

HOLY WEEK

mountain brook community church

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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 2025

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 Matthew 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 Matthew.
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.

MATTHEW 21:1–11

¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion,

‘Behold, your king is coming to you,

humble, and mounted on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

PALM SUNDAY

WHENEVER I HEAR THE STORY OF PALM SUNDAY, I tend to focus on the cheering crowd. What do they think the week ahead holds?

The way they welcome Jesus by laying down their cloaks and branches on the road may seem strange to us, but it was a common way to honor royalty and celebrate victory. The crowd recognizes Jesus as their King and cries out “Hosanna” as a plea for Jesus to save them. They have a lot of expectations for Jesus as He enters Jerusalem, but by the end of the week, many of them would say those expectations were unmet.

Take a moment to notice how you are coming into Holy Week. What are the expectations you’ve been holding on to? How are you expecting the Lord to show up in this season of your life? Are there unmet expectations that have distanced you from God?

As people who know how the story ends, we have the opportunity to rest in the mystery

of our unmet expectations and allow them to draw us nearer to God. We know that the end of the week does not look like the “victory” the crowd was expecting, but that Jesus’ victory over sin and death is far greater than anything they could have known to ask for or imagine.

Maybe God hasn’t shown up recently in the ways you expected Him to, or maybe you’ve grown numb to the fact that you are in need of a Savior. Spend time today praying that the Lord would open your eyes to the ways He’s showing up in your life and ask Him to reveal the depth of your need for Him.

While the crowd does not know what’s coming, Jesus does. He knows what lies ahead and yet He still rides in on a donkey to take on all that comes next. May today be a reminder that Jesus showed up to save you and is still seeking you out, even if it’s not in ways you would expect.

—MADDIE SCHNELL

MATTHEW 21:12–17

¹²And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ¹⁶ and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

"'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies

you have prepared praise'?"

¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

MONDAY

IN SOME WAYS, Jesus' first actions following His triumphal entry fall right into line with the expectations of a Messiah. He drives people out of the temple who do not belong. Yet in a very important way, Jesus does not meet our expectations. He does not drive out the Roman powers but instead the exploitative businessmen.

During the Passover week, some 300,000-400,000 pilgrims descended upon Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple. After the exiles, many Jews are scattered among the nations, bringing with them many different currencies. The moneychangers exploit this—they are the temple-era currency changers at the airport who offer the unfavorable exchange rate. Many of the pilgrims can only afford to sacrifice a pigeon rather than a larger animal; the pigeon-sellers are exploiting the poor in particular. Matthew is painting a picture of injustice in the temple. After a long, hard journey, the pilgrims are met with a clear message: you will have to buy your way into this temple, and the poor must pay the worst rates. The temple, Jesus says, has gone from a “house of prayer” to a “den of robbers.” Jesus clears the temple, offering a clear message: He will make a way for the poor and weary to worship God.

As Jesus clears the temple, the children cry out “Hosanna to the Son of David!” As with much of the Gospels, the children spot the Kingdom before the priests and scribes do. The priests and scribes are “indignant” at the cleansing and the praise. As Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2, He affirms his identity as God the Son, preached from the lips of infants! This is the work of God, making straight the way of the Lord!

On the Tuesday of Holy Week, we are confronted with a challenge and an invitation. I confess that I can be like the Scribes and Pharisees, expecting others to “buy” their way to the temple, whether their currency might be socioeconomic status or good works or any other number of things we place our identity in. Jesus' cleansing calls us to repentance - there is no place for human currency in the Kingdom. Yet, at the same time, the cleansing of the temple is an invitation—there is a God who will stop at nothing to come near to His children. Our poverty no longer forces us to the margins. “He who has no money, come, buy and eat!”

—KYLE SCHUMPERT

MATTHEW 22:34-46

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, ⁴² saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." ⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ "'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet"'?"

⁴⁵ If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" ⁴⁶ And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

TUESDAY

AS HUMANS WE CRAVE CERTAINTY. We desire an absolute answer to our biggest questions. We want to know what is right, wise, responsible, permissible, etc., and we want it to be obvious. We want the plan forward to be concrete and the outcome to be resolute. We often want the answer to be on our terms, giving us the illusion of control.

Here is a scholar of the scriptures standing before the Rabbi. As a trick he asks Jesus a precarious question that, if answered incorrectly, could undermine Jesus' credibility. He asks for a specific and certain answer to "what is the greatest of all the commandments?" Read Christ's response in Matthew 22:27-40.

The confident answer Jesus provides is filled with assurance! He does not flounder but answers the question outright — the prevailing law in the Kingdom is love. Love that is received from God, reciprocated to Him, and extended to His people. While this answer is certain, the Pharisee protests it because it exposes his own violation of the "most important commandment."

God has given us a definitive answer in a world where we aren't afforded many. However, we resonate with those in attendance: this law is hard. This answer is not the one we desire. The world's law is to achieve, self-preserve,

self-promote and self-produce. And, this is a seemingly comfortable solution because it depends on our own efforts. Therefore, we are prone to adopt this self-serving way.

But the way Jesus instructs is one that must be integrated into the whole self. This love He speaks of is one of suffering for another person — commitment and service to friend and enemy. New life comes from overlooking our own preferences so that someone might experience the light the Kingdom brings.

In application, we can easily read this law and leave much to nuance. We convince ourselves Jesus is referring to love as southern niceties and our neighbor as someone in the next world over. But, what if His words are as certain as they read? We are to follow His example of generous, sacrificial love to those immediately around us.

Who is in close proximity to you that is in need of compassion? Who have we left unattended because we find ourselves too busy building idols? Praise God that He did not leave our brokenness unattended or excuse our needs for His own! Because Christ was the fulfillment of the Greatest Commandment we are now restored to Him and one another. We are meant to be marked by the same law — love.

—TIM SANDERLIN

MATTHEW 26:1-13

¹When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ²“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. ⁵But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

⁶Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. ⁸And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? ⁹For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” ¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹²In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

W E D N E S D A Y

JESUS IS NOT A MEANS TO AN END. He is not a “get out of hell free” card or a ticket to get us to something else. No. Jesus Himself is and has always been the supreme gift of the Gospel.

The Bible upholds this truth as an absolute and undeniable reality. However, the reviews concerning Jesus during His earthly life and ministry were a mixed bag at best. For the religious elite, Jesus was a threat that needed to be eliminated (Matt. 26:3-5). For the disciples (at times), He was a ticket to glory (Luke 22:24). But, for some, Jesus was the pearl of great price—the treasure hidden in the field worth losing everything in order to gain. This unnamed woman found in our passage today falls into this final category. Her name was Mary, John teaches us, and she was from Bethany.

Throughout the Gospels, we read about this Mary on three occasions (Matthew 26:6, John 11:32, & Luke 10:39), and in all three instances, she finds herself at the feet of Jesus—the preeminent place of humility and worship—the most fitting position for discipleship. Mary knew that Jesus Himself was the ultimate reward. She wasn’t interested in Him solely for the benefits He had to offer—she was

interested in *Him* above all else. So, she takes a jar of precious perfume, worth about a year’s wages (Mark 14:5), and to the disciples’ dismay, she lavishes it upon Jesus. A costly sacrifice, no doubt, but she knew no sacrifice was too great to give to Jesus, especially in light of what He was soon to give up for us all.

You see, the cross ensures that we cannot out-give God. But it also ensures that He is worthy of everything we have. Mary understood, as we ought, that Jesus is worth so much more than casual acceptance or nominal adherence. He is worth our supreme adoration and complete affection. She knew that Jesus is not only the journey into paradise, He is the destination itself.

On the other hand, the disciples were more interested in being the feet of Jesus than falling at Jesus’ feet. Sure, their religious speech gave off the appearance of compassion, but in their misguided attempt to advocate for justice, they ignored Jesus. They failed to realize that a sacrificial love for others is a byproduct of a supreme love for God.

May we never sacrifice being *with* God, our ultimate reward, in doing *for* God.

—CHRIS MORGAN

MATTHEW 26:36–46

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”

³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”

⁴³ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

MAUNDY THURSDAY

IT'S LATE THURSDAY NIGHT. This evening has included a shared meal with friends, parting personal instructions, the shocking act of humility of washing feet, Peter's bold declaration, the institution of the Lord's Supper and Judas' abrupt departure.

Now, Jesus walked along with His friends singing hymns and speaking softly. Eleven remained, no longer twelve, soon there would be none. Not one would stay. All would flee. Strike the Shepherd and the sheep scatter. They passed through the city gate and walked up the hill through the olive trees where they came to the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane means "oil press" or "a place of crushing." A fitting description as it took on an infinitely deeper meaning that night. For it was there that Jesus experienced His own "pressing" and "crushing" agony. As Isaiah said, "He was crushed for our sins."

In 1739 Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled, Christ's agony: "At Gethsemane Jesus had a near view of the furnace of wrath into which He was to be cast; He was brought to the mouth of the furnace that He might look in; that He might know what He was about to suffer."

Jesus fell on His face and prayed as His friends, just a stone's throw away, could no longer fight sleep. He cried out, "Father, if possible, let the cup pass!" Then, as if the Son knew the Father's answer, He whispered, "Your will be done."

So, Jesus stared into the cup. What He saw flung Him into the throes of agony. He pressed His forehead deep into the dirt, which softened into mud when mingled with His tears. He felt several small explosions of pain underneath the skin on His face. The tiny capillaries in His sweat glands burst under the stress; blood flowed through His pores and fell to the ground; it ran into His eyes; it stung.

Finally, after pleading a third time, Jesus lifted His head to the sky and cried out, "Not my will but your will be done. I will drink from this cup, Father. I will drink from this cup so that your glory may be revealed and the sheep you have given me will see your salvation and enjoy it forever."

And so Jesus did. He downed every last drop of the scalding liquid of God's white-hot wrath against sin.

Hallelujah, what a Savior!

—TIM KALLAM

MATTHEW 27:32-44

³² As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴ they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶ Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷ And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴² "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

GOOD FRIDAY

FEW PEOPLE ARE OKAY WITH SITTING IN DISCOMFORT. When things get hard, we distract ourselves, fix what we can, or move on quickly. We change the subject when conversations get too heavy. We avoid the hard parts of stories because pain is unsettling. But some moments aren't meant to be rushed past—Good Friday is one of them.

Before we celebrate the empty tomb, we have to stop and take in the cross. We have to see Jesus, bruised and beaten, walking toward His death. Because only when we understand the weight of His sacrifice, can we truly grasp the depth of His love.

Matthew 27:32-44 gives us that sobering picture. Jesus, bloodied and exhausted, was forced to carry his cross—until Simon of Cyrene was pulled from the crowd to help (v.32). As He stumbled toward Golgotha, insults flew from the mouths of bystanders, soldiers, and even the criminals crucified beside Him. “If you really are the Son of God, save yourself,” they mocked (v. 40). They couldn't see that Jesus was doing something far greater than proving His power—He was giving His life for them, for us. Yet, Jesus endured it all—without defending Himself, without walking away. He stayed on

that cross when He could have stepped down. Why? Because He saw us. Because He loves us. Because His mission wasn't to save Himself, but to save us.

It's easy to distance ourselves from this scene. We'd like to think we wouldn't have been in that crowd, that we wouldn't have joined in the mocking. But how often do we question God's ways or ask for proof? We may not hurl insults at Jesus, but we doubt, we wrestle, we demand answers. Yet, despite it all, Jesus didn't turn away when given the opportunity—He stayed on that cross, choosing obedience, choosing love.

As we sit with the weight of Good Friday, let's not rush ahead to Easter just yet. Let's linger here. Let's remember that Jesus carried what we couldn't—our sin, our shame, our brokenness. And because He did, we don't have to.

Today, pause and consider: Where do I need to surrender my doubts, my fears, my tendency to take control? Jesus carried it all so that we could lay it down.

—KELLEY BROWN

MATTHEW 27:62-66

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' ⁶⁴ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

SATURDAY

THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE PHARISEES PLAYED A VITAL ROLE in leading the common Jew to adhere to and practice the Mosaic Law. They certainly took this role seriously and zealously. But, perhaps it was their zeal that caused them to miss all of the prophetic signs pointing to Jesus as the awaited Messiah.

In spite of Jesus' authoritative teaching and His miraculous ministry, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees saw Him as an impostor, as someone who assumed a false identity, namely the Son of God, for the purpose of deception. Why and how did they miss the Messiah?

As to the why, perhaps Jesus threatened their privileged status as rulers and the way of life they had carved for themselves. In contrast, Jesus ministered primarily amongst lowest of the low, which gained Him great popularity among all people in society, but particularly the downtrodden, the forgotten, the neglected, the abused, and the rejected. And yet, Jesus threatened their power hold on the Jewish populace.

As to the how, Jesus came to proclaim forgiveness of sins through repentance and belief in Him as the ultimate and sufficient sacrifice while the religious leaders proposed a salvation based on the strict adherence of

the Mosaic Law. Remember, Jesus said, "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it." These competing values led these leaders to opt for the more reasonable way out of their predicament...getting rid of Jesus.

Once they had apparently succeeded, they wanted to leave nothing to chance. They had done their homework. They knew that Jesus had repeatedly affirmed that He would raise in three days after His death.

Although all Jews, including the leaders were under Roman control, the Chief Priests and Pharisees had significant influence with Pilate. It was a symbiotic, beneficial association. So, they appealed to Pilate to afford them a way to seal and protect the tomb where Jesus had been laid. This would absolutely have squelched any chance that Jesus' prophesied words about His resurrection could become a reality, or even a perceived reality.

This was their best shot at getting rid of Jesus and His followers. If He remained dead, the followers of the Way would consequently also have died. And, this outcome was what they ultimately desired as this would have preserved their unrivaled position. Jesus' resurrection squelched their evil plans, giving way to a new hope: salvation.

—WALTER ARROYO



MATTHEW 28:1-10

¹Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

EASTER SUNDAY

WITH ONE UNIFIED VOICE, Christians across space and time declare today: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. What wonderful news—news so good, we almost don't dare believe it. In the chaos of your life, I hope you don't lose sight of this Gospel today. It's the life-changing message that Jesus has died for your sins, and more than that, He reigns victorious over evil and death right now. The grave could not hold Him.

In the words of George Ladd, "Apart from the Gospel of the Kingdom, death is the mighty conqueror before whom we are all helpless... But the good news is this: death has been defeated. In the face of the power of the Kingdom of God in Christ, death was helpless. It could not hold Him, death has been defeated; life and immortality have been brought to light. An empty tomb in Jerusalem is proof of it."

Matthew's account of Jesus' resurrection fills us with awe and wonder. In the wake of the crucifixion, Jesus' disciples go into hiding. But notice, they aren't the only ones afraid. Behind closed doors, the Jewish leaders remember Jesus' promise of resurrection and take every precaution to keep a religious hoax from happening. Although, I wonder if

whispers were starting to circulate among them—"What if it comes true?" Their best-laid plans to contain Jesus seem silly in retrospect. Commissioning the soldiers and the stone feel like feeble attempts at control. They may as well have tried leashing a tornado or holding back a tsunami with straw bails.

Amid the uncertainty and fear, two women approach the tomb expecting to see Jesus' body, to pay their respects, to grieve. And suddenly, in the blink of an eye, with bold thunder on earth and lightning from heaven, their tears turn from sorrow to overwhelming joy. An angel of the Lord says, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen." Sprinting, they go to tell the others, and their faith becomes sight, overflowing in worship at the feet of Jesus who is radiantly alive.

Rejoice—the tomb is empty. In your worship today, remember this: all those who humbly seek Jesus still find Him. And praise God, this same Jesus who rose victorious over sin and death is coming again in glory. Yes, He is risen indeed!

—SETH LOCKE



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