

# Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 4/21/19

**Monday** – Read Matthew 27:62-28:10. **The Worst Assignment.** The soldiers who were sent to guard the tomb received the worst assignment in military history. On Sunday morning, an earthquake rocked the soldiers at the tomb as an angel descended. When they saw the angel, the soldiers who were guarding a dead man became like dead men themselves. The angel had Good News for Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. Jesus had been raised from the dead. As they left the tomb to tell the disciples, they encountered their risen Lord, and they worshiped him. Jesus told them, “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” Jesus calls us to tell others the Good News that he is risen. Ask God to help you share this Good News with the people in your life.

**Tuesday** – Read Matthew 28:11-15 and I Corinthians 15:3-8. **The Cover-up.** Did Jesus really rise from the dead, or did his disciples take his body and make up the whole story? Matthew tells us that the priests and the elders tried to cause people to doubt the resurrection of Jesus by paying off the soldiers to tell the lie that Jesus’ disciples stole the body. However, Paul gives us a list of over 500 people to whom Jesus appeared after he was raised from the dead. The historical evidence points to the reality that Jesus conquered the grave. How can you help others come to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Pray for God to help you grow in your understanding of Jesus’ resurrection and the hope we find at the empty tomb.

**Wednesday** – Read Matthew 27:50-53. **Raised from the Dead.** Today’s scripture takes us back to the moment of Jesus’ death. Matthew is in such a hurry to tell us about Jesus’ resurrection that he skips ahead to what happened after Jesus was raised from the dead. <sup>52</sup>*The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.* <sup>53</sup>*After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.* Jesus’ resurrection gives us the hope that we too will be raised from the dead. How does resurrection give you hope even in the face of death? Pray and thank God for God’s resurrection power.

**Thursday** – Read Mark 16:1-20. **From Doubt to Belief.** These verses include both the shorter and longer ending of Mark’s Gospel. Jesus’ resurrection challenges us to rethink everything we have known to be true. It was not easy for the women or the disciples to grasp what had happened at first. Mark tells us that at first the women told no one what they had seen because they were terrified. Notice how none of the disciples believed in the resurrection at first. They had to experience the presence of the resurrected Jesus before they came to believe and to understand what God had done in raising Jesus from the dead. Two thousand years later, we rely on the witness of those first Christians who encountered our risen Lord. Ask God to help you experience the resurrection power of our risen Lord.

**Friday** – Read John 20:1-10, 30-31. **So That You May Believe.** When Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb on that first Easter Sunday, she mistakenly thought that someone had taken Jesus’ body, so she ran to tell Peter and John. When John and Peter arrived at the empty tomb, they saw the linen wrappings there and noticed that the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head had been rolled up in a place by itself. When John saw this, he believed. Then they went home. John wrote down all of these things so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. How do all of the Gospels help you to believe in Jesus? Pray for God to help you to continue to grow in your belief in Jesus.

**Saturday** – Read John 20:11-18. **From Sorrow to Joy.** At first, the empty tomb seemed like one more reason to weep. When Mary saw the risen Jesus she thought he was the gardener at first. Only John tells us that Jesus’ tomb was in a garden, and he wants us to remember the Garden of Eden as we hear this story. Everything went wrong in the Garden of Eden, but now, God was making everything right again through Jesus’ resurrection in another garden. When Mary realized that the gardener was Jesus, her sorrow turned into joy. So, she went and told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord.” In the face of death and despair, we all need the same hope that Mary Magdalene found at the empty tomb. We can help others find hope at the tomb by telling them the Good News that Jesus really is alive. Pray for God to help you share the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection with others.

**Lectionary Readings:** Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 15:19-26; John 20:1-18.

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