



Day 1 Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, begins Holy Week. It is when we remember and celebrate the day Jesus entered Jerusalem as Savior and King. As He rode a donkey into the town of Jerusalem, a large crowd gathered and laid palm branches and cloaks across the road, giving Him royal treatment. Hundreds of people shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Scripture - The Triumphal Entry

Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their clothes on the colt, they helped Jesus get on it. As he was going along, they were spreading their clothes on the road. Now he came near the path down the Mount of Olives, and the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen: Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven! Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out." Luke 19:35-40

Application

What a tremendous start to Easter week! As you consider today's devotional, think of reading about a cure for a disease your neighbor has suffered with for years. How eager would you be to run to his house, knock on the door, and pour out your exciting, great news? You surely wouldn't hesitate and worry that he might not receive it.

The good news of Jesus is called the Gospel. Think about specific people who are struggling through life without hope, without peaceful assurance of life after this one...those who are without the knowledge that they can be forgiven and promised a joy-filled eternity in heaven. Further, they can know God's power and presence to help them here and now! Who could you start praying for now? How could you be intentional in connecting with them and sharing your story of Hope in Christ? **Your** excitement about **your** faith could be the reason they consider coming to church Easter Sunday. Pray for them, and for opportunity to share.

Palm Sunday Prayer

Father, we give You praise and honor, for You are righteous and true, holy and just. Your love stands firm forever. Your lovingkindness endures forever. Thank You that You had a plan to redeem us. Thank You for forgiveness and that You make all things new, hear our prayers, and know our hearts. Help us to stay strong and true. Thank You for the cross, for our Lord Jesus and what He endured to set us free. Bring to our minds people we see regularly who don't know you. Give us opportunity to connect with them, for them to hear our faith story, and stir in them an interest in coming with us to worship on Easter Sunday. I pray this in the Mighty Name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 2 Monday

Monday is the second day Jesus was in Jerusalem, and the Bible tells of Christ teaching in the Temple in full view of the religious leaders He knew wanted to kill Him. The day before, He had entered Jerusalem with followers calling Him "King." The Pharisees were outraged. Now, He walks into the Temple and really stirs things up. Remember, He is only days away from the crucifixion.

Scripture - Jesus at the Temple

When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers.' " Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words. Luke 19: 45-48

Jesus Came for Us

Jesus knowingly came to Jerusalem to face the cross. He was intentional in His mission and purpose to sacrifice Himself for our sins. We will see later in the week that no one took His life. He gave it up. He gave it to us, for us.

Application

Do not miss how intentional Jesus was in going to Jerusalem for the last week of His earthly life. Remember, He knew He would be arrested and put to death. He moved towards it, even making it possible for the Pharisees to take Him. This is Jesus...moving to save us, His sheep. Without His intentional sacrifice, we are lost, without hope, and condemned to eternity separated from God. Who do you know that needs what you have been so richly given? How can you be intentional, without it being forced, about sharing Jesus? Pray and see who God brings to mind.

Monday Prayer

Lord, we see in Your Word that You knew Your death was near, and You went forward for our sake. Please help us this Easter week to consider, how Your love for sinners moved You to take on flesh and give it as our substitute, as our offering for sin. What a gift! And help us to see others who need You. Give us Your heart for the lost. Put people on our minds with whom we can share our faith and even invite to join us in church. Thank You for Your great love! Help me not to keep it to myself. I pray in Jesus name. Amen!

Day 3 Tuesday

The Bible records Jesus' activities on the Tuesday of Passion Week. There are over 2½ chapters of Him teaching and being challenged by the religious leaders. Again, He was intentional about speaking truth and confronting sin, even in the face of terrible torture and death in a few days.

Scripture - Jesus on Taxes

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" He saw through their duplicity and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent. Luke 20: 20-26

Remember, these people were some of the brightest in all of Israel. They repeatedly tried to trip Jesus up with tricky questions they hoped would condemn Him for heresy. And yet, Jesus always spoke with wisdom and truth. His enemies were amazed by His words. While this discussion was about taxes, Jesus was clear: we are to submit all we have and all we are to God.

Application

We all agree that everything belongs to God. We are stewards of a lot of stuff that is not ours, but is our responsibility. What do you think God would have you concentrate on during this Holy Week as we prepare to celebrate His resurrection on Sunday? Is there any area of your life that you could not say is completely surrendered to Him? Perhaps your work? Your hobbies? Your relationships with family/spouse? Your possessions/money?

Colossians 3:23 says "**Whatever** you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." What would it look like for you to do "**whatever**" as we consider what He did for us? Remember to pray about with whom God wants you to share your faith. Are you excited about a BIG Easter celebration at church on Sunday? Don't keep it to yourself!

Tuesday Prayer

Father, thank You for drawing me to You as I spend time thinking about Easter. Thank You for our Savior, King Jesus, who walks with us now and leads us to live lives pleasing to You. Stir the hearts of the people for whom I'm praying and sharing my faith. Help me to not take my salvation for granted, but rather, remember daily that I am here on mission **with** You - **for** You...to be the Gospel in the lives of those around me. I am here Lord. Send me! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 4 Wednesday

Wednesday was quiet...too quiet. With the controversies of the previous three days...Sunday's triumphal entry, Monday's temple cleansing, and Tuesday's temple controversies, now Wednesday was the calm before the storm. But lurking in shadows, evil is afoot. The church has long called it "Spy Wednesday," as the dark conspiracy against Jesus races forward, not just from enemies outside, but with a traitor from within. It is this day when the key pieces come together in the plot for the greatest sin in history, the murder of the Son of God.

The Plot Thickens

Jesus wakes again just outside Jerusalem in Bethany, where He has been staying at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. His teaching again attracts a crowd in the Temple. But now the Jewish leaders, silenced by Jesus the day before, will leave Him be. Today they will avoid public confrontation and instead, connive in private.

Caiaphas, the high priest, gathers to his private residence the chief priests and Pharisees. These two groups were typically at odds, competing with one another. But now they are united in their hatred of Jesus. They scheme to kill Him. They don't yet, however, have all the pieces in place. They fear the approving masses and don't want to stir them up during Passover. The initial plan is to wait until after the feast, unless some unforeseen opportunity presents itself. Enter the traitor.

Scripture - The Plot

Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. Luke 22:1-6

Why would God have it all happen so dramatically? If Jesus is being "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," and His enemies are doing just as God's hand and plan "had predestined to take place," why this travesty, His own disciple, betraying Him? Why add the insult of betrayal to the injury of the cross? We find a clue when Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 in forecasting Judas's defection: "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." (John 13:18) King David knew the pain, not just of being conspired against by his enemies, but being betrayed by his friend. So now the Son of David walks the same agonizing path. Here, Judas turns on Him. Soon Peter will deny Him, and then the remaining ten will scatter.

Application

Jesus faced His most painful and difficult hours alone, without His closest friends and followers. The seriousness of sin (our sin) made all of Jesus's suffering and death necessary. Even the Father had to turn His back on Jesus on the cross as all of our sin was placed on Him. How terribly alone He felt.

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Never take biblical community for granted. It is the fellowship of believers God has given you. Our church is not just an organization or a place we attend to do religious things. Our church is the people and leaders God has given to us to do life together...to do all of the "One Another Commands" together, and to share with others who have nothing like that fellowship. Be sure your life includes the kind of love for those apart from Christ who will make you intentional about being "the Church" around them. They'll see the difference...and want what you have.

Wednesday Prayer

Lord, I cannot begin to imagine how hard it was for You to be so alone and to endure such pain and suffering. It feels so small to say "thank You." But thank You, Lord. Your love and mercy are especially seen this week as we approach Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Draw those around me to You as I live a life that shows them I love them, and especially that YOU love them and died for them. Thank You in Jesus name.

Day 5 Maundy Thursday

Christ's "mandate" is commemorated on Maundy Thursday, "maundy" being a shortened form of mandatum (Latin), which means "command." It was on the Thursday of Christ's final week before being crucified and resurrected that He gave this commandment to His disciples. Jesus and His disciples had just shared what is known as the Last Supper and He washed their feet saying: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
John 13:34-35

In the military soldiers receive "marching orders" clearly describing their mission. Here, Jesus is about to be crucified, rise, and then leave them. This command to love is a big part of their last "marching orders" before they begin their new mission. When we read the command to love in verse 34, we think we understand what it means. BUT, verse 35 says the way they love one another will be the biggest testimony that their faith in Christ is real and Jesus is really the Messiah. Don't miss it! The way they cared for, encouraged, supported, provided for each other, and did life together was so obviously "other worldly" that it served as the catalyst to the amazingly rapid growth of the new church we see born in Acts 2.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47

Do you see it? The importance of believers living out their faith and doing it together...in biblical community like this, was so attractive to the people around them that people wondered what it was and they came to faith DAILY. The apostles didn't have altar calls in church every day. People were saved daily because the believers' faith was obvious every day - in public! The new church exploded with growth because of their obedience to Christ's mandate on Maundy Thursday.

Scripture - The Passover with the Disciples

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who

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is eating with me.” They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?” “It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” Mark 14:12-21

Institution of the Lord's Supper

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” Mark 14:22-25

This intimate supper with His closest disciples would soon be behind Jesus as He walks into His arrest, His suffering, and His death on a cross.

Application

How will unchurched people around you see believers “love one another?” We do pretty well when we gather on Sundays, but lost people aren’t there to see it. The command to love one another is to be done publicly as a witness. Think of ways you could follow this command “publicly” in your life. Maybe your small group or class can adopt one of your neighbors (perhaps a widow or single mom) and help with grocery shopping, transportation...or host a block party, inviting neighbors. Our Sunday service is always closed with this decree: “Greer First, you are sent.” When we leave the church building, we are to BE the church in public. What could truly being “sent” look like in your life?

Thursday Prayer

Lord, we’ve been reminded of Your death and resurrection all week. As we move into the weekend (Good Friday and the cross, Sunday and the resurrection) help us to remember that while Your suffering and sacrifice were upon You, You still emphasized the critical importance of loving each other so the world would see clear evidence of the life change You are producing in us. Help me to be intentional about demonstrating that kind of love. I love You, Jesus...and I pray in Your name.

Day 6 Good Friday

Good Friday is the day we remember the crucifixion of our Savior, Jesus Christ. On this day Jesus endured multiple beatings, six crooked trials, desertion of His closest friends, and merciless mocking and ridicule. Ultimately, Jesus was forced to carry His own cross and then stripped and nailed to that same cruel cross where He would stay in misery and excruciating pain until death. The word “excruciate” is derived from a Latin term, “out of the cross.”

Scripture - Jesus is Handed Over to be Crucified

From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!” When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge’s seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, Gabbatha). It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, “Here is your king!” They shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?” “We have no king but Caesar!” the chief priests answered. Then he handed him over to be crucified. John 19:12-16

Application

As you think about all Jesus accomplished for us on this day, allow yourself to reflect upon His Goodness. Also think about the consequences and the severity of sin. Think of different times today you can praise Him for what He has done!

As you praise God for what Good Friday means to you, also remember those who do not yet know Jesus. Today is a unique day in that even people who do not follow Jesus know about it. God wants to use you on this Good Friday! Your invitation to someone today to attend Easter Sunday morning with you might be the invitation to which they say “yes.” Pray for them, and pray for them to say “yes” to your invitation.

Friday Prayer

Father, as I remember the pain your Son endured this day because of my sin, I am filled with emotion. Thank you, Jesus for enduring this terrible pain and humiliation so that I might have forgiveness. I see the cost of my sin. I see Your love as You accomplished this indescribable task to save me. I want to live my life for You! Amen!

Day 7 Saturday

What a day! For Jesus' mother and His disciples, Friday was a storm of drama, betrayal, abandonment, confusion, sorrow, and fear. For Jesus, it was the beginning of His final steps to the cross. While He came for this very reason, it was indescribably difficult and painful. After reading yesterday's Good Friday devotional, on this day before Jesus' resurrection, let's be sure we see as clearly as possible the serious cost of our sin.

Scripture

Friday's Scripture was from John. Look back at other accounts of the crucifixion. Try to imagine how those who loved and followed Jesus felt. Matthew 27:27-54; Mark 15:16-39; Luke 23:26-47

Think of Mary, His mother. No matter what she understood about Him and His mission, watching this suffering and death had to be almost impossible to bear. And the disciples...being so closely with Him for three years...and then to see Him betrayed, wrongly accused, torn away, tortured and killed. How confused and alone would you have felt? Was it all a terrible defeat? NO! Not a defeat! Jesus cried out *"It is finished"* as He died. But...it was **not** an exhausted cry of defeat. **It was a shout of triumph!** His death was not just physical. We can die, too, (and we will). But His death paid a spiritual debt. When He said "It is finished." (John 19:30) the word was a Greek word, "Tetelestai." It was a business term meaning "Paid in full." In other words, Jesus said, "The debt of sin has been paid off, **Paid in Full.**" Jesus came as God in flesh to pay for the sin that separated us from God. Sin is so serious that this sacrifice had to happen. Jesus came to die in our place, to pay a price we could never pay.

Application

The resurrection we celebrate tomorrow is absolute proof that He was who He claimed to be, and His death was sufficient to pay off completely our debt of sin, and He has the authority to forgive and give us eternal life. Are you ready? Tomorrow will be a celebration of the greatest act of love, **ever**. And it helps to remember that Jesus would have died if you were the only sinner on earth. Easter is the celebration of God giving you new life. A clean slate and His indwelling presence to walk with Him now. We will say together, "Hallelujah! He is Risen! He is risen indeed!" We hope you can invite someone to join Sunday's awesome worship experience. We are praying with you for any who will come.

Saturday Prayer

Lord Jesus, what can I say but "Thank You!" And that feels so very small when I think of what you did for me. Help this truth sink in and move me day by day to love and follow you with a new passion. Tomorrow, I will celebrate with my church. I will celebrate a love beyond description. I will celebrate you Lord. I love you! And I pray this in YOUR name! Amen.