

in real time, in real space, to real people. John sees the empty tomb and believes. The resurrection is not a feeling or a metaphor – it is an event. And the evidence, honestly considered, is worth taking seriously.

DAY 6 - Beautiful Intimacy

Read John 20:11-16

Mary is outside the tomb, weeping. Not quietly – the word suggests wailing. Loud, raw, uncontained grief.

She doesn't recognise Jesus at first. Perhaps the tears are blurring her vision. Perhaps it's the early morning light. Perhaps grief does that – makes it hard to see what's right in front of you.

And then he says her name. *Mary*.

One word. And everything changes. She turns. She recognises him. Tears of grief become tears of joy.

The risen Jesus doesn't make a grand announcement. He calls one grieving woman by name. This is the God of Isaiah 61 –binding up the broken-hearted, comforting those who mourn. The resurrection is not just a historical event. It is deeply, personally intimate. He knows your name, too.

DAY 7 - Beautiful Feet

Read John 20:17-18

Mary Magdalene wants to hold on. Of course she does. But Jesus gently redirects her. *Don't cling to me – go and tell.*

And she goes. Mary heralds the resurrection of Jesus to the disciples: *“I have seen the Lord.”*

Isaiah promised that those who receive beauty for ashes would become the rebuilders of ancient ruins – that the comforted would become the restorers. Mary is the first living proof of that promise. She arrives at the tomb broken, weeping, hopeless. She leaves with a message that would change the world.

This is where the Easter story leads. Not just to personal comfort, but to participation in something far larger – the restoration of all things. Those who encounter the risen Jesus are sent into the ruins of the world with beautiful news and, as Isaiah put it, beautiful feet.

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

FROM RUIN TO RESTORATION

7-Day Easter Reading Plan on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus

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DAY 1 - Beauty for Ashes

Read Isaiah 61:1-4

The world knows how to make ruins. And Isaiah knew that too. He wrote to a people who had experienced devastation – exile, loss, ongoing sin, the wreckage of everything they had known. And yet into that darkness he spoke an extraordinary promise: beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, restoration for ruin.

But this wasn't just a comfort; it was a mission. The one who brings this beauty must himself enter the ruins. He must suffer. He must die. Only then can the broken-hearted go free.

This week, we follow that story. We trace the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the one Isaiah was pointing to. The one who stepped into our ruins so that beauty could rise from them. Wherever you find yourself this Easter, you are invited to consider that promise for yourself.

DAY 2 - Beautiful Affection

Read John 19:23-27

The soldiers are gambling for Jesus' clothes at the foot of the cross. It is a scene of humiliation and brutality. And yet in the middle of it, Jesus looks down and sees his mother.

In agony, struggling to breathe, he makes arrangements for her care. He asks his beloved friend John to take her as his own mother. And from that hour, John did.

This is who Jesus is. Even in his darkest moment, he is thinking of others. His love doesn't falter under pressure — it shines through

it. This is not the death of a defeated man. This is a man who loves all the way to the end.

Whatever you think of Jesus, consider this: what kind of person dies like this?

DAY 3 - Beautiful Suffering

Read John 19:28-29

Jesus said, **“I thirst.”** But there is more happening here than dehydration on a cross.

Earlier in John's gospel, Jesus had promised living water to a woman at a well, water that would satisfy forever, springing up to eternal life. Now, on the cross, he thirsts. He who offered living water has become thirsty himself.

This is not a coincidence. Jesus knew the scriptures he was fulfilling. He became thirsty so that we would never have to thirst again. He entered into our emptiness - our longing, our searching, our spiritual hunger - and took it upon himself.

His suffering. Our satisfaction. His thirst. Our living water. That is why we call it Good Friday.

DAY 4 - Beautiful Victory

Read John 19:30

“It is finished” sounds like defeat. A man dying on a cross, his final breath spent on words of resignation. But that is not what is happening here.

The Greek word behind “it is finished” – *Tetelestai* – was the word stamped on a bill once it had been paid in full. Jesus is not giving up. He is declaring victory. The debt has been settled.

At the cross, Jesus has paid the penalty for our sin, taking the judgment we deserve upon himself. The mission accomplished.

Everything Isaiah promised – freedom for captives, beauty for ashes, restoration for ruin – has been secured.

The cross looks like the end. It is anything but. Jesus bows his head and gives up his spirit – not because it was taken from him, but because he chose to lay it down.

Even before his resurrection, Jesus had won the victory. Sin paid for. Satan trampled. Death defeated.

DAY 5 - Beautiful History

Read John 20:1-10

On the first day of the week, Mary comes to the tomb while it is still dark. The stone has been moved. She runs to tell Peter and John. They run to the tomb – John winning the race, a detail so specific it could only have been written by someone who was there.

They find the linen cloths lying there. The face cloth folded separately. No body. No bones. The tomb is empty.

Christianity stands or falls on this historical claim. It is not a myth or a legend. It happened