

# The Best Day Ever

April 9, 2023 A.M.  
West Side Church of Christ  
Searcy, Arkansas  
Nathan Guy

## Scripture Reading

*“But there will come a glorious day, says the Lord, when the whole topic of conversation will be that God is bringing his people home from a nation in the north, and from many other lands where he had scattered them. You will look back no longer to the time when I rescued you from your slavery in Egypt. That mighty miracle will scarcely be mentioned anymore. Yes, I will bring you back again, says the Lord, to this same land I gave your fathers” (Jeremiah 16:14-15 TLB).*

## **WHAT IS THE BEST DAY EVER?<sup>1</sup>**

“I went to sleep with gum in my mouth and now there’s gum in my hair and when I got out of bed this morning I tripped on the skateboard and by mistake I dropped my sweater in the sink while the water was running and I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

At breakfast Anthony found a Corvette Sting Ray car kit in his breakfast cereal box and Nick found a Junior Undercover Agent code ring in his breakfast cereal box but in my breakfast cereal box all I found was breakfast cereal...

Paul said I wasn’t his best friend anymore. He said that Philip Parker was his best friend and that Albert Moyo was his second best friend and that I was only his third best friend.

I hope you sit on a tack, I said to Paul. I hope the next time you get a double-decker strawberry ice-cream cone the ice cream part falls off the cone part and lands in Australia.

I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Sam Wells, “Easter Sunday: The Magnificent Seven,” a sermon preached at St. Martin-in-the-Fields (21 April 2019). <https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/easter-sunday-6/>

<sup>2</sup> Judith Viorst, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, rep., 1987).

You all know where that little bit was taken from, don't you? If you don't, your children do. It's the delightful children's book by Judith Viorst, called *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. I've had days like that. You've had days like that. But I want to read a book to Grace that celebrates good days. I mean really good days. Have you ever had a Wonderful, Glorious, No Bad, Very Good Day? Surely that would be the best day ever.

I found a book for Grace with that very title. It's called *The Best Day Ever*.<sup>3</sup> Except, it's about a dog! This dog wakes up happy, with a stretch and a sniff in the air. His breakfast table isn't a sad story about finding nothing in the cereal box. His breakfast story is about digging in the flower garden—what he calls his “special box.” After all, in that special box he finds a bone, and a tennis ball, and some dirty socks. “Best. Day. Ever.”! At the park, he steals a frisbee, eats a hot dog left behind. What can I say? “Best. Day. Ever.”!

That's pretty good, as far as books go. But you don't have to be an adult to know that isn't going to capture the best day ever for us humans. Even those who like frisbees, tennis balls, and hot dogs. I wonder, what would count as the best day ever?

I don't just mean for you. I mean for everyone.

Several years ago, Sam Wells delivered an Easter sermon where he went searching for the world's best day. Reading that inspired me to do that same exercise this morning with you.

What do you think would count as the world's best day? Pick a day, and I wager that Scripture will agree with your high estimation.

### **CREATION**

It would be easy to pick creation, wouldn't it? Be it the first day, when light filled the universe, or the sixth day when humanity became his crowning achievement. Be it the day of announcement as God declared his intent to bring the world into existence. So many particular days feed into one overwhelming event that Genesis 2:4 describes as “The day when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” (Gen 2:4). How about *that* day? The words of Genesis are pregnant with meaning, just as the world in that earliest stage is pregnant with possibility. What a glorious day. “Where were you,” asked the Lord God to his servant Job; “where were you when I laid the foundations of the

---

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn Singer, *The Best Day Ever!*, illustrated by Leah Nixon (Clarion Books, 2021).

earth...when the morning stars sang together, and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4, 7 NRSV). Oh yes. Creation of the world that might count as the world’s best day.

### ***NAMING***

What about that day in the city of Haran, recorded in Genesis chapter 12. The day when God named a people. In later tellings—chapter 17, and chapter 22, we get the familiar language of children and children’s children, so many it will be like “the stars of heaven” or “the sand that is on the seashore” (Gen 22:17 ESV; see also Gen 28:14). But there in chapter 12, we have the first direct call. “Abram,” says the Lord; “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house; go to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3 ESV; see also Gen 28:14). When the Apostle Peter, standing in Solomon’s Portico, wanted to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ a crowd of Israelites, he couldn’t help but focus on this story, the day that must have been etched into their minds as the day of all days (Acts 3:25). It’s in 1 Peter where we are given this beautiful affirmation harkening back to that glorious day: “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet 2:10). In Romans, Paul disabuses his readers of the notion that God gave up on a people in exchange for another. Oh no, says Paul. God pruned his people (based on faith in Jesus the Son), and grafted in Gentiles who accepted Jesus the Christ. But this verse describing the day when God formed a people—His people, God’s people—is a foundation stone for all who belong to the Father. That might rank as a contender for the world’s greatest day.

### ***EXODUS***

Were you to ask the average member of God’s holy people at any point in the Old Testament, they might have pointed to the Exodus. That day when God open the pathway for Israel to pass, then opened the floodgates to destroy Israel’s enemies, leaving his people standing outside of Egypt, a collected and rescued people on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, singing the song of Miriam. The Exodus becomes the symbol of God’s redeeming power. Any time God’s people were in trouble, someone somewhere would say, “buck up! It’s going to get better. It’s got to! Don’t you remember just who we are, and who God is? We were caught in the grip of Pharaoh; God is the one who delivered us from Egyptian slavery, out of the house of bondage. When Paul is reaching for a metaphor to describe the Christian experience, he rewrites the Exodus story, as we pass through the water and find freedom by the Spirit

in the land of promise. The day when God led his people out of Egypt. A remarkable day.

### ***COVENANT***

As great as the Exodus proved to be in the collective conscience of Israel, it was Covenant day that crystalized what it meant to be a collected and separated people. To be sure, God chose a people, gathered a people, and saved a people, long before he gave them a law. But it was in the ceremony of giving the law when God entered into a Mosaic covenant, defining what it meant to *be* the “people of God.” The curses laid out in the law reflected the disciplinary love of a father for his children. The promises laid out in the law reflected the heart of a God who wanted to lavish blessings on his children, and provide an inheritance for generations. Law gets a bad rap these days. But in a world of chaos and competing gods, Israel knew who their father was, what he wanted, and what He promised. It is why David could sing, “O how I love your law!” Covenant day. That was a really good day.

### ***CHRISTMAS***

Oh, I know what you’re thinking. At the very end of every year, we see the name of Christ on every street corner, in storefront windows and in holiday lyrics. The best day ever must be Christmas, the day of incarnation, the birth of our Savior, when God became a man, when God entered into our story to become one of us. A theologian I greatly respect wrote a book called *Christ: the Logic of Creation*. And one of his points is that the whole reason God made the world was so that he could be with us in Jesus Christ.

### ***GOOD FRIDAY***

What about the day of crucifixion, when our Lord suffered the greatest of all indignities, taking our sins upon himself, nailing them to the cross? That would certainly be a top contender for the greatest of all days. “Concerning this salvation,” writes Peter, “the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” (1 Pet 1:10-12 ESV). Even the angels wanted to know and understand the story of the sufferings of Christ. Our Suffering servant. For by his wounds we are healed.

At the cross, at the cross, is where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away.

### ***RETURN***

Could any day top those days? Well, maybe it's the final day. Title fight. The day that makes the demons shudder. The day for which creation groans. The day when all martyrs will have their say. The day our hearts always hunger for. The day of Christ.

What could possibly top that? What could be a greater day than one in which every eye shall see him? The one I'm thinking of had almost no witnesses.

### ***RESURRECTION***

I wish to present to you, the jury, my pick for the best day ever. A day that includes and explains all of those other days.

**Creation.** It was Tom Wright who first alerted me to how the Gospel of John retells the creation story in the lead up to the resurrection. In the beginning are the first three words of Genesis and in the beginning are the first three words of the gospel of John, but while Genesis centers its discussion in God's creation of the world, John centers his thoughts in Christ giving birth to a brand new world. On day 1, just as light shines forth, Christ enters in radiance into the world. Just God separated the light from the darkness, John says Christ was the true light and the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. It was Day 6—Friday—of God's creation week that God made man, and it's on Good Friday that Pilate looks at Jesus and declares, "Behold the Man." When Jesus is crucified, his body is taken down from the tomb. Just as God rested on day 7, the body of Jesus lay dormant in Joseph's tomb. And then, early in the morning on the first day of God's new creation week, the light shines in the darkness as Christ bursts forth from the grave. We know it's a new week and a new world, a new creation, because John recreates the imagery for us. There is the man—Jesus Christ—and the woman who came to the tomb thinks he is the gardener. Why would she think that? Because they are in a garden. And just as God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, it is in John's gospel and in John's only that in confirming the transfer of the Spirit to his disciples Jesus "breathed on them." The resurrection highlights the point of creation, the culmination of creation, and the beginning of God's new creation.

**Naming.** And Abraham. What a day that was. What a day. But do you know something? Our Lord looked into the eyes of the religious leaders of his own day, who prided themselves on that day, and said "Abraham rejoiced to see *my* day" (John

8:56). The day God named a people is truly a great day. But it remained a small band, rooted in shared ethnicity. The promise to Abraham was that one day, one day, “all the nations of the earth” would share in this blessing. That is why, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God said to his named people “The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings (shall see) your glory, and you shall be called by a *new* name that the mouth of the Lord will give” (Isa 62:2 ESV). Today, there are Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free men, wearing the name of Jesus Christ, wearing the name “adopted,” “wanted,” “chosen,” and “forgiven,” because of what was accomplished in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is because resurrection is where Christ conquered the grave. And to the struggling churches in Pergamum and Philadelphia, the risen Jesus declares “to the one who conquers, I will give a new name” (Rev 2:17). “I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God...and my own new name” (Rev 3:12). It is because of the resurrection that Christ could declare all authority had been given to him, and then to commission us to make disciples of all nations, plunging them into a new community in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Exodus.** What could be greater than the Exodus, the story of rescue from our past and redemption from our bondage? Only a new Exodus, the ultimate exodus, the one that rescues us from our sinful past and redeems us from our seemingly inevitable bondage to decay. This exodus not only is for all who choose the name of Jesus Christ. This exodus is not only to live an abundant life in the Spirit starting today. This exodus includes the promise that our whole selves—soul, spirit and body—will not suffer defeat that is found in this age; for we will rise up and meet the Lord, new bodies and a new creation. In fact, leaving this world of decay to touch the face of God is precisely what Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about on the Mountain of the Transfiguration. And do you know what word Luke the historian uses to describe it? What word Luke says Jesus and Moses were discussing? Oh, your Bibles probably say they were talking about “his departure,” But in the Greek, Luke writes, they were speaking of his “exodus” (Luke 9:31 CJB; NLT, NRSVUE) that he would accomplish in Jerusalem. His exodus after fulfilling the righteous requirements of our sacrifice happened on the cross. His exodus from this earthly life happened in the ascension. Both in Jerusalem. But what the cross looked forward to, and what the ascension relied upon was another event in Jerusalem: his exodus from the tomb, his exodus from death.

**Covenant.** What about the day of covenant-making, the giving of the Law? You know that the covenant given by Moses revealed the heights of love in telling of a God who will never let go. But it also revealed the depths of depravity, as we looked into the law and saw the reflection of our own sinfulness. But Christ “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own

possession” (Titus 2:14). “I was blameless when it came to righteousness under the law,” writes Paul; but I would exchange every bit of it to be found in Jesus Christ, having a righteousness that is not my own, but that which comes through faith (Phil 3:5-9). I know it is tempting to think only of the cross as what freed us from the curse of the law. But in 1 Corinthians 15, as Paul comes to the rousing crescendo of his most detailed treatment of resurrection, He says that since Christ was raised from the dead, we too will be raised imperishable and immortal; death shall be swallowed up in victory. And we will sing “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” And then he makes the connection: “the sting of death is sin, and *the power of sin is the law*. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:53-57). There is now no condemnation to those who are in the risen body of Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit who gave Jesus life has set you free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).

**Christmas.** The incarnation—God become man—is rightly celebrated in remembering the birth of our Savior, for it was at his birth that Jesus was declared to be “God with us.” And he was. For 30 years, he was. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The only thing that could top that would be if Jesus Christ still dwelt among us. And it was only through the resurrection that Christ could say to his disciples, and through them, to all of us: “lo, I am with you *always*” (Matt 28:20).

**Good Friday.** We come to Good Friday, the day of crucifixion. There can be no doubt that the cross is the centerpiece of our faith. In the words of Paul, we preach Christ crucified. But that same Paul said if Christ be not raised from the dead, our faith is in vain, and we are still in our sins. This is because, as Romans 1 tells us, yes Jesus was descended from David, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:3-4). The story of the cross is not simply the power of martyrdom, but the assurance that self-sacrifice is not the end of the story. For those who humble themselves shall be exalted.

**Return.** And finally, we come the last day. The day to end all days. Christians have nothing to fear upon Christ’s return, because the resurrection declares death to be defeated. Christians know what to expect on the final day because the resurrection of Christ serves as the first fruits of all human resurrection. You see, the resurrection of Christ is the opening of the seal for God’s final day; it’s what releases the Spirit of God to invade our hearts; it’s God’s guarantee that our bodies shall be made like unto His glorious body, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is; He is...because God raised Him from the dead. In the resurrection, we see God’s final day declared, prepared, and begun.

For many children across the globe, this morning holds a wonderful surprise: baskets full of goodies, eggs a plenty, and everything imaginable in the shape of bunnies. I've been looking forward to this. My daughter Grace, who is not even 2, has been looking forward to this! I love bunnies, and, as one formerly allergic to chocolate, I can't get enough chocolate.

But today is about so much more. People all over the world will be remembering that glorious day when Jesus Christ rose from the grave. Easter Sunday is an opportunity to reflect on far more than bunnies and chocolate.

Why do *you* think the church gives so much attention to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Sometimes you can find the greatest truths in the smallest places. A few weeks ago, I came across a wonderful little children's book that explains the power of this day remarkably well. I am thankful to a woman named Gracie for helping explain it all to my Gracie. Gracie Jagla's book is called *God the Father and the Best Day Ever*.<sup>4</sup> Here are some of the lines:

You've heard Easter's story,  
You know how it goes:  
Christ died for our sins  
And on Easter, he rose.

But there's more to the story  
That you might not know.  
What happened above when God  
Triumphed below?...

On the first Easter  
All gone was the gloom  
For Jesus had conquered  
The dark, dreary tomb...

That's why we love Easter  
Since thanks to this day  
We can see God in heaven  
Forever to stay...

---

<sup>4</sup> Gracie Jagla, *God the Father and the Best Day Ever*, illustrated by Jacob Popcak (Our Sunday Visitor; Illustrated ed, 2020).



May you enjoy this day, knowing that, because Christ rose from the grave, we can enjoy all days...for ever and ever. Amen.