**The Final Week**

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**Opening Hymn:** “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” (Hymn #200)

**Opening Prayer:**

**Speaker #1**: In one week we will celebrate the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ – those culminating events of Jesus’ mortal life. As we ponder these events in our Easter celebration, let us look to the last week of Christ’s life on Earth to see what He taught us. And as we learn more of our Savior, may we each try to be more like Him.

**Song:** “I’m Trying to Be Like Jesus” (Primary – all verses)

**Speaker #2**: If you knew you were going to die, what last words would you say to your family? To your friends? Jesus knew that his time on earth was coming to a close. Let’s read and see what his final teachings were. Turning to Matthew 25, we see that Jesus gave three final parables. He taught his followers about what the Kingdom of Heaven would be like – what the final judgment would be –how to return home– using three stories.

First, he tells the story of the ten virgins:

“And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”

Second, he tells the parable of the talents and proclaims:

“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

Third, he teaches the parable of the sheep and the goats:

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Three parables. Three stories teaching the people. His final words to his followers.

Each teaches that we are accountable for our choices and actions. Each teaches that there will be a judgment. Each teaches that our Heavenly Father wants us to abound in good works as we follow the path to exaltation. Each of us must choose.

**Song:** “Because I Have Been Given Much” (Choir) (or “Miracles” by Sally DeFord at defordmusic.com)

**Speaker #1**: It was the Passover – one of the most holy of all times for the Jews. Jesus sat in a large room with his apostles. He knew that this was his final time with all of them.

The Savior took this time to leave them a great gift. That quiet evening, he gave them the sacrament – that crucial ordinance that would bring life-saving –eternal life-saving—blessings to their life.

Luke 22:

 14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

 15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

 16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

 17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

 18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

 19 ¶And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

 20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

This ordinance of the new and everlasting covenant began that night.

Each week, we are given the same gift. We are given the emblems of His body and His blood. We are given the same opportunity to renew our covenants to always follow Him.

**Song:** “How Great the Wisdom and the Love” (ALL 6 verses) (solo or small group)

**Speaker #3:** The time had come. Throughout all time and throughout all the creations of Heavenly Father, the most important moment of all had come.

I wonder if we were all together there in the Spirit World, waiting, hoping? Christ had promised us all that He would do what was required. He had promised us that He would atone for all of us so that we could progress and become like our Heavenly Parents. And we believed Him. We chose to have faith in Him—that He would do what He said he would do.

And now the time had come. All eternity hung in the balance.

Jesus and his closest friends and apostles went to the Garden—that wonderful, beautiful place where Jesus had often gone to find peace and stillness. He gently left his friends, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.” He was tired, so very tired, as the weight of all the effects of mortality began to sink upon his soul. He whispered, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.”

 39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

 40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

 42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

The book of Mark records:

 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

The book of Matthew continues:

 43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

 44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Luke records the pain of the Atonement vividly:

 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:42-44)

And Matthew finishes the narrative.

 45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Christ himself describes his experience in Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-19:

 16 For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

 17 But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

 18 Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

 19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

The time had come. Jesus had kept his word. All of heaven breathed a sigh of relief as their hopes for the eternal progression of ALL of God’s children were renewed.

**Song:** “I Stand All Amazed” (violin solo or violin/viola duet)

**Speaker 4:** As quickly as all of God’s children were filled with hope, Heaven was then subdued. For not only must our brother suffer for all of us, but He then would be required to give His life and his body for us as well.

All of God’s creations stilled. All was quiet—brooding. Christ was betrayed by one of his closest friends. He was cruelly mocked and scourged. The King of all—the creator of Heaven and earth! Descended below them all.

He was raised upon the cross—on display to be ridiculed by the ignorant. His body already spent from bearing the weight of all worlds in the Garden, he hung.

Again, He kept his promise—giving up his life so that all of us might live. His suffering was complete.

**Song:** “No Greater Love Than This” (choir – DeFord Music)

**Speaker 2:** And then most glorious of all days throughout eternity. He rose again! Light bursting from that empty tomb as He stepped out. Glorified. Resurrected. Immortal.

Luke records:

 36 ¶And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24:36-39)

Our Redeemer had finished His work. He had done the will of the Father. He had kept His promise.

**Song:** “He Is Risen” (congregation)

**Speaker #4:** Our prophet, Thomas S. Monson, counsels us:

On this beautiful Easter morning, prayers of [gratitude](http://lds.org/topic/gratitude/) for the life and mission of our Lord and Savior, [Jesus Christ](http://www.mormon.org/beliefs/jesus-christ), fill the Sabbath air while strains of inspiring music comfort our hearts and whisper to our souls the ageless salutation, “Peace be unto you.”

In a world where peace is such a universal quest, we sometimes wonder why violence walks our streets, accounts of murder and senseless killings fill the columns of our newspapers, and [family](http://www.mormon.org/values/family) quarrels and disputes mar the sanctity of the home and smother the tranquility of so many lives.

Perhaps we stray from the path which leads to peace and find it necessary to pause, to ponder, and to reflect on the teachings of the Prince of Peace and determine to incorporate them in our thoughts and actions and to live a higher law, walk a more elevated road, and be a better disciple of Christ.

Let us remember that to obtain God’s blessings, one must do God’s bidding. May I suggest three ideas to prompt our thinking and guide our footsteps:

1.  Search inward;

2. Reach outward; and

3. Look heavenward.

First: Search inward. … President Ezra Taft Benson counsels us:

“The price of peace is righteousness. Men and nations may loudly proclaim, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there shall be no peace until individuals nurture in their souls those principles of personal purity, integrity, and character which foster the development of peace. Peace cannot be imposed. It must come from the lives and hearts of men. There is no other way.”

Elder Richard L. Evans observed: “To find peace—the peace within, the peace that passeth understanding—men must live in honesty, honoring each other, honoring obligations, working willingly, loving and cherishing loved ones, serving and considering others, with patience, with virtue, with faith and forbearance, with the assurance that life is for learning, for serving, for repenting, and improving. And God be thanked for the blessed principle of repenting and improving, which is a way that is open to us all.”

Truly peace will reign triumphant when we improve ourselves after the pattern taught by the Lord. Then we will appreciate the deep spirituality hidden behind the simple words of a familiar song: “There is beauty all around when there’s love at home.”

Second: Reach outward. Though exaltation is a personal matter, and while individuals are saved not as a group but indeed as individuals, yet one cannot live in a vacuum. Membership in the Church calls forth a determination to serve. A position of responsibility may not be of recognized importance, nor may the reward be broadly known. Service, to be acceptable to the Savior, must come from willing minds, ready hands, and pledged hearts.

Number three: Look heavenward. As we do, we find it comforting and satisfying to communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer, that path to spiritual power—even a passport to peace. We are reminded of His beloved Son, the Prince of Peace, that pioneer who literally showed the way for others to follow. His divine plan can save us from the Babylons of sin, complacency, and error. His example points the way. When faced with temptation, He shunned it. When offered the world, He declined it. When asked for His life, He gave it.

The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. “I am the resurrection, and the life,” spoke the Master. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Added to His own words are those of the angels, spoken to the weeping Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they approached the tomb to care for the body of their Lord: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”

Such is the message of Easter morn. He lives! And because He lives all shall indeed live again. This knowledge provides the peace for loved ones of those whose graves are marked by the crosses of Normandy, those hallowed resting places in Flanders fields where the poppies blow in springtime, and for those who rest in countless other locations, including the depths of the sea. “Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: ‘I know that my Redeemer lives!’”

**Speaker #1**: Christ himself tells us how this final week of His mortal life has blessed us. Because He did what He said he would do, He is now able to be our Savior—saving us from our mortality. He is now able to be our Redeemer—paying the price of justice.

He speaks to us.

 3 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading YOUR cause before him—

 4 Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

 5 Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

May each of us believe on His name. May each of us come unto him. May each of us strive every moment of every day to always remember him.

(Bishop fills time if needed)

**Closing Hymn:** “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” Hymn #136

**Closing Prayer:**