

## A Powerful Proclamation

**You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow** (Isaiah 62:2).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a

**Song:** “How Great Thou Art”

Charles Colchester, a self-proclaimed psychic, warned of Abraham Lincoln’s assassination weeks in advance. This dubious character once close to Mary Todd had attempted to blackmail her and no longer had influence with the family when he delivered the message. And because of his friendship with John Wilkes Booth, the true source of his warning has always been questioned. Regardless of his associations and crooked past, he called it right. Had he been heard, he would’ve changed history.

Words are powerful, but their power is contingent on the credentials of the one who speaks them. When God sent the message to the Israelites that He would change their name from deserted to delight, from desolate to married, that message had weight. Weight not from human discussion and decision but from the intrinsic power of the Lord himself. The Lord has a résumé of spoken creation that contains so much—from vast galaxies to single-cell organisms. There is no mouth more powerful.

This God of ours who whispers worlds into existence does not misspeak, and the size of His word is matched only by His love for us. When He calls us forgiven, we are in that moment none of what we used to be and everything He says we are. May we never let His mighty voice grow small in our noisy lives, and may we always humbly bask in His massive love.

**Heavenly Father,** let the immeasurable weight of Your words forever be impressed on my heart. In Christ’s name, amen.

## God Can Reach Everywhere

**Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back** (Deuteronomy 30:4).

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 30:1-6

**Song:** “Jesus Loves Even Me”

Years ago people would seal a message in a bottle, with a note saying something like, “Send me a postcard from where you found this bottle.” Then they’d put the bottle into the water. Most bottles were lost forever, but some were found. In a few cases, the bottles had traveled the ocean currents around the world!

Israel had been scattered throughout the world due to the people’s sin. But paired with God’s promised curses for disobedience, God always promises restoration. When Israel repented, God began to bring them back.

We may find ourselves far from God at some point in our lives. Once we return to Him with our hearts, God is ready to restore our relationship with Him. There is no place that is too far away from redemption. We have two lessons of hope. First, there is nowhere we can go that God cannot find us, unlike the bottles that get lost. Second, while people may ignore the message in a bottle, God will neither forget nor ignore us. He is always ready to bring us home.

**Dear Lord,** thank You for remembering us, and for reaching to the farthest parts of the world to redeem us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

April 28

## Jesus Our Shepherd Brings Us Home

**As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries** (Ezekiel 34:12, 13, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 34:11-16

**Song:** “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

In 1991, Israelis were concerned for the safety of Jews in Ethiopia. Because the government was about to be overthrown in a civil war, the nation of Israel gained short-term permission for an emergency airlift of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. The entire program, called Operation Solomon, rescued 14,000 Jews from danger in 36 hours.

If people in one location can watch over people in another and come to their rescue, just imagine how much our loving God watches over us to rescue us. He seeks us and finds us and brings us into His fold, regardless of how far we might have been scattered. God is continually calling His people into His fold.

God cares for us as our loving shepherd. He ensures that we receive the aid we need, and He guides us in paths of safety and growth. He provides for us in countless ways. God does not neglect any of His children. We can rest secure in knowing that God is looking after us.

**Heavenly Father,** thank You for seeking and finding us, and then bringing us into Your fold. May we always be grateful for Your provision and rest in the safety of Your arms. In our Savior’s name, amen.

## Restored Through Newness in Christ

**“I will strengthen Judah and save the tribes of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them”** (Zechariah 10:6).

**Scripture:** Zechariah 10:6-12

**Song:** “I Shall Be Whiter Than Snow”

“A broken bone grows back stronger.” That old saying has been challenged by some scientists in recent years, scientists who report calcium loss and other factors. But once completely healed, the bone is definitely not weaker than before. It can be completely restored as if there had been no break.

When Zechariah prophesied that God planned to restore Israel, the restoration would be complete. The tribes would be strengthened and returned to their former places as if God had never rejected them.

When God cleanses us from sin and sanctifies us, His restoration is complete. We do not exist as spiritual cripples, carrying the wounds of our sin through eternity. God will restore us to a point where it will be as if there had been no break in our relationship with God. The healing will be complete.

This work is not done based on any merit we may have. It is entirely out of God’s compassion for us. Just as He desired to bring healing and restoration to Israel, His desire in His program of salvation is to bring complete healing and restoration to us today.

**O God in Heaven,** You make us as new, cleansing us completely. We thank You for restoring us and making us whole. In our Savior’s name we pray. Amen.

April 30

## Exaltation That Cannot Be Silenced

**God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins** (Acts 5:31).

**Scripture:** Acts 5:27-32

**Song:** “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”

Disney’s *Aladdin* shows Aladdin as the focal point of a huge parade to impress Princess Jasmine. Led by the genie, there are musicians, dancers, and animals marching in to create a huge spectacle. Aladdin himself, as Prince Ali, rides in exalted on an elephant. But it was all a lie, as Aladdin had done nothing to deserve any exaltation, being merely a street urchin masquerading as a prince.

So much more genuine is the true exaltation that Christ received from the Father because He is Savior! There is no fakery; no deception was needed to puff up Christ. Death could not contain Christ. His resurrection leaves no doubt as to His divinity. The message of subsequent miracles after Christ’s ascension, as well as the testimony of the apostles, could not be silenced by the Jewish council. No one can silence or refute the exaltation of Christ.

The birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ provide full testimony to His supremacy. This is the glorious universal truth that cannot be silenced and will ring forth forever!

**Exalted Lord**, thank You for choosing to die for us. We give You praise for rising again in victory to be exalted at the right hand of God, our Father. We worship You now and forever. In Your mighty name, amen.

## A Long Enough Leash to Sin

**She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God** (Zephaniah 3:2, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Zephaniah 3:1-7

**Song:** “I Gave My Life for Thee”

Dogs must be stubborn creatures. There are myriads of training videos, books, and classes designed to help desperate owners teach their pets to heed and heel. If one method fails, the owners frantically move on to the next method “guaranteed” to solve their obedience problems. Sometimes people will just give up.

This dog behavior is not necessarily rebellion. In most cases it is simply dogs being dogs. But humans, having a sinful will, do engage in acts of willful rebellion against God. They reject His counsel, they reject His standards and laws, and they may reject Him altogether.

While God could force us to yield to His commands, love requires that He let us experience the consequences of our rebellion. He sent Israel into exile to understand the results of their rebellion. He allows us to be more distant from Him when our rebellion is demanding more space in which to sin.

Yet unlike with the recalcitrant pet on which the owners eventually give up, God does not give up on us. Even while God knows it is best for us to experience the consequences of our sin, it saddens Him when we reject His fellowship. So He has provided the means to bring us back to Him.

**Heavenly Father,** I know I have sinned. Help me learn from my past rebellious behavior to forsake my sin and turn to You. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.

May 2

## The Test of Humility

**“I will leave within you the meek and humble. The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the LORD”** (Zephaniah 3:12).

**Scripture:** Zephaniah 3:8-13

**Song:** “I Surrender All”

In the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Indy had to pass a series of tests to reach the Holy Grail and save his father. The first test was of penitence, which he understood as humility. He then physically knelt, which saved him from the blade whooshing across the entryway. His physical demonstration of humility saved his life, and he was able to continue.

When God restored Israel, He would restore the meek and humble. Those who were arrogant or proud would no longer be with them. Those who were deceitful and boastful would not be saved. The remnant God preserved would in humbleness place their trust in God rather than in their own abilities.

An important facet of God’s plan of restoration is that it is His plan and not ours. We cannot, through our own abilities, save ourselves. Any arrogant boasting of not needing God to take care of us will ultimately be met with judgment.

Thankfully, as God has demonstrated countless times in the Bible, He desires to heal and restore us. He desires to bring us into fellowship with Him due to His great compassion for us. This great love, mercy, and grace should inspire in us a sincere response of humility.

**Dear God,** we know that we could not save ourselves, so we rely completely on You. Help us to remain humble and never think we could reach You through our own strength. In Jesus’ name, amen.