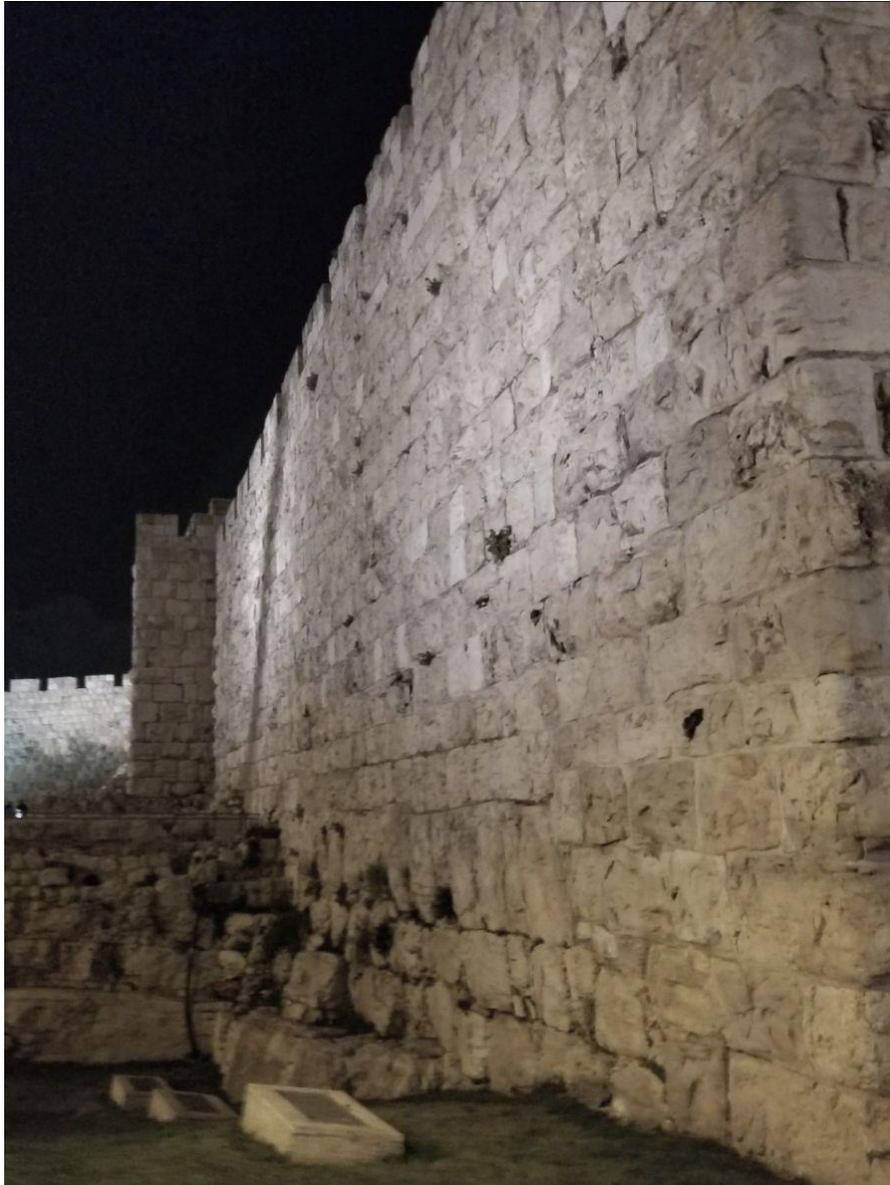




Abundant Life

COMMUNITY CHURCH



Each day this week, I (Gabe) will share a brief devotional- walking through some of the events of Holy Week, the days leading up to and including Jesus' death & resurrection, using some pictures from my trip to Israel last month.

A Silent Sabbath

In Israel, everything shuts down on the Sabbath. From sundown on Friday through sundown on Saturday, the streets are nearly empty as Jewish families spend time at home together. The picture above shows a portion of the wall around Old City Jerusalem, near the [Jaffa Gate](#), at night. The bustling city looks to be quiet and at rest, which sets the stage for us to consider the quiet hours of Holy Week's Sabbath. Can you imagine what a painful time this was for Jesus' disciples and loved ones? It's one thing to rest after a busy but triumphant week; it's another thing altogether to experience the loneliness and grief of rest in the midst of tragedy and grief.

Take a few minutes to [read Matthew 27:62-66](#).

Do you remember the first time you heard the Easter story? When you came to the part about the death and burial of Jesus, were you left feeling sad, confused, and even angry? It really isn't fair; the hero of the story is never supposed to die. Jesus didn't deserve to be treated like this. And how can he be our Savior if he's lying in a tomb? The first time you heard this story, you didn't know about the empty tomb. How could you?

I remember having this experience when my mom read me C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in my childhood. As Aslan was being beaten and killed on the Stone Table, I remember crying- it wasn't fair for One so good, and so loving, to be so brutally executed. As you may remember, Lewis ends the chapter with the death of the great Lion. We're left to feel the hopelessness of Lucy and Susan, and we

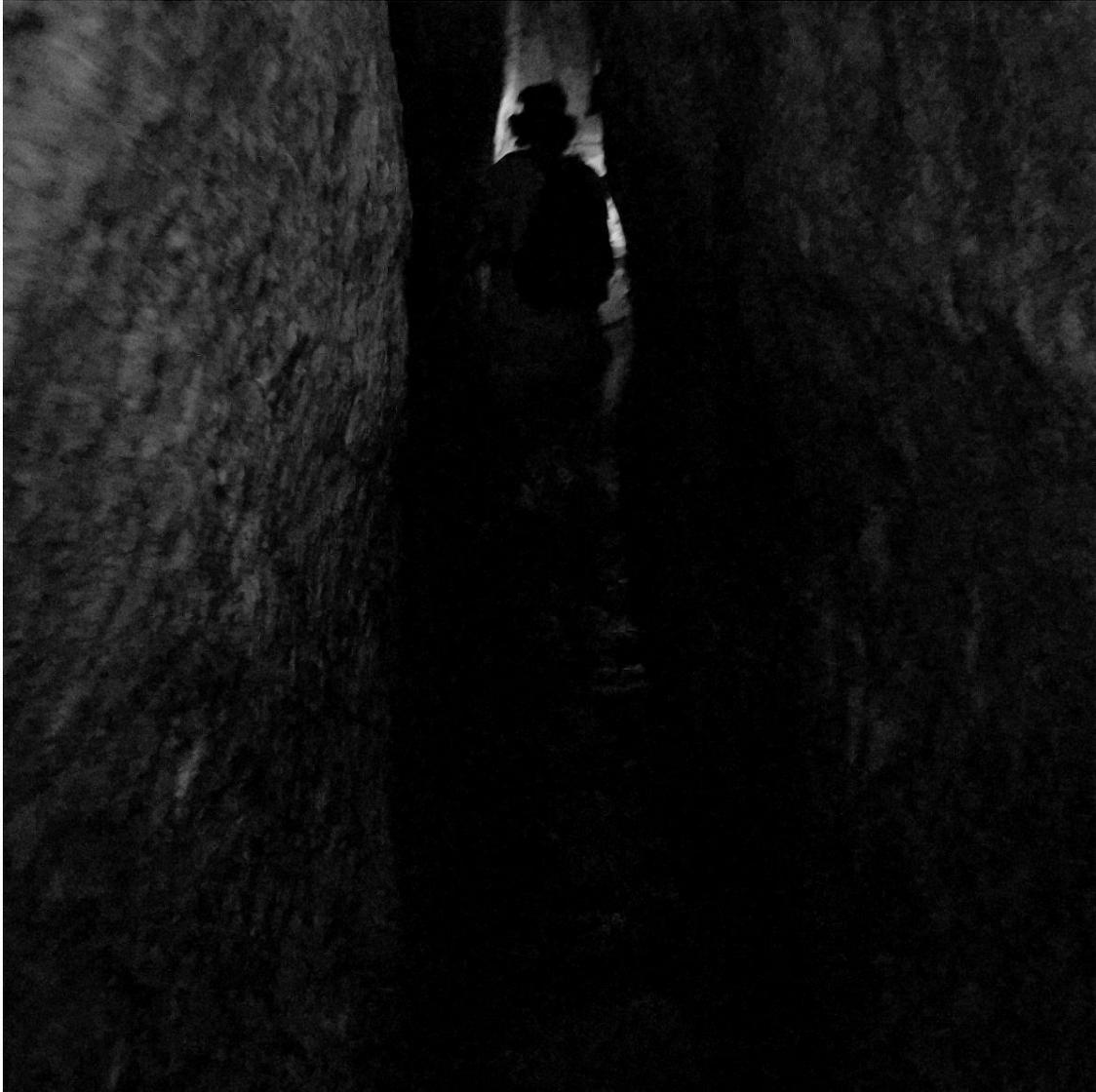
don't get to rejoice in Aslan's resurrection and the breaking of the Stone Table until we read the next chapter. C.S. Lewis understands something - it's important that we don't skip past the heavy tension and grief of Jesus' execution too quickly.

So before we get to Easter Sunday, let's pause here to get a taste of the emotion of Holy Week's Sabbath, as experienced by Jesus' loved ones. They, like you the first time you heard the Easter story, didn't know about the empty tomb. They had given, in the case of the disciples, 3+ years of their lives to follow the One they believed to be the Messiah. The more they saw in Jesus' ministry, the more they allowed themselves to believe that he really was the Messiah, the Son of God. And yet, shortly before sunset, those who hadn't already abandoned him were left to stand helplessly by as Jesus' lifeless body was removed from a wretched cross and laid in a tomb.

In the passage we read above, the religious leaders are afraid the disciples have an elaborate plan to hide Jesus' body. Now I could be wrong, but I don't think they had any sort of plan. They had given everything to Jesus, and now they were reeling not only from the loss of their teacher and friend, but from the shattering of all their hopes and dreams. The disciples were grieving. How could they possibly have had any sort of plan for tomorrow, much less one for such an elaborate hoax? Their Sabbath was marked by the sorrow of grieving a great loss; there was no hope for tomorrow, as far as they were concerned.

Of course, we know that this grieving would give way to the unfettered joy and new hope of tomorrow...Easter Sunday. But they could not rush through the pain and agony of that Sabbath; to do so would not have been healthy. Perhaps you, like Jesus' followers on this day, are in a season of pain and great loss. It will not do for me to offer you empty promises or religious platitudes. But I can point you to this silent Sabbath of Holy Week. God, in his infinite love on the cross and definitive victory

through the resurrection, allowed the disciples this 'Silent Saturday.' He allowed them to weep, to mourn, and to grieve; this is part of the human experience. But he did not leave them there; Jesus invited them into hope the next morning, and by extension he invites us to grieve as those who share in that same hope - the hope of the empty tomb!



I took this picture as our group was walking out of [Hezekiah's tunnel](#), a 530 meter tunnel carved through rock during Hezekiah's reign (approx. 705 BC) in order to prepare for an impending Assyrian siege on the city. This tunnel diverted water away

from the Assyrians and into the City of David, helping Hezekiah withstand the siege and Judah to maintain independence. It took us nearly 30 minutes to walk through the tunnel, and if not for our headlamps we would have been surrounded by the pitch black of complete darkness.

This obviously has nothing to do with Holy Week. But this picture reminds me of the experience of Jesus' disciples during that Sabbath. Their sorrow must have felt like a long, dark tunnel; but we know that they are about to emerge from that darkness and enter the glorious light of the hope of Jesus' resurrection!