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HOLY WEEK

2024

mountain brook community church



INTRODUCTION

Christians have long recognized the significance of the final week of Jesus' life. We call it "Holy Week." It is a week like no other.

During this week, Jesus proclaims that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23). The fullness of time has arrived.

During this week, the Creator of the universe "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

During this week, the Promised Messiah "was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

During this week, God our Savior provides eternal salvation to all who trust in Him, "not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy" (Titus 3:5).

In other words, this week is all about the fulfillment of God's eternal plan to save humanity. It is the week that gives us hope in our present circumstances and hope for all eternity.

Use this devotional as a tool to reflect on the greatness of our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Each day has a Scripture text from the Gospel of Mark and a devotional written by someone from our ministry team.

THREE WORDS OF INSTRUCTION:

1. Read the text each day aloud as we follow the story in the Gospel of Mark.
2. Read the devotional slowly to meditate on the person and work of Christ.
3. Take time to pray to and worship our Savior from this passage of Scripture.

It is our hope and prayer that this devotional will deepen your love, devotion and worship as you reflect on the great love that God demonstrates for us through Jesus Christ.

— Ben Telfair
Holy Week 2024

MARK 11:1-10

¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus[a] sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

P A L M S U N D A Y

Well over 700 years had passed since the nation of Israel celebrated independently what the Passover commemorated. It had been over 700 years since the nation of Israel governed itself, claiming independence from the harsh tyranny of other nations. Even so, year after year, faithful Jews swarmed Jerusalem for Passover to reflect upon their former deliverance and eagerly anticipate their coming deliverance that awaited them when the Messiah would arrive on the scene. Unlike years before, though, this Passover felt different. Rumors swirled about a man from Bethlehem who healed the sick, drove out demons, and even raised the dead to life. His name was Jesus, and the question that followed Him was consistent: Could this be the Messiah? Could this be the anointed King who would reestablish our nation to its former glory and trample over all of our enemies?

Mark's Palm Sunday account seems to suggest that the answer to this question is both a yes and a no. Like the other kings of his day, Jesus rode, rather than walked, into the city of His coronation, He fulfilled the Messianic prophesy of Zechariah, and He received the acclaim of the people without batting an eye. Jesus, in this triumphal entry, laid all His cards on the table and declared beyond a shadow of a doubt that He, the royal Messiah, had come to claim His throne at last.

In the same breath, however, Jesus declared that His kingship would look entirely different than the one of their expectations. Yes, Jesus would bring deliverance, liberation, and salvation, but not from physical oppression... not political liberation...not salvation from Rome. No. The salvation He came to offer was spiritual in nature—it conquered sin, not just kingdoms.

Here, Jesus does indeed establish His Messianic kingdom, but He does so on His terms. And the controlling ethic of His kingdom is paradoxical by nature. It's one where God rides in on a donkey—where a king only accepts a crown if it is made of thorns and where a ruler lays down His life for His constituents. It's one where a Roman torture device transforms into the most glorious throne the world has ever known, and where the Jewish wrath against their own Messiah becomes the very means of humanity's salvation.

If Jesus only came to meet our expectations, we'd have no song of salvation to sing, but praise be to God that He didn't come to be the God we wanted. He came to be the God we needed, and so we sing on this Palm Sunday the song of the first: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

—Chris Morgan

M O N D A Y

For some of us, it is unsettling to see our Shepherd become so angry. We might even question it! Does it not say in James, “the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:20)?” How is it that the Perfecter of our Faith could become so angry that He might flip tables, raise his voice, and even fashion a weapon (Matthew 21:12, John 2:15–16). Furthermore, why would Mark not leave this unpleasant scene out of his account? It is preserved that we might see Christ’s zeal for true and unhindered worship.

The temple in those days was the cultural epicenter—a school, meeting place, church, community center all in one. But, most profoundly, it was the place of worship. This temple, being located in Jerusalem, meant it was a place travelers would come from days away to worship and, most importantly, sacrifice. The custom was to leave your livestock at home, find a sacrifice upon arrival, and take it into the temple for the atoning of sins.

The “Den of Robbers” knew this was many peoples’ only option, and they sought to profit off the faithful worship of others. These

solicitors would stand outside the temple courts and sell diseased or tainted animals at an outrageously high rate because they were certain their customers were desperate enough to pay any price. An important note is Jesus had made this trip to Jerusalem before and had certainly witnessed this scene many times—this is where we see that He is *slow* to anger. This is not an outburst void of self-control. This is not because He was lacking judgment; Jesus knew this would likely set His murder into motion! Christ, in His perfect judgment and timing, stood to protect meek. This is a moment where we see the justice of God setting things right and the mercy of God making a way for those who wish to worship in Spirit and in Truth—this is a dress rehearsal for Calvary.

Christ’s anger burned because He *longs* to forgive us our sins; He will not let anything stifle our salvation. Jesus is where *debts are paid*, not made. He turns the tables from a store register to a feast where His favor is free. Praise God for His zeal that will let nothing stand between us and His love, not even ourselves.

—Tim Sanderlin

MARK 11:27–33

²⁷ And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” ²⁹ Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” ³¹ And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ³² But shall we say, ‘From man?’”—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

T U E S D A Y

We see Jesus again in the temple, where He was last seen, turning the tables of the money exchangers in full blown indignation, accusing the leaders of the temple for turning the worship of God into a den of robbers. Word spread about this incident, and now the scribes, elders, and chief priests came looking for Jesus. They were seeking Jesus to confront and to prove Him to be a fraud. What was their motivation?

We learned part of the answer earlier in the chapter: they indeed feared Him, for the people were astonished at His teaching. But there was more...Jesus was representing a threat to the status quo, of which they were at the top of the pyramid. It was the scribes, elders, and chief priests who held the power pertaining to the spiritual life of Israel. Along the way, their privileged position became a way to enrich themselves and to abuse their power over the people.

However, they made this encounter about one thing, the matter of Jesus' authority. They asked a two-pronged question: "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus could have answered these questions succinctly and with authority, but He didn't. Instead,

He turned the table on them and answered them with questions related to the ministry of John the Baptist. "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" After deliberating amongst themselves, they concluded they could not answer Jesus' question. If from man, they had to confront the strong held belief of the people that John was a prophet, and if from God, then Jesus would have questioned them as to why they didn't believe and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. They remained silent, and so did Jesus.

We can only speculate as to why Jesus chose not to answer their question. However, we see a pattern throughout Scriptures that whenever Jesus spotted a hardened heart, He would not offer spiritual truths to His hearers. John the Baptist came to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. Ironically, it was the chief priest alone who would enter the temple once a year to make atonement for the sins of Israel, and yet he fails to recognize the one who would make atonement once for all for all people.

"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." –Jesus

—Walter Arroyo

MARK 14:1-9

¹It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ² for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

³ And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴ There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹ And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

W E D N E S D A Y

Many of us are calculated people. If you are like me, you pour over every word of an email to make sure you get your point across perfectly. You know where every dollar fits into your budget. You worry about how others might perceive even small actions. If it can be calculated, I will make sure to do so!

Like us, the Pharisees, chief priests, and scribes are calculated people. They want to arrest and ultimately kill Jesus, but they fear how it will impact their public image. They need to do so “by stealth” and the feast becomes a hinderance to this plan. For a group of religious leaders called to serve their people, the people have become a group to be manipulated and controlled rather than nourished and served.

The very next interaction found in Mark 14 stands in stark contrast to the first two verses. As Jesus reclines at the table with Simon the leper, Mary comes with a “very costly” alabaster flask and breaks it above Jesus’ head, anointing Him. The disciples respond to this scene as many of us would—why waste such a costly gift? Surely there is a better use for the flask that cost nearly a year’s wages! The disciples scold Mary. It does not add up.

I imagine that the mood in the room shifted at this point—the people likely looked to Jesus as a judge. When the cost of the oil and flask is calculated, can it be justified? Who is in the right here—Mary or the disciples? Jesus endorses Mary’s actions, “she has done a beautiful thing for me” before telling the room that Mary, perhaps even unknowingly, has anointed Jesus for His burial.

Living in a calculated manner is not inherently wrong, but at times, it blinds us to the good news of the Gospel. In the next two verses, Judas seems to be unable to understand the interaction he has just witnessed and chooses to betray Jesus.

Songwriter Jess Ray sings of the Gospel, “It may be too good to be understood/But it’s not too good to be true!” Mary understood this in a unique way; her expensive sacrifice prepares Jesus for a sacrifice that is incalculable in value! This Holy Week, Jesus Christ offers us the opportunity to worship Him in a costly way for an even more costly sacrifice. We can offer ourselves not because we made a calculated decision, but because the good news of the Gospel is true!

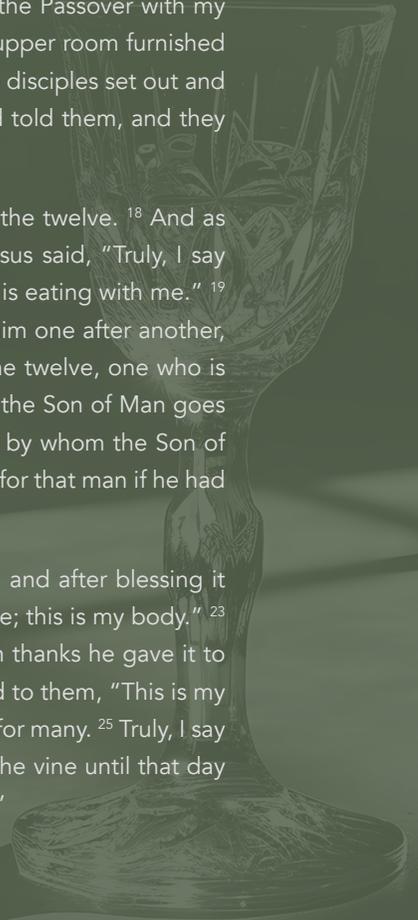
—Kyle Schumpert

MARK 14:12-25

¹²And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶ And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" ²⁰ He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."



M A U N D Y T H U R S D A Y

Do you consider yourself a needy person? I'd imagine many of us don't want to see ourselves that way. Independent, sure. Strong, of course. Reliable, absolutely. But needy? If I am, I'd rather not admit it.

We live in a culture that tends toward self-absorption. For many people, it's more attractive to establish a life where they can provide everything themselves—love, finances, community, you fill in the blank. The great tragedy of our time is the lie that we are *independent* creatures meant to be self-sufficient in all areas of life. There's a reason Under Armour ran an ad-campaign entitled "Rule Yourself"—that kind of authority and control sounds great!

Here's the problem: we *are* deeply needy people. Now, before you move on, take a look at your life and make some notes. Are you satisfied? Do you feel a wholeness in your soul? Is your life marked by contentment? If we're honest, every time we try to establish a good life by our own means we are left heartbroken, anxious, empty, and strung out. Our money doesn't satisfy. The athletic feats leave us wanting more. A family member lets us down again. Attempting to rule our lives and make everything come out good is like trying to catch the wind...Good luck.

Here's the good news: into our hopeless wandering and flawed vision of our abilities, God extends the gracious provision of His *presence*. In the upper room, Jesus celebrates the Passover with His disciples. And although this was a routine cultural practice for them—eating, reading scripture, praying and singing together—Jesus does something revolutionary. He inserts Himself into the programming. He takes bread and wine, saying, "Take; this is my body.... This is my blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:22, 24). Jesus captures the moment in order to prepare them for what's coming next. Jesus would be betrayed, brutalized, and buried to provide redemption and relationship with God to those who would *receive* His new covenant of grace.

"Do this in remembrance of me," Jesus says (Luke 22:19). What are we remembering at the communion table? God's *provision* for us in Jesus. His grace is daily bread, and His love is living water. Instead of trying to capture the good life for yourself, turn to Jesus. Come to the table and *receive* the deep provision of God's abounding love for you, again and again.

—Seth Locke

MARK 15:33 – 41

³³And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.⁴¹ When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

GOOD FRIDAY

We've probably all heard the familiar saying, "It's Friday, but Sunday's comin!"

Hallelujah! Resurrection Sunday is the Father's, "Amen" to the Son's, "It is finished."

But today is Friday. It's Good Friday. Let's not rush through it. As we have been doing on these Sundays leading up to Easter, let's draw near the cross. Let's sit at the foot of the cross. In the shadow of the cross we gain much needed perspective.

In the shadow of the cross we see:

- who we are and who Jesus is. Or, in the words of John Newton as he neared the end of his life, "I remember two things. I am a great sinner and Jesus is a great Savior."
- that what we desperately need, God graciously offers.
- that what we could never do, Jesus has done.

John 13:1 tells us that when Jesus knew the time had come for Him to "depart this world," He "loved them (His followers) *to the end.*" We could also say He loved them *to the cross.* And, we can make it even more personal by saying, He loved *us* to the cross.

We must not approach this day casually, but carefully consider what it meant for Jesus to be the sin bearer. Gazing at the cross, it is

not a pleasant picture. But, we mustn't turn away. Look! See Jesus in extreme agony. The horrors of crucifixion are beyond anything we have witnessed or imagined - excruciating pain, bitter humiliation, unspeakable shame.

Yet, it is then and there that we see the greatest display of selflessness and sacrifice. If we draw near and listen closely we hear Jesus speak these words, "Father forgive them."

Charles Spurgeon says this, "I love this prayer because of the indistinctness of it. It is "Father, forgive them... Now into that pronoun "them" I feel that I can crawl. Can you get in there? Oh, by a humble faith, appropriate the cross of Christ by trusting in it; and get into that big little word "them."

Yes, you and I are complicit. We weep over our sin while we rejoice in our salvation. We sing, "It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished...but this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom."

Jesus had to die for His prayer to be answered. There were those on that Friday who called upon Jesus to save Himself. Had He saved Himself that day none of us would be saved today.

All praise to our Savior who did not save Himself but gave Himself for us.

Hallelujah what a Savior!

-Tim Kallam

MARK 15:42-47

⁴² And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. ⁴⁵ And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

S A T U R D A Y

“Only Eat One Pringle.” It may sound odd, but have you ever had one pringle and then walked away? Solely, just one, salty chip? If so, I commend you. If not, I get you. In elementary school, an old dance teacher of mine started class by giving each of us one pringle and telling us to take in all the senses. Smell, texture, and then (what felt like forever), taste. After her long speech, she concluded with “only eat one Pringle.” Then I had to dance the next several hours dreaming of another salty Pringle chip.

In the depths of longing, waiting can be utterly ruthless. We find an illustration of this truth in Mark 15:42-47, where the anticipation of God’s people for a triumphant, conquering king to liberate them from the grip of the Roman Empire turned out to be the sight of the crucified Christ, laying there lifeless, shattering their expectations. In the silence of Saturday, our hearts are revealed. Like the disciples wept over the death of Jesus, we too mourn unmet expectations in our life today. Whether the expectations are spoken, unspoken, unrealistic, hidden, or even unknown, our hearts desire to be protected, delivered, understood, and loved.

Holy Saturday reminds us that Jesus did not come down from heaven to meet our expectations, He came down to meet our deepest needs. Without the cross, there is no life found in our loss. No joy found from darkness. And no hope found in our sin. We sit today in between the devastation of the slaughtered lamb and the coming sabbath celebration of the resurrection. In the crushing and waiting is where Jesus turns our heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

To this day, I’m not entirely sure how a pringle exercise ties back to the art of ballet. But, I do know this...in the midst of our waiting, utter darkness, and loss of expectations...Sunday comes. Jesus, the roaring lion, rose and conquered death. He is our only hope who quenches our thirst, not of worldly desires and expectations, but with our true need of a risen Savior who reigns forever. We too like Joseph of Arimathea can look to the kingdom of God with great expectation and courage for what tomorrow brings!

“For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died”

—Lauren Caldwell

MARK 16:1–7

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them,

**“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus
of Nazareth, who was crucified.
He has risen; he is not here.**

See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”



E A S T E R S U N D A Y

“In a man’s path of happiness lies a huge rock, which completely blocks the road. Who among the mighty shall remove the barrier?” –Charles Spurgeon

As the conclusion of the Sabbath dawns, three women faithfully seek to fulfill what to them was a significant task in the care taking of the Lord Jesus’ body. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went and bought spices to anoint Jesus’ body.

These faithful women had proven through their constant presence to be extremely loyal to Jesus. But it was during the events of the previous week that their faithfulness was most obvious. Through torture, death, and burial the women continued in steadfast obedience to stand with their savior. And now on this first Easter morning they would be the first to seek out Jesus’s broken and tortured body to allow him to be buried with the dignity he deserved.

On the way to Jesus’ tomb, the question arose among them, “Who will roll away the stone?” According to some, this question was asked over and over again. The reality of the stone was daunting, in that there was no way physically for these women to move the stone themselves. But they carried on in spite of the massive obstacle that awaited them. You see, it was their strong faith and relationship to

their savior that moved them with each step closer to the place where Jesus’ body laid.

Upon arrival at the tomb, to their great surprise, they found the stone had been rolled away! Inside, the Lord’s messenger was waiting for them. It seems God knew all along the strength of their faith would move them to carry out their responsibilities to care for Jesus’ body. What they heard as they entered the tomb was the message that fulfilled all of Jesus’ teaching! Jesus of Nazareth was not there—death could not hold him for he had risen just as He promised. In that moment, the truth of the Gospel took center stage.

Despite massive obstacles, these women responded in faith. They didn’t turn back from their mission even as they faced the uncertainty of what awaited them at the tomb.

Each year we return to this empty tomb with full knowledge that Jesus’ promises are true—the stone has been rolled away—but it’s in the journey that we struggle with the stone. May the hope of the resurrection give us renewed courage to live out the Gospel in the struggles of our day to day!

**FOR HE HAS RISEN,
HE HAS RISEN INDEED!**

—Kevin DeLaney



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