who's affected by it. You see, when we forget God we forget the biggest who and the greatest what there is. And the reason why we do so so often is because forgetting God actually seems to have no apparent consequence. I mean if I forget my wedding, if I forget to feed my children, I'm certainly going to hear about it. Even my goldfish is going to die and stink if I forget him. But if I forget God, apparently nothing happens. I mean the sun still rises and sets, sets on the just and the unjust alike, I mean life continues to go on. And those who forget even the thought of God continue to do so with impunity, as the psalmist says in *Psalm 73: The wicked prosper.*

So what's the point of remembering? And what's the point if the consequences of forgetting are nonexistent? You know, even God knows about that argument, I mean, he's heard it all before. Listen to what God says to believers who feel betrayed by God's inaction. This is *Malachi 3:13*. God says: "*Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken*

against you?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.'"

Well back then even as it is today, there seems to be no obvious distinction between those who serve God and those who mock him, and even God acknowledges that. But he also says in verse 16: *Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. And need I add the distinction those who remember him and those who do not. Job 8 says: While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant. Such are the paths of all who forget God.*

Have you ever forgotten God? I mean perhaps you're thinking a question like that surely needs a qualifier, I mean, what constitutes forgetting God? What level of consciousness does God

expect from us? Well *Deuteronomy 6* says this, it says: *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

So what constitutes forgetting God? Well the answer is actually simple, it's living any part of my life as if God wasn't a part of it. God says there's basically four parts of your day when I should be part of your thinking, when I should be on your heart: When you sit down, when you walk, when you lie down, and when you rise. I mean that's God's way of saying I should be on your mind and in your heart 24-7, 365. Now you might -- you might be thinking, well, isn't that a little bit overboard? I mean that's kind of fanatical; that's not even practical. I mean it would create a whole class of people who are so heavenly-minded they're no earthly good, as the cliché goes. And the fact is that simply isn't true. The most engaged folks I know are people who have God on their minds constantly. In fact being heavenly minded is the key to being of any earthly good.

This is what C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*. He said: "If you read history you will find the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the middle ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in.' Aim at Earth and you will get neither."

The problem with the world and with the church today is that it aims almost exclusively at earth. It has forgotten that we are dust, that we didn't invent ourselves, that we are mere creatures put here for a purpose by a creator. That purpose is to glorify God. And it's not something that we only do on Sunday mornings. Okay. So how much of my consciousness is God entitled to? Well, the answer has to do with who we think we are and what we think we're here for. You see, if our purpose of existing is God's glory then what part of our conscious thought do we exclude? I mean *1 Corinthians 10:31* says: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* And when do we do that? Well *Deuteronomy* tells us: When you sit down, when you walk, when you

lie down, when you rise, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That about covers it.

Now before you lift up your hands in despair, I want you to just revisit with me that scripture in Deuteronomy 6 because the very next verse says what we are to do with these commandments from God. It says, *tie them as symbols on your hands, bind them on your foreheads, write them on your door frames and on your gates.* And you know what all of these devices are, these are reminders. You know why God gives us those reminders? He knows how easily we forget. Why did God have an altar built out of stones taken from the dry ground at the center of the river Jordan? Quote -- "*So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.*" A memorial is something that stirs up what? Your memory. I mean God knows us, he knows how quickly we forget. I mean what was the purpose of The Passover celebration, what was the purpose of the Day of Atonement, what's the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles? God says so you will not forget. I mean you remember what Jesus said when he instituted the Lord's supper, he said, "*This do*" -- in what? "*In remembrance of me.*"

Well, that brings me to the point of this message this morning. You see, today marks the beginning of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we who forget so easily have been given by God a whole

week. We've been given a week to prepare to celebrate the greatest event in the history of humankind, and that's Jesus Christ's triumph over death and his resurrection. And Palm Sunday starts a week of remembrance of that event. There's 52 weeks in a year. This week coming up should be like no other week in that year because the event of the resurrection is like no other. I mean all history human, divine, natural, supernatural, it flows forward or backward from that one event.

The first day of this week is today, it's Palm Sunday. It marks our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. *John 12* tells us that *the multitude met Jesus with palm branches and that they laid them down shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.* So we pass out palm branches on Palm Sunday and why do we do that? To help us remember. And what do we remember about that day? Do you remember what Jesus did as he approached Jerusalem at the height of his triumph? If you remember, the crowds were shouting, the Pharisees were fuming, every person in Jerusalem was overwhelmed with Jesus. One person who wasn't overwhelmed was Jesus. *Luke 19* says: *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.* Jesus wept for a blindness in his people that would culminate days later with more shouts but now would be shouts for his crucifixion, shouts for his blood to be on their heads and on the heads of their children. And Jesus wasn't weeping for himself,

he was weeping for a judgment that would come to Jerusalem. It says: *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

Well, some 37 years later in A.D. 70 Jerusalem was overrun by Rome and exactly what Jesus had predicted came true. You see, Jesus is God incarnate, he knows the future and he also knew with absolute accuracy every last detail that would unfold over the next few days. And we know that he knew all about it because a month before he even arrived in Jerusalem he said this in *Matthew 20*. He said: *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."* See, at the very height of his triumph, Jesus already knew his fate because he already knew his purpose. You see, he had not come to earth as a teacher or as a ruler or example, he came as a sacrifice. His purpose was to lead a spotless, flawless life and

so earn the right to have the blood drained from his body to splatter on the wood, the nails and the soil below. And that blood, the blood of God himself, that blood alone would atone for my sin and for yours. This was the moment his whole public ministry was pointed to. It wasn't his teaching or living or miracles that brought him to Jerusalem, it was his impending execution.

Three years earlier at the very beginning of his public ministry he's baptized by John the Baptist who was sent as the prophet to prepare the way for Christ, and here's John and he sees Jesus approaching and he identifies him as the Christ not by declaring, "Behold, the teacher," although he was certainly the greatest teacher there ever was. He didn't declare, "Behold, the leader," although he led all of creation to the greatest victory would ever have at the cross; and he didn't declare, "Behold, the example," although he was the greatest example there ever was of what it meant to live a flawless human life; none of those titles defined who Jesus truly was. It was John the Baptist who had that privilege, and it was he who declared, "*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" What an incredibly strange but absolutely appropriate title. I mean everybody knew the purpose of a lamb was to be sacrifice. And for three years as Jesus healed and he taught and he ministered, he knew that his primary mission

was to be that sacrificial Lamb of God and that thought was never, never beyond his consciousness.

I mean we know from experience that we human beings have a hard time remembering. And I'm just wondering if Jesus from experience had a hard time forgetting. I mean how do you forget what had to loom in front of his consciousness every single waking day of his life? I mean, we know from the Palm Sunday account that Jesus wept and what we don't know because he's left no record of it is if Jesus ever laughed. I mean Jesus knew every single day of his adult life that he was here to be slaughtered as a perfect sacrificial lamb, and unlike us, he certainly didn't need reminders. And so the question is could he ever forget his purpose long enough to laugh? Could he ever for one moment wipe out the imminence of the torture he knew was coming? We struggle to remember; did he struggle to forget? I don't know. I do know that the palms and the crowds and the "Hosannas" made him weep, and I do know that Palm Sunday and those palms help me remember that. It starts off a whole week of remembrance.

And the next day of holy week is holy Thursday; it's known to some as Maundy Thursday after the first word of the Latin anthem that is sung that day. Holy Thursday is a day that is set aside to commemorate the last supper, and the last supper was a Passover

meal which was in itself a meal designed to help the Jews -- what? remember, to keep them forgetting what God had done when they were still slaves in Egypt. God told the Jews to take a lamb, to slaughter it, spread the blood over their doorposts and lintels because that night God was sending his final plague on Egypt. The angel of death would come down that night and kill the firstborn in all of Egypt. And if the angel saw the blood of the lamb on a doorpost, he would pass over that house and they would be spared. And to remember that event, Jews all over Israel slaughtered a lamb for the Passover celebration. Jesus himself celebrated a Passover supper the night before he went to the cross and it's referred to as "the last supper." And Luke tells us: *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So once again God is simply asking us to remember.

But the very next day Jesus was the Passover lamb whose shed blood would cover the sins of his sheep. It was not coincidence that Jesus was crucified at the exact same time that the Jews were celebrating Passover. I mean, John's gospel tells us of the timing of the crucifixion and it states in *John 19: Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover.* So on the very day the Jews in all of Jerusalem were slaughtering their lambs to remember how the blood of the lamb had protected them from death, at the very same moment

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was being slaughtered so that his blood could save us from death. That wasn't a coincidence. Holy Thursday is a day designed to help us remember The Passover.

The next day of holy week is good Friday. This is the day that we set aside to remember our Lord's crucifixion. And I have vivid memories of this day as a child, I mean, it was to be a day of profound sorrow. No shopping, no sports, no TV, no games, silence from noon to three p.m., and we were not particularly observant Roman Catholics. But you know, I believe they got that right and that we Protestants on this day, we often, we just miss out on that. This is the day to focus on the mocking, on the slaps to the face, on the spitting, on the taunts, on the question, "*Who struck you?*" We remember the sport the soldiers made of the King of the universe, the crown fashioned from two-inch thorn briars forced into his brow and again the taunts, "*Hail! King of the Jews.*" We remember the floggings, leather thongs with bits of metal and bone on the end designed to tear flesh from bone. We remember the wicked procession, Jesus forced to carry his own cross. We remember him stripped, nailed and hoisted all to the gloating and mocking of the very ones that he came to save. Good Friday is a dreadful day of remembrance.

So what's good about it? Well, we focus on what took place at the

cross. There was no noble shouldering of man's sin there, that wouldn't do. See, what many misunderstand is that the cross is not a place where Jesus just came to pay the price of our sins; no, at the cross the spotless One instead became sin for us. That's hugely different. *2 Corinthians 5:21* says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

And when I think of remembering Good Friday, I always think of remembering that passage in Joni Eareckson's book *When God Weeps*, and just about every year we read that passage for the exact same reason we're speaking of, so that we will remember why Good Friday is both dreadful and good.

Joni picks up the crucifixion at the driving of the very first nail: "As the man swings, the son recalls how he and the father first designed the medial nerve of the human forearm. The sensations it would be capable of. The design proves flawless. The nerve performs exquisitely. 'Up you go!' They lift the cross. God is on display and can scarcely breathe. But these pains are a mere warm-up to his other and growing dread. He begins to feel a foreign sensation. Somewhere during this day an unearthly foul odor began to waft, not around his nose, but his heart. He feels dirty. Human wickedness starts to crawl upon his spotless being,

the living excrement from our souls. The Apple of his father's eye turns brown with rot. His father! He must face his father like this! From heaven the father now rouses himself like a lion disturbed, shakes his mane, and roars against the shriveling remnant of a man hanging on a cross. Never has the Son seen the father look at him so, never felt even the least of his hot breath. But now that roar shakes the unseen world and darkens the visible sky. The Son does not recognize these eyes. 'Son of Man! Why have you behaved so? You have cheated, lusted, stolen, gossiped, murdered, envied, hated, lied. You have cursed, robbed, overspent, overeaten, fornicating, disobeyed, embezzled, and blasphemed. Oh, the duties you have shirked, the children you have abandoned! Who has ever so ignored the poor, so played the coward, so belittled my name? Have you ever held your razor tongue? What a self-righteous, pitiful drunk. You, who molest young boys, peddle killer drugs, travel in clicks, and mock your parents. Who gave you the boldness to rig elections, foment revolutions, torture animals, and worship demons? Does the list never end? Splitting families, raping virgins and acting smugly, playing the pimp. Buying politicians, practicing extortion, filming pornography, accepting bribes. You have burnt down buildings, perfected terrorist tactics, founded false religions, traded in slaves, relishing each morsel and bragging about all. I hate, I loathe these things in you! Disgust for everything about you consumes me!

Can you not feel my wrath?' The father watches as his heart's treasure, the mirror image of himself, sinks drowning into raw, liquid sin. Jehovah's stored rage against humankind from every century explodes in a single direction. "Father! Father! Why have you forsaken me?!" But heaven stops its ears. The son stares up at the one who cannot, who will not, reach down or reply. Two eternal hearts tear. Their intimate friendship shaken to the depths. The Trinity had planned it. The Son endured it. The Spirit enabled him. The Father rejected the Son whom he loved. Jesus, the God man from Nazareth, perished. The father accepted His sacrifice for sin and was satisfied. The rescue was accomplished." Good Friday is the day God gives us to remember his cross.

The next day is holy Saturday, and the church is as it were at the Lord's tomb. It's meditating on his passion and death, awaiting his resurrection with prayer and fasting. You see, holy Saturday commemorates the time the entire universe held its breath. It didn't know the results. For Jesus' death to have been an acceptable sacrifice, it too would have to have been like his life, flawless. If the Lord Jesus Christ's entire life and death had been marred by any sin whatsoever, then death and the grave would claim him and Satan would have had the ultimate victory. In fact it's been suggested that hell itself feasted and partied assuming

they had triumphed. Saturday's a day of pensive waiting anticipating Sunday.

And Sunday is the most glorious day of the Christian calendar. It's the day we celebrate the triumph of mercy and justice over sin, it's a day of worship and praise and thanksgiving like no other day all year long. It is a day when the justice of God and the mercy of God meet and kiss. Or it's a day of new outfits and Easter bunnies and Easter eggs. It all depends on what you choose to remember and what you choose to forget.

I said at the beginning of this message that we who forget so easily have been given by God a week to prepare to celebrate the greatest event in the history of mankind. So I want to ask each of us this morning, what are your plans for next week? You know, three times a year God called ancient Israel to celebrate feasts in order to remember, and when he did it, all work was to stop. I mean, everyone ceased what they were doing to appear before the Lord, and even the army was to cease all military duties. This is what God said in *Exodus 34*. He said: *For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.* Do you realize how amazing that statement is? Do you hear what God said? He's saying that these -- these commemorations

are so incredibly important that he's going to move in the wills of all of Israel's enemies and for the time necessary for them to remember God, God says I will make them forget that they're your enemy. I'll make them have no desire whatsoever to even covet your land. And by the way, the next time you think God will never interfere in human autonomy, just remember this promise from God -- quote -- *"No one shall covet your land when you go to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year."* You see, three times a year God broke through the pagan wills of Israel's enemies and made them cease coveting Israel's land. Three times a year God said everything is going to stop. Even the covetous desires of Israel's enemies had to stop while Israel tended to what really mattered. They were about the business of remembering, remembering God's deliverance from Egypt and his provision for Israel. It was a sacred task. And this week, this week we are about the business of the deliverance of the universe from the bondage of sin. The sacred triumph of the Prince of the universe over the power of death, the resurrection that gives eternal life to all who place their trust in him.

So what are we planning for this week? I'm sure Wal-Mart's got a big Easter sale and I'm sure the malls are going to be packed and there's gardens to be tilled and spring cleaning to be done and time to change the oil in the car. We remember those tasks all too

well, and I'm not saying that all life has to cease this week. But I am saying that this is a week to change our perspective and to ask what do you plan to do this week? And as in ancient Israel, the responsibility for households rested with the man. And so this morning I particularly want to address the husbands. And ask will this week be any different than all the others in your household, men?

You know, growing up, our household used the passion week to view Franco Zeffirelli's film *Jesus of Nazareth*. I still think it's one of the greatest Easter movies of all. It's a six-hour movie so we would watch a chunk of it each day just to keep us focused. And I'm sure all of us plan to be here for the Good Friday service, but what about the rest of the week? Maybe you want to use some devotionals or some Christian music or read from the scripture but I exhort you this morning, make this week different from the other 51. Ask God for wisdom, ask him to help you remember what *Colossians 2:13* proclaims: *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* This is the day we celebrate the fact

that the empty tomb is proof that Jesus won. And because he won, we win eternally. So let us never forget that. *Praise the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits.* Let's pray.

Father, again, I thank you for this week, I thank you for what it represents. We don't have a clue what the universe is celebrating this week. We see through a glass darkly. We have these tiny little hints. Lord, I just pray that we would take all of those things that you've given us to help us remember, that we would use this week to make it different from the other 51, that we would remember exactly what it's about and offer you praise. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.