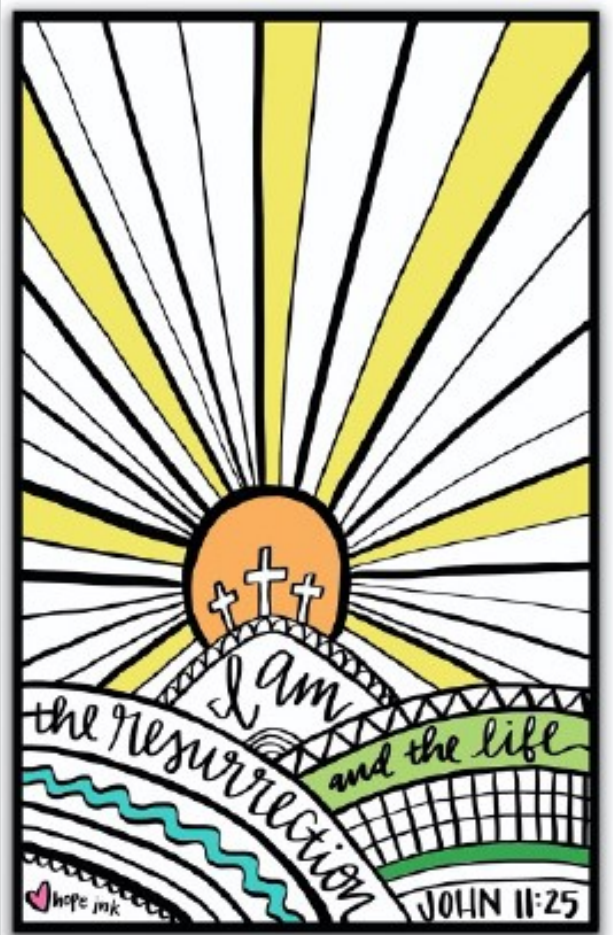


**Pastor Nathan Johnson
is inviting you to join the
Tabernacle MBC Family
in a
2021 Lenten Devotion
“Arising Son”**



“Arising Son”
2021 Lenten Devotional



Jesus said to her,
“I am the resurrection and the life. Those
who believe in me, even though they die,
will live...”

~ John 11:25

Week Six: Omega (endings)



March 21-27

Monday, March 22, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 44:6

"Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god."

REFLECTION: "I am the first and I am the last." "The resurrection and the life." These particular lines of scripture resonate with me. The beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega for without a beginning how would there be an end. It seems to me they go together. Beginnings and endings, I thought a sentence, a story, a school year, a romance, a marriage, and life itself. Our lives have a beginning. Psalm 139 tells us, "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb." God is there. We have a mortal end when the "angels come to greet us and carry us home." God is there. Jesus shared in this, our human cycle of life.

These are some of my thoughts during the time of the story I share with you. It was several years ago my daughter who lived out of town came for a visit. We stopped to visit my mother, her grandmother, in the nursing home on a sunny August day. My daughter was expecting a baby in December. My first grandchild, mom would become a great grandma. Mom was happy to see us that day. Eyes wide, she raised a hand and pointed her finger in the direction of my daughter's beachball shaped tummy. "It's a boy", she predicted with a great deal of conviction. Mom would never know how correct she was for she passed away that December. I remember saying to my clergy friend, "We have had the Omega, now we await the Alpha." My grandson was born three days after her passing. An end but yet a new life for each. Mom returned to the loving arms of her heavenly Father. My grandson to the waiting, loving arms of his

mother. I love this little Celtic prayer. I do not remember the source.

PRAYER: *"On my heart and on my house, the blessing of God. In my coming and in my going, the peace of God. In my life and in my seeking, the love of God. At my end and new beginning, the arms of God to welcome me and bring me home." Amen.*

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

SCRIPTURE: John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

REFLECTION: What greater sacrifice is there then to offer up your child, for the lives of others? Complete selflessness and quite frankly, something I cannot begin to imagine, for it is too painful a thought to even consider. God, with his endless and everlasting love knew what he needed to do for the greater good. What an unimaginable act this was for him to make. A true testament to his adoration and commitment to all Christians, not just his loved and adored Son.

Attempting to understand such a level of sacrifice and love is difficult for we mere humans to understand in today's day and age. As Christians, we do our best to be selfless, so we donate our time and money to those less fortunate. We participate in finely organized 5K races to bring attention to very worthy causes. But, to give the thing we love and cherish the most in the world, your own flesh and blood? Your child, to benefit another? That is something that takes a level of love and commitment few can imagine. Can you?

I will be forever thankful and grateful for God's unending love and acceptance of me as a fallible human being. I will do my best to give back to those in need and offer the gifts which He has bestowed upon me, to add to the betterment of my community. It rarely feels like enough, but I will continue to do my part.

PRAYER: *Lord God, thank you for the sacrifices you have made to allow my family and I to have eternal life. Please continue to show me how to be the best Christian I can, to give of myself in some small way to emulate all that you have given up for me.*
In your name, Amen.

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:20

He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake.

REFLECTION: I think we are near the end of ages now. Our country is divided; there are riots and uprisings all over. We have had major wildfires that destroyed property and forests also took lives all over the world. There have been hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes also causing millions of dollars of damage and taking innocent lives. We now have COVID Virus that has caused the death of more than a million people around the world. We feel alone, overwhelmed, lonely, and some of us feel hopeless and depressed. What are we to do? We need to put God and family first in our lives again. We need to remember that God loves us so much that he gave his only son to suffer and die on the cross for us.

I remember when I was a child back in the 1950's and 60's. On Sundays we got dressed in our Sunday best and went to Sunday school and church. The church was full of generations of families worshiping God, and on holidays it was standing room only. After church we reconnected with our family and friends then went home to Sunday dinner. The day was mostly spent with family. Our hearts and minds were full of the love of God and family and we were ready for the rest of the week. We were a kinder and gentler people. Now Sundays are for sports practice or tournaments. Kids are in the house playing games on computers rather than playing outside with friends. We are rushing to go who knows where and if anyone gets in our way, we get mad. We are living with the darkness.

We need to bring God back into our lives. God revealed Christ to the people back when they were living with the darkness of the times. Now when we feel we are in the darkest of times we need to remember that God loves us and put him first in our lives again. If we do this, we will find that the light will come back in our lives.

PRAYER: God help us to open our eyes to your love and bring the light back into our lives. Amen.

Thursday, March 25, 2021

SCRIPTURE: John 17:3

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

REFLECTION: We live in a world that is very materialistic and has many limits and restrictions. For the most part we come to understand that is just the way of life in this world. As these changes in our lives occur, we try to accept the changes and move on with our lives. Over time we learn that all of the material things we have in life have a life cycle and do not last forever.

We also learn that many of our personal relationships don't last forever either. Some of our close friends and beloved family members will move out of the area and not be seen very much or even not at all anymore. Another limit that occurs in our lives has to do with our jobs and careers. Sometimes in spite of our best wishes and even prayers we lose our job because the business is leaving the area or is shutting down. We are left to scramble to put the pieces together again. But perhaps the most difficult limits and restrictions we deal with in our lives are the health and mortality of our family and friends. So as we deal with these life on earth limits and restrictions, especially the end of our earthly lives, God's message of eternal life - "Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" gives us the assurance we were never able to achieve during our earthly trials and tribulations. So my friends, take a deep breath and relax knowing that God has lifted all these earthly burdens by granting us, the faithful, eternal life! No more limits or restrictions, just our resurrection!

PRAYER: *Dear Lord: We thank you for the many, many blessings you have given us, especially eternal life in heaven with only true God. Amen.*

Friday, March 26, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Revelation 1:17-18

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.

REFLECTION: In Revelation, Christ reveals himself to the apostle John, and his writing of this book was to give hope and encouragement to those Christians who were suffering severe persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. These Christians needed to know that God controls whatever happens here on earth. I doubt any of us Christians here in the United States, have experienced the kind of severe persecution that these Christians did. But this still is happening in several parts of the world today. Where it does occur, I can imagine the faith of those Christians is tested every day, and strengthened by the struggles they go through. I wonder if the lack of severe persecution here has let our faith go on a kind of "auto-pilot". We are clearly tested daily in our faith, but not to the degree that the severely persecuted are. We need to daily be aware of our faith and strengthen it, and know that God really has control here and now, as it was written by the apostle John in Revelation. We can't afford to remain on "auto-pilot", we know that the day will come, the "last" or the Omega, when the Lord will someday judge and punish what is evil.

PRAYER: *Lord, please help us sustain our faith in you. To know, that you have control in this world, especially at those times when we doubt. Help us to exercise our faith daily, and strengthen it so we may do the good things you wish of us all. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.*

Saturday, March 27, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Revelation 21:6-7

Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

REFLECTION: Given that my image of the Book of Revelation is a documentation of Armageddon, I wondered how I could possibly write anything uplifting that references this Biblical text. Nevertheless, I persistently struggled to find encouragement in today's verses, and continued this effort by delving into Chapter 21 in its entirety. With each of these iterations, I began to consider the possibility that rather than the end of time, the continuity of life is presented here. With each additional perusal of God's declaration in Verse 6 that He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End", I became more and more convinced that He always has been, is and will continue to be with us for all time. Beginning with the World being 'without form and void', followed by ancient and modern history, then on to the present time and ultimately into the future and eternity. He is with us!!!!

I found additional confirmation of my newly discovered image of the Book of Revelation in a synopsis which presents the intent of Revelation as an encouragement to Christians in every age to maintain their faith, and to share in Jesus' victory over all forces that oppose him and his people. After His declaration of being the Alpha and the Omega in Verse 6, God concludes with the promise of spiritual strength from the Spring of the Water of Life. Continuing in Verse 7, He notes that with this gift we are enabled to conquer any adversity, and we will be His children. It seems to me that all

that's expected of us is to simply accept this gift; i.e. to have faith in Him. What a blessing to be His Children!!! The imperfect Alpha morphs into the perfect Omega, so there's no Armageddon. We have eternal life. May each of your days become, in their own way, this blessing of the Omega.

PRAYER: *Thank you God for granting the privilege of being Your children and encouraging our obedience to You each day. Send us chances to contribute to making this World a pleasing sight to You, and guide us in all our endeavors. Amen.*

