



Holy Week

Devotional and Timeline

 **CHRIST PLACE.CHURCH**

This is a Holy Week Devotional according to the Gospel of Mark. It is based on the traditional thought that Jesus was crucified on Friday (some believe He was crucified on Wednesday).

Palm Sunday

Read Mark 11:1-11

How would you expect a king to arrive into his city? Regal stallions pulling ornate carriages with trumpets blaring? A line of soldiers marching victoriously around their commander?

Jesus, coming from Bethany and Bethphage (just a few miles to the east of Jerusalem) heads towards a full-to-overflowing Passover Jerusalem, buzzing with excitement over this new leader. Jesus takes a brief pause at the top of the Mount of Olives, and makes a strange request for two of his disciples to go get a colt of a donkey. A young donkey, never been ridden, and never been saddled, has a covering of garments from the disciples, and is given to Jesus by divine decree (and a promise to return it)!

Jesus is echoing the words given to an Old Testament prophet named Zechariah over 500 years earlier, specifically in Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah is pointing to a new era of peace to be established in Jerusalem, and every good Jewish person knew this prophecy – it was burned into their minds right from their youth. Imagine being there – hard pressed by the Romans, ashamed of being knuckled under by invading armies, waiting for Messiah to rescue, and then see this fulfilled right before your eyes!

No wonder everyone was shouting praises to the highest heaven, and praises to God! Paving the way with palm branches and their own clothing, lifting praises and shouts, they made a royal procession for the King! Hosannas (literally, “save us”) are ringing all around!

Imagine walking with Jesus into the city now – you can see the throng of people desperately craning their necks to see what the hubbub is about. You see the leaders observing, thinking, scowling – this is not in their plan. You walk with Jesus into the Temple, the seat of religious power in Jerusalem. You notice Jesus’ gaze panning over all the courtyards, drinking the scene in deeply. You wonder what He is really thinking – over in Luke 2:49 Jesus calls the temple “my Father’s house”, yet it appears as though He has not seen it in such disarray, like uninvited guests throwing a wild party. His sense of sadness and resolute purpose impress themselves deeply in your being. You sense that this evaluation is not the end.

After all this, Jesus quietly retires back with his disciples to Bethany – home turf where He can decompress and spend the night with His close friends.

Takeways

- How should the king over all arrive? Compare your thoughts to how Jesus arrived in Jerusalem.
- When entering the Temple, Jesus looks over it all without a word. When was the last time you looked with quiet humility over the mess that religious people make?
- In the middle of all the activity, Jesus needed time to be with friends. How do you build margin in your life while the world is clamoring for you?

Monday

Read Mark 11:12-19

Sunday had been a big day for Jesus. He had entered His beloved Jerusalem to the accolades of crowds of people shouting “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” But that was yesterday. Today is Monday and the crowds are gone. Discarded and dying palm branches can still be found in the path entering Jerusalem from the East. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem again, He senses that it is going to be an eventful week.

He spies a fig tree and goes to see if a ripe fig might satisfy His hunger. He finds nothing but leaves. He then says something rather strange, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” The disciples take note of His words.

As He enters Jerusalem, it seems that He is on a mission. He goes right for the money changers and those selling temple sacrifices. He overturns their

tables resulting in money being scattered and doves flying to freedom. He speaks as if He is God, saying “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves.”

His enemies were appalled by His actions and looked for a way to silence Him. But they were careful to consider the political timing that would be required.

As the chief priests and teachers of the law considered their options, Jesus simply headed back to Bethany where He had spent the night before.

Takeways

- Compare this text to John 2:12-17. What significance do you see in Jesus doing similar things at the beginning and at the end of His earthly ministry?
- If you had been a Disciple who was with Him on Monday, what would you be thinking of His actions?

Wednesday

Read Mark 14:1-11

So, by now we know that people are scheming to kill Jesus, the most prominent being Judas, one of Jesus' own close friends. There is something beautiful sandwiched between the two mentions of betrayal, and the avenue with which the officials are provided to get right to Jesus.

Jesus is hanging out with some friends, probably about time for dinner, and a woman comes up to him. We do not know much about this woman. We know that she had enough money to buy a very expensive bottle of perfume. This bottle should have been saved for her wedding. This was one of those 'once in a lifetime' things. To put it in today's terms, this woman just gave away the dress which she was going to wear on her wedding day, which her mother wore on her wedding day, and her grandmother wore on her wedding day. Or the son who gives away his dad's old maroon '69 fastback Mustang to someone he hardly knows. The disciples were right to question this.

It doesn't make sense...

... to the average person...

...but Jesus isn't the average person.

Jesus sees the beauty in the sacrifice. He can relate because He has been preparing himself for an even bigger sacrifice. She recognized that Jesus was bigger than anything she could have used that expensive bottle of sweet-smelling stuff on her own. She recognized that he was something special, and Jesus recognized that she was something special. Jesus mentions that wherever the Gospel is spread, this story will be spread as well, and she will be remembered for her act.

Recognizing Jesus took something from her, but she was willing to give whatever that something was. She gave from her hopes and her dreams and humbled herself to anoint Jesus as the most important thing in her life.

Takeways

- How do you recognize God as the most important in your life?
- If you cannot think of something, what are the most important things in your life? How can God be a part of that?
- Are you completely entrusting your hopes and dreams to Him?

Thursday

Mark 14:12-31

Passover; the high Holy Day God set aside to celebrate the Jewish liberation from slavery, specifically when God “passed over” the Hebrew people while killing all the firstborns in Egypt (see Exodus 12:1-20). God gave specific instructions to choose a lamb or goat on the 10th day of the first month, remove all yeast from their homes, and spread the blood of the sacrifices on the door posts and lintels. God then also instituted this as an ongoing practice, to be handed down from generation to generation.

By the time of Jesus, this festival was observed by selecting a goat or sheep on the first day, and spending the next day removing any yeast from the house (mostly involving a deep cleaning of your house to remove bread, crumbs or any other possibility of yeast – think Spring Cleaning). Then, the meal was prepared.

The disciples knew all this, as good Jewish men, growing up with these lessons all the way from their youth. It would be very usual to expect to celebrate the

Passover with their group – thus the question forms in their mind – where?

Bringing this question to Jesus, we see Him give another set of instructions that cannot be mistaken (just like the ones he gave for the colt used for the entry to Jerusalem): When a man carrying a pitcher meets you, follow him to the house he is heading to, ask the owner of said house for the guest room, and he will show you a room already set up.

Well, remember that in Jesus’ day, it would have been very uncommon to see a man doing this, since this was

the usual role of women. Also, seeing that the room was already set up (assuming it was clean of yeast), the two disciples got busy with the preparations for the Passover meal.

Takeways

- How are you doing your “spring cleaning” in your life in preparation for Easter?
- Reflect on the specific preparations for Passover – can you see the parallels of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us?
- When the unmistakable direction of Jesus is given to you, how do you follow?

Friday

(Remember Friday began at sundown on our Thursday)

The Good Friday devotional reading is longer and divided into portions should you wish to divide the day into moments of devotional thought.

Part 1: Read Mark 14:32-41

That night after the Passover meal (late Thursday, Friday to them), Jesus stops in the garden of Gethsemane to pray. By now, it is quite late. He selects His three closest disciples to enter His prayers of suffering. Asking them to watch, He pours out His heart to God, all the fears and dread of the next hours, asking for another way – yet humbly submits to the path that God has for Him.

Peter is singled out when Jesus returns and finds the three asleep – disappointment mixing in with Jesus' distress. The disciples themselves are full of guilt, yet cannot change – their tiredness outweighs the watching and praying that Jesus requests.

Takeways

- Suffering people often need company without comment – how can you provide silent support to someone in grief?
- The three close disciples (Peter, James, and John) are given 3 opportunities, yet fail all 3 times. How do you deal with the embarrassment of your failure?

Part 2: Read Mark 14:43-72 (this occurred very late on Thursday night, extending beyond midnight)

When is a trial not a trial?

The priests of the Sanhedrin had it out for Jesus for a while, and they came out in force to settle the score. First by sending a mob after Jesus, then hauling Him in front of this leadership body, it is hard not to be angry at the court. They bring false charges against Jesus, twisting His words to their own evil ways, and even then, they cannot keep their stories straight. All the while, Jesus is silent, as prophesied by Isaiah chapter 53:

⁷He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Jesus, after prodding of the High Priest, finally speaks with power, equating Himself with God (I AM) – using

A second time Jesus prays, and a second time the disciples fall asleep. When Jesus returns to them, they specifically have nothing to say – naked embarrassment over their failure to their master.

Jesus returns to prayer a third time, asking the same thing – a pattern that Paul would later use in his prayer for God to take away the thorn in Paul's flesh (1 Cor. 12:8-9). In both cases, God's will is clear – suffering and submission are required.

Jesus, returning for the third time to find the disciples asleep, wakes them up for the very last time, just as Judas and the crowd approaches.

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the same name as God called Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). He also adds the description of his place at the right hand of God (see Ps. 110:1), again equating himself with God, and the place of God's power.

The priests, in horror, recognize this as blasphemy, and start to physically brutalize Jesus. Handing Jesus off to the guards, the guards continue the brutality.

Outside the Sanhedrin, Peter, who passively failed Jesus 3 times at Gethsemane, now actively denies Jesus 3 times. All the promises Peter made to Jesus earlier (v. 29, and more emphatically in v.31) are shattered. Only the prophesy of Jesus of the rooster crowing (v. 30), snaps Peter out of his self-serving and self-preservation, giving him a reflection of his brokenness. Peter, full of despair and loneliness, retreats into the darkness to places unknown.

Takeways

- False courts are everywhere, and injustice is rampant. How do you keep faith-filled when the darkness is winning?
 - Peter both passively and actively fails Jesus 3 times. Do you think Jesus gives some comfort to Peter by his prophesy?
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Part 3: Read Mark 15:16-41

There is not much more to say as the raw words of Mark describe the hideous scene. You can feel the nightmarish revulsion welling up from his pen of few words. Staccato flashes of activity portrayed while Jesus is painfully tortured on the cross.

Many of these short vignettes were foretold hundreds of years earlier, in books all over the Old Testament:

- v24 – They divided up my garments and gambled for them (Ps. 22:18)
- v27 – He was counted among the rebels (Is. 53:12)
- v29 – Many would look over His suffering (Ps. 22:17)
- v31 – Direct quote by the crowd - “He saved others, but cannot save himself” (Ps.22:7-8)

- v33 – Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 directly
- v36 – They gave him sour wine to drink (Ps. 69:21)
- v40 – His friends would watch from a distance (Ps. 38:11)

That God planned this beforehand is not in doubt, but this does not blunt the unspeakable horror of Jesus’ death. Jesus, as our High Priest, suspended between heaven and earth, sacrificed Himself and secured for us earthly dwellers redemption from sin (Heb. 9:11-12).

Takeways

- The prophecies listed above are just a short sampling of all that Jesus fulfilled through His death. God planned for this to happen from the very beginning of the first book of the Bible (Genesis 3:15). Thank God for His planning of our redemption.
 - Meditate on the death of Jesus – see the pain, the blood, the nails, the cross. Know that He did this for you!
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Saturday

A Jewish Sabbath

...Silence...

What is going on here? Mark is completely silent on what happens this day. He ends Friday in verse 15:47 and picks up with Sunday in 16:1. To put it plainly, we don't know, but we can guess.

Jesus is dead. Hope is lost.

Jesus even quotes the 22nd Psalm saying, "My God, My God, why have you left me behind?" These words must be echoing in the hearts and minds of everyone who saw Him die. Saturday is the Sabbath. The Jews were not supposed to do any work and were supposed to think on God's glory and his provision for them. They could not do anything except sit around and think. "What about the good times he promised?" "What about the peace that I should be feeling right now?" "Where is God now when we need him most?" These are some questions we often ask in times of trouble or foreboding, but it does not stop here.

Read Psalm 42.

Now read Psalm 42 again, but slow down and put yourself in the mindset of what the disciples were thinking on this day after Jesus died. Read it line by line.

Now read the last verse again:

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I will again praise him, my salvation and my god.

God is not finished yet...

Death Could Not Hold Him.

S: Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you." Matthew 28:5-7 NLT.

O: The tomb in which Jesus was buried was found to be EMPTY on the third day. The angel explained the miracle to the women.

A: The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was made to pay the price for our sins. His RESURRECTION "sealed the deal," assuring all who follow Him of their future resurrection. It is our responsibility and our joy to let others know- "He is RISEN!"

P: Thank You, Jesus, for the sacrifice You made for me. Thank You for Your victory over death and for the promise of eternal life. Be greatly glorified today on this RESURRECTION Sunday. Amen.

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