

Holy Week

—Devotional—

Intro

This 8 day devotional has been curated to help guide you through Holy Week, starting on Palm Sunday and ending on Easter. Each entry is designed to take 15 – 45 minutes, depending on how much time you have to spend. Each day, you will find the same components: an icon, a text from the Gospels, a Psalm, a devotional, a short prayer, and a few reflection questions.

If you are able, begin each reading by closing your eyes, opening your hands, and taking a few deep breaths, as you welcome the Holy Spirit. The Gospel text will frame the day's focus in each devotional. The icon, Psalm, and prayer are meant to help guide you in prayer, as you practice God's presence and remember the One who draws near. You can end each time by praying or journaling through each of the question prompts.

Our hope is that you journey with us this Holy Week, placing yourself into the story by prayer and reading, as a way of experiencing his presence and comfort as we eagerly await his return, and gather with us to celebrate on Easter Sunday.

Palm Sunday

| Entry of Jesus to Jerusalem



As Jesus entered the city on a donkey, an event often called the triumphal entry, an electricity was moving through the crowd. People had heard of Jesus: a miracle-working, sin-forgiving, Kingdom-of-God-preaching rabbi from the line of David. Could he be the triumphal king of whom the prophets spoke? There was a stirring hope that Jesus might finally rescue Israel from Roman occupation.

So they pulled out all the stops for Jesus' royal entrance — a path of cloaks like a red carpet and palm branches like flags at a parade — all while they cried out "Hosanna!" (or "God save us!"), a cry of both praise and petition, over and over.

No one in the crowd anticipated the week would end with Jesus, mocked and beaten, breathing his dying breath on a criminal's cross. How could this have been a triumphal entry? Jesus came to Jerusalem to rescue people in a way far more glorious than they could grasp. He would indeed triumph, but over more than just Rome — over all sin and death! But we're not there yet in the story. We're still at the beginning of Holy Week, on Palm Sunday, echoing the cries of the crowd: Hosanna, God save us!

Readings

Psalm 118

Mark 11v1-11

Prayer

Hosanna! My help and my deliverer: I welcome you.

I cannot see how you are working: I welcome you.

I set aside my expectations: I welcome you.

With praise and honor: I welcome you.

Hosanna! Jesus Christ, King of Kings: I welcome you.

Reflection Questions

1. As you pray “Hosanna! God save me!” today, what are you petitioning God for? What are you praising God for?
2. Is there a specific area in your life that the Spirit may be inviting you to welcome Jesus into today?

Notes

Holy Monday

| Jesus Cleanses the Temple



“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Imagine: a place where all kinds of people may dwell together, praying to their Creator who loves them, united in adoration and praise.

“But you have made it a den of robbers.” Standing between God’s divine presence and a working class worshiper was not just his own sin, but a merchant selling a temple-edition sacrificial dove for a 400% markup.

In the end, Jesus’ death would rip apart all barriers to God’s presence. As Jesus tore through the temple, he got rid of everything trying to separate us further from God. Did he cleanse the temple of merchants to humiliate them? No. He did so for the sake of the temple and its people: a house of prayer for all nations. That’s who they are and who they were made to be.

Today, you are God’s temple, the place where his Spirit dwells. When we come together, we create a house of prayer for all nations. He cleanses and cares for us for our sake, and the sake of the world.

Readings

Psalm 27

Matthew 21v12-17

Prayer

Father, Son, and Spirit, I offer myself wholly to you.

Father, search me and know my heart.

Jesus, see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Holy Spirit, come and make your home in me.

Reflection Questions

1. As you pray for the persons of God to search you and know you completely, what comes to your mind?
2. What would it look like or feel like to be a person freed up (or put another way, “cleansed”) to access the spirit without barriers? How might life be different?
3. Consider the things that make you feel far from God or his people. Are any of those things barriers God wants to tear down?

Notes

Holy Tuesday

| Jesus Curses the Fig Tree



When reading about Jesus cursing the fig tree that was not yielding its intended fruit, it's entirely possible to think that he may have been experiencing a case of "hangry." But, reading this story in Mark, along with Jeremiah, Micah, and Matthew, the fig tree becomes a symbol that points to the larger story of Israel.

The fig tree's unfruitfulness and Israel's ongoing unfaithfulness helps us to see God's perspective on it all. Mark places Jesus at the center of the temple, rightly disappointed and frustrated at how a place of worship was only a false image of misplaced love. Jesus's invitation here in Mark 11 is: "Have faith in God... embrace this God-life, and you'll get God's everything."

The truth is, when we purpose ourselves to see our life's circumstances as God sees them, we're going to live with greater peace and joy. Where we once may have only seen limitations, we're going to see potential. Where we once only saw an oncoming defeat, we got to see a coming victory.

You can't touch faith, but it can move mountains. You'll gain courage and strength as you see the glorious future God has for you.

Readings

Psalm 16

Mark 11v12-25

Prayer

Jesus, would you come close to us as we remember ways we have not been faithful to you. Would you come gather us, cleanse us of all unrighteousness, so that the weight of any festering fear and unbelief would simply wither away. Would you give us faith to trust you and remain in your love by the renewing of our minds.

Reflection Questions

1. What are you sensing God inviting you to have faith for?
2. In what ways could your community, friends, or family come alongside you in this?
3. How are you wanting to encounter God's love in the challenges you are facing?

Notes

Holy Wednesday

| Judas Betrays Jesus



There was something about how Jesus was wholly present that tended to bring out deep responses from people around him. What comes out in these moments is often not what we expect – deep rage from the Pharisees, deep gratitude from the outcast, deep sadness from the rich. On Holy Wednesday we remember two such juxtaposed moments: Judas' betrayal and Mary's anointing. It is baffling how Jesus let people who could hurt him get close, but he was neither naive nor flippant about it. He knew the cost and the reward: Judas' betrayal would bring his death, but Mary's pouring of oil illuminated his title Messiah, or The Anointed One. While both actions shocked their observers, Jesus knew what dwelled in his friends' hearts. In the same way, Jesus is not surprised by our responses either. Rather, he welcomes us and them.

But the questions remain: Do we have the courage and trust to sit with Jesus, who wants to help us face our depths, as we watch and wait for our healing? Or does not knowing what may surface in us, blessing or curse, bring its own paralysis? Welcome him today, as best you can, to help you see.

Readings

Psalm 139

Matthew 26v14-25

John 12v1-11

Prayer

You who bring out the deepest parts of me,
Draw near now. But do so gently, please,
For I'm not sure what may surface.
As best I can, Jesus, I trust and love you.
Have your way.

Reflection Questions

1. As you consider the idea of Jesus' presence bringing out a deep response from you, what do you want it to be? What do you fear it to be?
2. Now that you've named your hopes and fears, as you sit with Jesus, notice what actually does come out. It may not be as strong as Judas or Mary, that's ok. But what is stirring?

Notes

Maundy Thursday

| Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet



After Jesus and his disciples ate their last meal before his crucifixion, Jesus washed their feet and said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 16v34-35. In Latin, the word for command is *mandatum*, which is why we call this day Maundy Thursday.

The symbolic act of foot washing is a practice that reminds us of the extreme humility of covenant love. As disciples of Jesus, we are to follow his example and love one another through radical acts of kindness that require humility. What would it look like for us to serve one another with this heart posture? How might our city see the love of Jesus through us as we serve them?

As Jesus washed the disciples' feet on Maundy Thursday he set into motion what would be completed on Easter Sunday. His sacrificial example calls for us to love one another just as he has loved us.

Readings

Psalm 103

John 13v1-3

Prayer

Jesus, you came into the world as a servant, giving your life. King of all, you bowed low and washed feet.

May we follow your example in humble love.

Strengthen us so that we may serve one another.

And, as we do, may the world know of your great love.

All glory to you Father, honor to you King Jesus, and praise to you Spirit.
Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. How do I feel about serving people in a way that requires humility?
2. Where can I find opportunities or invitations from the Spirit to sacrificially love and serve my community?
3. What is one tangible action I could plan this week to actively show love?

Notes

Good Friday

| The Crucifixion of Jesus



What's so good about Good Friday? N.T. Wright once said, "in order to speak meaningfully about the Cross one must say at least something about evil, the problem which, in classic theology, the Cross has decisively addressed." This statement is relevant to us on Good Friday because the 'Good' in Good Friday cannot be understood without addressing the relationship between the problem of evil and the Cross.

Ironically, Good Friday was and is God's stunning response to the problem of evil in the world and right within our own hearts. God's response didn't carry the justice of "fire from Heaven" that the disciples wanted (Luke 9v54), but the justice of the sacrifice of His one and only Son, the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). As the old hymn goes, "See all your sins on Jesus laid."

You see, Good Friday is the day we acknowledge the grief, surprise, and powerlessness of seeing all our sins laid on Jesus. It's where the megaphone of evil is silenced by the piercing 'Why God?' cry of our Savior on the Cross. It's where we witness the worst injustice in history transformed into the greatest power to bring the lost home. See all your sins on Jesus laid.

Readings

Psalm 22

Matthew 27v32-56

Prayer

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

We want to feel the weight of our sin as we see it laid on Jesus this Friday. Help us not to rush to resurrection, that we may know the Grace which runs deeper than our sins on Jesus laid.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to recognize the seriousness of personal and corporate sins on Good Friday?
2. In what area or relationship in your life are you challenged to live more like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 rather than the disciples in Luke 9:24?
3. How has Jesus revealed Himself to you during times of suffering and/or sin?

Notes

Holy Saturday

| The Harrowing of Hell



Today is Holy Saturday, the moment in our story where we find ourselves in silence and waiting. And as an old song says: “It was a long Saturday between his death and the rising day.” For most, this has become a regular Saturday to finish picking up the extra Easter Eggs or prep for Sunday’s meal. But if we are paying attention, we find an invitation today to enter into the story of Jesus’ redemptive work in a deeper way.

1 Corinthians 15 and Matthew 12 remind us that this long Saturday is a central piece of the story. Yes, Jesus died, but his work was not finished. Ephesians 4v9 tells us that, upon his death, Jesus descended to “hades” or “sheol” (better understood as the “realm of the dead”). More than just a minor detail, it is on this day that Jesus entered fully into death so that we could fully know life.

On this Saturday we are invited to wait with the disciples in the silence of what we cannot see, to live between what is and what is to come: between dashed hopes, mysterious promises, and the dream of resurrection. On Saturday we wait and steady our gaze on the quiet, unseen work of a redemptive God.

Readings

Psalm 31

Luke 23v55-56

Prayer

As the crucified body of Jesus was laid in the tomb on this Holy Saturday, so may we await with him the coming of the third day, trusting in the hidden work of a redemptive God.

God, grant us hearts that trust and eyes that look for your coming good, as we wait for morning to dawn.

Reflection Questions

1. Take a moment to notice where you feel the tension of God's silence or a space of waiting. What emotions (positive or negative) come to the surface?
2. What is your usual response to God's perceived silence? In what ways do you usually distract or mitigate the negative emotions to disrupt the tension of waiting on God?
3. Take a moment and surrender to God any questions or frustrations you are carrying. Then ask the Holy Spirit to remind you that he is at work, even in the quiet, unseen places. Take some time to journal about what is coming to the surface.

Notes

Easter Sunday

| The Resurrection of Jesus



He is risen! Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus that made the way for our own resurrection! Now, it is all too easy to fall into the assumption that Jesus' resurrection simply refers to a reset, merely a return to a time before the pain we experienced happened – though many of us would settle for that, at times. But in doing this, we forget the creativity and promises of God. After Adam and Eve are kicked out of the Garden of Eden, the rest of the Bible illustrates how God is restoring us to himself. That restoration, though, does not entail bringing us back to the Garden of Eden. God has bigger plans. Instead, we read, all of creation will be made new.

The beauty and glory of Jesus' miraculous resurrection, as the Bible illustrates it, is that we are not raised to life as it was, but to life as it was intended to be. And more than just a spiritual or mystical experience, like Jesus' resurrection ours will be a bodily one, in which every currently disjointed part of us will be brought back into alignment with God's original intention: wholeness, delight, and union.

We may only see in part now, but one day we shall see in full, looking at Jesus face to face, loving him and being fully loved!

Readings

Psalm 148

John 20v1-29

Prayer

You made all things once and you will make them again!

But newer and with more glory!

Wake me up to the joy and beauty of what is to come!

Let me run in the pastures of your goodness

And watch for signs of your resurrected Kingdom!

Reflection Questions

1. Where am I waiting for resurrection in my life?
2. Think about something in your life that could us resurrection. (e.g. a relationship, a dream, a job, your body, etc.) What might it mean for it to be raised to life as it was intended to be?

Notes