

Praise in His Presence

The whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen (Luke 19:37).

Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

Song: “Come, Thou Almighty King”

My 10-year-old son had always wanted to rush a college football field after a game. He was just waiting for his team to win a big game. Finally the day came when it happened. Later as I scanned a picture someone had taken of the field that day, I saw it! Among the hundreds of fans smiling and jumping, there was the image of my boy with both feet off the ground. He was elated.

I imagine a similar scene as Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem: people jumping and cheering, overcome with excitement to celebrate the one responsible for healing the sick, making the lame walk, and causing the blind to see. How marvelous a moment that must have been!

It's easy to imagine the praise that will occur when we see Jesus face-to-face. But the reality is, we can be full of delight in our King's presence every single day. Our Lord is here! He's with us by His indwelling Spirit. May we joyfully praise God daily!

Father, thank You for Your presence in our lives. Fill our hearts with endless praise for all You have done and all that You are. In Jesus' name, amen.

March 27–April 2. **Jennifer Turner** lives in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area with her husband and three children. She enjoys speaking and writing about the goodness of God, His abundant grace, and His redemptive love.

Jesus Our Peace

[Jesus said,] “The days will come upon you when your enemies will . . . hem you in on every side” (Luke 19:43).

Scripture: Luke 19:41-48

Song: “What a Wonderful Savior”

To my horror, I accidentally dropped my 10-week-old son onto a concrete parking lot. A CT scan showed he was fine, but I struggled afterward. My main thought was, *Your negligence could have killed your baby*. One condemning thought breeds others, and during the year that followed, a tsunami of guilt took over my mind.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He wept over that city. If the people there had only known that His mission was to bring them peace, they would have spared themselves so much heartache. But now enemies who plotted to destroy them would “hem them in on every side,” much like the enemy of your soul and mine wants to do to us.

If he can catch us in a weak moment, Satan will seek to infiltrate, filling our minds with destructive lies and sordid thoughts. But when we have Jesus, we have peace. In Romans 8:1 we read, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” These words were penned by the apostle Paul, a man who easily could have drowned in self-condemnation for his role in having Christians killed—before he became one (Acts 7:60; 9:1). Instead, he allowed Christ to soothe his soul. When we feel surrounded by the enemy, may we run straight to the Lord and receive His peace.

Father, help me remember that I am never surrounded by anything that You can't destroy. I will run to You for protection and peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Days Are Numbered

[Job said,] “A person’s days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed” (Job 14:5).

Scripture: Job 14:1-15

Song: “Life at Best Is Very Brief”

“Who is going to die first in our family?” my 6-year-old asked me, his little voice trembling.

“Son, that’s something that only God knows,” I responded. But sometimes I wish I *did* know how many more days I have on this earth, how many more hours I have left with each person, how many more times I will get to visit with someone before God calls one of us home.

Sometimes I also wonder about Job. Here was a man who had it all . . . and then lost it all. And by *all*, I mean he even had to bury his children. He understood the frailty of life. So when he declared that a person’s days are determined, I wonder, *Did he scream it? Did he cry it out? Or did he just state it as fact? What exactly was going through his mind?*

Life is hard. It’s always going to be that way. It’s part of living in a sinful world. But as believers, we know this life is not our own; it belongs to Him. We can rest knowing we have a good shepherd who tends to us and keeps us, who loves us and guides us. So we too can accept from God every moment of each day, the good and bad.

Father, thank You that You are always with us. Help us live lives that glorify You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Examine Ourselves

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

Song: “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

I didn't mean to do it, but here I am admitting it: For a variety of reasons, I did not have quiet time with God for a few days. So when it came time to write this devotion, I had nothing. I sat staring at a blank screen, trying to come up with something encouraging or inspirational, trying to “will myself” to put words to paper. The reality is, I hadn't adequately prepared my heart. So I had to take some time to do just that.

Paul warned the Corinthians to make sure they examined themselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper. Unless they reverently approached this sacred remembrance of Christ and the work He did on the cross, they would bring “judgment on themselves” (1 Corinthians 11:29). In fact, Paul says that many in the church had become ill or died as a result of not preparing their hearts for Communion but partaking anyway (v. 30).

Truly our hearts need examining and preparation—not just for taking Communion but at all times. We must remember that we cannot adequately serve others if our hearts are not first serving Jesus. We cannot love big without loving Him bigger. We cannot minister for Him if we forget to let Him minister to us in the process.

Father, thank You for wanting my whole heart to be bent toward You. Help me as I examine my heart today. In Jesus' name, amen.

He Is Our Strength

LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me (Psalm 22:19).

Scripture: Psalm 22:1-2, 7-19

Song: “God Is Our Strength and Refuge”

As I read my 6-year-old son’s speech diagnosis, the word *severe* jumped off the page. My hands began to tremble, and I started to panic. For a moment I wondered how we would make it through this obstacle. Then I quickly remembered that God is never surprised. We don’t need to wait for Him to show up; He is here.

Throughout Psalm 22, King David is crying out to the Lord. Trouble surrounded him on every side. He felt forsaken by God. He was being insulted and mocked by others. He had to hide from his enemies. It was a lonely time. But ultimately David clearly understood who God was: his strength.

God is just as present in our moments and days as He was in David’s. (As New Testament believers, we even have God’s indwelling Spirit!) While on this side of eternity we will never fully comprehend God, we can know that He is here with us. And we don’t have to reach a point of meltdown before remembering Him. What will help is to pause and look around. Evidence of His power and love is everywhere to be seen. Indeed, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). How blessed we are to know He is with us!

Father, thank You that You are our strength and our shield. Help us to trust You in every situation. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Proclaim His Name

I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you (Psalm 22:22).

Scripture: Psalm 22:20-31

Song: “Oh, for a Thousand Tongues”

If You get me out of this marriage struggle, I will tell everyone what You have done, I silently prayed. In His great mercy, God answered, and my marriage is stronger today than ever. But fessing up to others that God bailed me out of a marital crisis can be difficult. Telling others about the goodness of God means that I may have to admit how I failed, and I’m not always OK with that. So I don’t always reveal what He’s done in my life.

What I love about King David is that he lived his life with uninhibited abandon to God. He rejoiced when he was alone, and he sang God’s praises in corporate worship. No matter the situation, no matter how much he felt abandoned or was crying out to God, no matter what the Lord had delivered him from, he chose to praise fearlessly.

We can be like David. We can acknowledge God’s good works not just in private prayers of thanks but in public expressions of gratitude as well. We can declare His Word as good and holy “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2) We can worship Him with the same full-hearted abandon David did. God deserves *all* the praise. So during this season of remembering His atoning work on the cross, let’s not miss the opportunity to proclaim His name.

Father, thank You that we can praise You openly. Help us to share with others what You’ve done. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Trust the Source

Peter . . . ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened (Luke 24:12).

Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Song: “O God, Thou Art the Source of Life”

I thought everyone in our household trusted me when I said that I'd hidden presents in my closet and told them not to go in there. However, I later discovered that we had a little investigator in the house; someone had moved the blanket covering the gifts. Indeed, one child had to see them with her own eyes before she would believe me.

Peter was a force to be reckoned with! He was a guy who would chop off an ear for Jesus and bitterly weep when he denied the Lord, a man who would leap out of a boat and then remember the waves. So it's no surprise that he did not initially believe the women's report about the tomb. In his disbelief, he ran toward where he thought Jesus should still be. Peter didn't find Jesus in the tomb that day, but it wasn't long before Peter discovered His whereabouts.

Not everything in life is going to be as straightforward as we wish it might be. At times in our Christian walk, we will wonder if we have heard right. Sometimes we will not know which way to go. But as long as we run toward the source of our life, the answer will surely come.

Father, I reaffirm my trust in You, and I'll run toward You today. In Jesus' name, amen.