**“Forgiven” Easter Devo Series**

*written by Lindsay Williams*

**Day 1**

“‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.’ But Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.’ And all the other disciples said the same.” (Matthew 26:34-35, NIV)

We all have a little bit of Peter inside of us, don’t we? As committed believers, we tell the Lord we would *never* be one of *those* people. We couldn’t possibly disown Him. And yet, when something doesn’t turn out the way we think it should or we feel squeezed, wanting desperately to fit in, our actions tell the world we don’t know Him. And we hang our head in shame as we immediately recognize our sinfulness. Perhaps like Peter, we walk away and weep bitterly in the aftermath of what we’ve done.

*I’ve denied You with my very lips / God, I fall down to my knees / With a hammer in my hand*

Let’s be real, Peter even blew his second and third chances. He denied Christ not once, not twice, but *three times*. Yet, Peter soon found out, first-hand, that even this trifold betrayal wasn’t enough to turn God away. What regret Peter must have felt as Jesus was nailed to the cross, realizing their final conversation was one laced with the hint of fragile loyalty.

Three days later, can you imagine his relief when he, Peter, was one of the first people Jesus sought out? It was as if Jesus wanted to personally tell him, “It’s OK. I know you denied me. But I forgive you.”

Here’s the simple truth: We may deny Him, but He will never disown us.

*You look at me, arms open / Forgiven, forgiven / Child, there is freedom / From all of it / Say goodbye to every sin / You are forgiven*

**Day 2**

“They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.” (Mark 15:17-20, NIV)

Sometimes the image of Jesus hanging on the cross is more than we can bear. We can’t even comprehend the magnitude of what He did for us that day. He took the sins of the entire world on Himself so that you and I could be whole, blameless and new. The cross blotted out all of our transgressions. Jesus’ blood atoned for every sin we’ve ever committed and every sin we will ever commit. He took the sins of the world on Himself so that we could be forever forgiven.

It’s overwhelming. Yet, the truth of the matter is that Jesus didn’t die to make bad people good. He died to make dead people come alive. And there’s no greater picture of this than His own death, burial and resurrection.

The cross is the centerpiece of everything we believe, but the tomb is our victory. So as we celebrate Holy Week, on Good Friday, may we fix our eyes on the cross, remembering His sacrifice and the depth of our sin that held Him there. But on Easter, let us cast our gaze on the tomb, in all its glorious emptiness.

*All the weight of all our evil / Lifted away, forever free / Who could believe / Who could believe /Forgiven, forgiven*

**Day 3**

“It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.” (Luke 23:44-46, NIV)

Jesus’ death on the cross was the ultimate act of surrender. “Not my will, but yours be done,” He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was sweating drops of blood, knowing what was to come. His death proves that surrender is costly. In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus tells The Twelve, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

*The Message* says it this way: “Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how… Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.”

Something always has to die in order for life to rise. Sacrifice is a requirement for anyone who chooses to follow Christ. Jesus led by example. His crucifixion was the fulfillment of a lifetime of promises. It was His ultimate calling, and the pinnacle of the greatest story ever told.

There is freedom waiting for us if we simply surrender to God’s perfect will. We must lay down our lives every day for the sake of His greater calling. For just as He showed us, on the other side of the cross lies a bigger, more abundant, more beautiful life than we could ever imagine.

*You love me even when I don’t deserve it / Forgiven, I’m forgiven / Jesus, Your blood makes me innocent / So I will say goodbye to every sin / I am forgiven, I am forgiven*

**Day 4**

“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” (1 Corinthians 15:12-14, NIV)

While the cross serves as the rightful symbol of modern-day Christianity, identifying believers with Jesus, it’s the tomb that stands as a memorial for the ages. For it’s the sight of an empty grave that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. We serve a God who is ALIVE.

Without the empty tomb, Jesus would be nothing more than a victim—an innocent man who died at the hands of prideful people intent on maintaining control. But with a tomb lying empty, Jesus becomes our victor.

By all accounts, it should have been you and me hanging on that cross. Yet, God in His infinite mercy sent His Son to die in our place. But if the story ended there, we’d serve a God who’s dead. Good Friday literally bled into a miraculous Sunday morning that stopped the whole world in its tracks. Who is this King who brings the dead to life?

Jesus’ resurrection changes everything. And this same resurrection power lives inside of you and me. When He rose from that grave, He set our hearts ablaze.

*I could’ve been six feet under / I could’ve been lost forever / Yeah, I should be in that fire / But now there’s fire inside of me*

**Day 5**

“‘He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ Then they remembered his words.” (Luke 24:6-8, NIV)

Good Friday didn’t seem very good at the time. Can you imagine what must have been going through the disciples’ minds? *We gave up our lives—our families—to follow Him, and now that’s it? This is how it ends?*

The situation looked grim, but the story was far from over. When the whole earth shook on Sunday and the stone was rolled away, no one was more surprised than the disciples. Even when He first appeared to them, it was hard for them to believe. But then they remembered His words. This is what He had been trying to tell them all along. His birth, His earthly ministry, His death, His resurrection—it was all part of a carefully orchestrated plan to save humankind.

*Here I am a dead man walking / No grave gonna hold God’s people*

All of His promises were fulfilled. Yes, He surrendered His life on that cross; but three days later, *yes*, He walked out of that grave.

1 Corinthians 15 says it best: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (vs. 55-57, NIV)

We have access to a Savior who will shake heaven and earth to bring us back to life. We serve a God who will stop at nothing to keep His promises.