



Holy Week Devotional

HE IS RISEN!

HOLY WEEK 2021

Holy Week chronicles the last moments of Jesus' life as he drew closer and closer to the cross. From Palm Sunday to the resurrection celebration on Easter morning, the last week of Jesus' life is a story of jubilation, betrayal, remembrance, and suffering.

Holy Week is the culmination of the season of Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and is forty days of preparation leading up to the resurrection of Christ. Whereas the season of Advent is the joyful anticipation of Christ's birth, Lent is a time of prayerful preparation as believers ponder the meaning of God's grace that is extended to all through the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

Palm Sunday and Easter are the bookends for a week of important events. So often we jump from the celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his resurrection a week later. What we miss when we jump from celebration to celebration, is the fulfillment of centuries of God's promises working themselves out in the person of Jesus Christ. Come with us on this journey through the last moments of Jesus' life.

PALM SUNDAY

RED CARPET ARRIVAL



Zechariah 9:9

The Coming of Zion's King

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!

Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Matthew 21:1-9

The Triumphal Entry

¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ "Say to the Daughter of Zion,
'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.
⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!””

Today walking the red carpet is an elaborate affair. Celebrities individually arrive at the red carpet in beautifully waxed limousines. They’ve been primed, prepped, and dressed to the nines. Almost more important than the awards, is the commentary on each celebrity’s outfit. The red carpet is a moment to shine before the main event.

Two-thousand years earlier, Jesus also took care to plan his red-carpet arrival. With the words of the prophet Zechariah ringing in his ears, Jesus chose an important moment to make a public demonstration. At a time when thousands of pilgrims were entering Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Festival, Jesus stood out, but not for his outfit. Jesus entered Jerusalem deliberately as a humble king. Instead of choosing a large war-horse, Jesus chose an animal known for carrying the supplies and burdens of others. This intentional choice to ride a low animal put Jesus right up close with the people he came to save.

The red-carpet ride into Jerusalem was not the main event. The red-carpet ride points to the main event. Jesus arrived as the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the one who will suffer and die. As the week goes on, the celebratory feeling is going to take a dramatic turn. In a few days, many of the people who shouted with joy during the red-carpet arrival will turn their backs on the suffering of their servant King.



Personal Reflection

In what ways does following Jesus make you stand out?
Do you stand out to gain attention for yourself or Jesus?
How can you direct that attention to Jesus and not yourself?

MONDAY

GOOD TROUBLE



Isaiah 56:6-7

Salvation for Others

⁶And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord
to minister to him,

to love the name of the Lord,

and to be his servants,

all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it

and who hold fast to my covenant –

⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in
my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices

will be accepted on my altar;

for my house will be called

a house of prayer for all nations.

Jeremiah 7:2b-11

False Religion Worthless

² “Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who
come through these gates to worship the Lord. ³ This is what
the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways
and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. ⁴ Do not
trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the
Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!” ⁵ If you

really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, ⁶ if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, ⁷ then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave to your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁸ But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

⁹ “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe” – safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.

Mark 11:15-18

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

The late John Robert Lewis was a civil rights leader and Congressman from Georgia. Lewis was a strong supporter of

getting involved in what he liked to call “good trouble.” Good trouble is what Jesus got into when he entered the temple courts. Good trouble is necessary when it comes to calling out things that are not right. Jesus quoted two important Old Testament prophets- Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah revealed that God’s promise of salvation extended further than just Israel. In Jesus’ day, the temple had become a place where walls separated and secluded Israel from the other nations. Jesus intended to crumble those walls and bring all nations together in God’s house.

Jeremiah had the difficult task of reminding his stubborn audience that something sacred and holy could become perverted. The ‘robbers’ who entered the temple courts knew they wouldn’t be called out on their awful behavior because they had found safety and security in a worshipping community that neglected to practice what it preached. Outside of the temple, their lives were a complete reversal. They trusted in foreign nations and worshipped other gods, thinking they were safe to act however they saw fit. They professed to follow the Lord but neglected to follow the Lord. The actions of Jeremiah’s contemporaries showed that they practiced cheap grace, thinking the temple sacrifices would keep them from God’s judgment.

Jesus called out a corrupt system that allowed robbers to hide out after committing their crimes. Jesus’ call for worship reform is not what propelled the chief priests and teachers of the law to act. What sparked fear in their hearts was that the people were amazed at his teaching. Jesus stood in the temple courts and criticized the very institution that caused

others in Jerusalem to look the other way. Jesus created a disturbance to call them to something better.



Personal Reflection

Have you ever gotten into ‘good trouble’? Why or why not?
Does anything surprise you about Jesus’ behavior?
In what ways was Jesus’ disturbance a call for reform?

TUESDAY

A BEAUTIFUL THING



Mark 14:1-11

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

¹ Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ² “But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶ “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to

prepare for my burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So, he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Lord Darlington, Oscar Wilde’s character in *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, commented that a cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Those gathered who witnessed this woman’s act of devotion certainly knew the cost of the perfume and the jar that contained it. They knew how far the money would go if it was sold. However, they failed to grasp the value of her action.

Anointings are sprinkled throughout the Old Testament. Both priests and kings were set apart for specific jobs by pouring oil over their heads. Kings were usually anointed in private ceremonies by prophets working in response to God’s instructions. Samuel anointed both, Saul and David, in private (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13). Elisha sent a prophet to anoint Jehu as king of Israel which kicked off a revolt against Ahab, the current king (2 Kings 9:1-13). Generally, kings were anointed at the beginning of their reign, not the end.

Jesus looks with favor on this anonymous woman and her anointing. She is not a priest or an authorized prophet, yet she anoints Jesus’ head with valuable oil because he is THE king. Jesus declares her actions to be a beautiful thing

because she has prepared his body for burial. She didn't hold anything back in her commitment to glorify Jesus. The value of her sacrifice is shown later when Jesus' body is hastily buried in a tomb borrowed from an unknown follower.

The value of the anointing escaped the notice of many of those present at Simon's house. Especially Judas. Judas later met with the chief priests and agreed to betray Jesus. The unnamed woman and Judas will not long be forgotten. One for her stunning devotion and the other for his incredible betrayal.



Personal Reflection

Name a time when you lived out your faith in a way that made other people shake their heads at you.

In what ways do you live out your faith that are countercultural to the messages of our society?

WEDNESDAY

THE LAMB OF GOD



John 1:29

John Testifies About Jesus

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

Matthew 26:26-30

The Last Supper

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Every year we have feasts and family gatherings to celebrate special events with those we love. Thanksgiving is one such holiday. We all have our traditions and ways of celebrating but there are some common elements. We know there will be food, laughter, and awkward conversation.

When Jesus gathered with his disciples in the upper room, they were celebrating the Passover meal. Passover, an important feast in the Jewish calendar, is a chance to remember God's past acts of salvation. Exodus tells the story of the Israelites, God's people, who were enslaved in Egypt. The Lord heard their cries and acted to deliver his people from slavery. Pharaoh, Egypt's ruler, was given 10 chances through 10 plagues to release the people, yet each time he went back on his word and refused to release the Israelites. The final plague, the death of the firstborn, hit close to home. The firstborn son of everyone in Egypt, along with the animals was struck down. To spare the Israelites, Moses commanded the people to sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood on the doorpost of their house. As a result, when the plague struck Egypt, the Lord passed over the houses with the lamb's blood. Passover commemorates the saving grace of God that was present in the blood of the lamb that saved the Israelites from death. The Israelites were then released from their slavery in Egypt and began their wanderings in the wilderness.

Jesus and his disciples gathered to remember the redemption Israel received when the lamb was sacrificed on

their behalf. Those gathered were very familiar with the way the evening was supposed to go. Then Jesus did something unexpected. He took the familiar cup and bread and gave them new meaning. John's gospel reports that John the Baptist called "Jesus the Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world. In light of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, this is a fitting title for Jesus. Sacrificial lambs needed to be male, without blemish, and without broken bones. Jesus, sacrificed on our behalf was without sin and no bones were broken during his crucifixion.

Jesus knew his death was around the corner. He took the cup and gave thanks for it even though the cup represented the new covenant which was sealed with his blood. The blood shed by the Lamb of God covers over the sin of the world. The bread and wine are the elements of the new covenant. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, a new relationship with God is made possible. Today believers around the world gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to remember the freedom we have through God's grace.



Pray & Reflect

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

PART OF ME



John 13:1-17, 34

Jesus Washes His Disciples Feet

¹ It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸ “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

⁹ “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

During his last meal with the disciples before his arrest, Jesus showed he was willing to humble himself and serve those he loved. When the disciples went through the details for the Passover meal, they neglected to designate someone to wash

the feet of those gathered. Therefore, it must have been an awkward moment when Jesus got up from the table, wrapped a towel around his waist, and proceeded to wash and dry the feet of his disciples. True to form, Peter alone spoke out loud his thoughts about the awkward moment. He recognized the humiliation that his teacher must have felt to crouch down and touch the dirty smelly feet of his students. What's more, Jesus knew who was going to betray him, and yet he washed all the disciples' feet, even the one who would later exchange Jesus' life for thirty pieces of silver.

Jesus reminded Peter that he didn't understand what was happening at the moment, but he would soon enough realize that the foot washing was not the main point. Jesus was still their Teacher and Lord. He was showing them that he was a different kind of Teacher and Lord. In response to his powerful example, Jesus gave his followers a new commandment- love one another and show others that you love them by serving them in the same manner that Jesus did.

Maundy Thursday is the celebration of the new commandment that Jesus gave to his followers. It is a new mandate that is not a suggestion, but a commandment. Love one another. A truly difficult commandment when you realize Jesus didn't just mean those that love us back or those that look up to us, but rather those who will scatter at the first difficult moment and those who will turn their backs on us.



Personal Reflection

In the last year, how difficult has it been for you to serve others?

What gets in the way of you caring for others?

Who is easy for you to show love towards?

Who is difficult for you to show love towards? Spend time praying for the people that are hard to love, not so that God will change them, but rather that God will change your attitude towards them.

GOOD FRIDAY

THE PLACE OF THE SKULL



Mark 15:20-39

²⁰ 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.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²¹ A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). ²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

²⁵ It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁷ They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!”

³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! ³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?”).

³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

In Jesus’ day, crucifixions were public affairs. Much like red carpet events, crucifixions were a cultural moment. Taking place outside for all to see, the Romans perfected their death penalty. The darkness that blanketed the land was palpable. The Son of God was crucified on a day that today

we call 'good.' Surely the last moments of Jesus' life were not good. Jesus was arrested, beaten, scourged, mocked, and crucified. The suffering of Jesus is not something we can overlook. What is good about the crucifixion of Jesus is that it led to the resurrection. We cannot go around the crucifixion, we must go through it.

To those gathered at the foot of the cross, Jesus couldn't possibly be the Savior. What kind of savior refused to rescue himself? Their insults and demands for a sign show the marks of human responses to power. If you have the power to save others, why wouldn't you start with yourself? The night before, Jesus demonstrated to his followers that having power doesn't mean you lord it over others. It means you humble yourself and care for others. Jesus also wasn't willing to go around the crucifixion. Instead, he hung on the cross for all to see.

We might never fully understand the practice of crucifixion. There was one person present that day that intimately knew the ins and outs of crucifixion. The centurion who witnessed Jesus' death knew it was not a routine crucifixion. Something was different about that day. He boldly declared that the man whose death he witnessed on the cross was no ordinary person. He was the Son of God.



Pray & Reflect

When have you felt like God abandoned you? Pray about those moments where God felt distant.

SATURDAY

SILENCE



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EASTER SUNDAY

THE RESURRECTION



Luke 24:1-12

Jesus Has Risen

¹ On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ “The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb.

Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

CHRIST HAS RISEN!

HE HAS RISEN INDEED.

An Easter Prayer:

Good and Gracious God-

The heavens and earth rejoice in the good news that entered this world through your Son. In Him we have an anchor for our hope. Today we rejoice with gladness in the resurrection of our Savior. Hosanna to God in the highest!

Christ's resurrection carried us from death to life. Through Christ, we are new creations with new life and new breath in our lungs. Let us go forth from worship full of your presence, ready to share the good news to the ends of the earth.

Our salvation and trust are in you, Lord. This day and forevermore. Amen.



