

PASSION WEEK

Reflections For This Most Sacred Week

As this passion week starts, here are some scriptures to read each day as we walk through this last week of Jesus' life with Him. Some of the passages are paralleled in more than one of the gospel accounts, so you might want to just select one to read in those cases.

May it draw you near to the One Who died and rose for you!

Anticipating Easter Together,

Pastor Larry

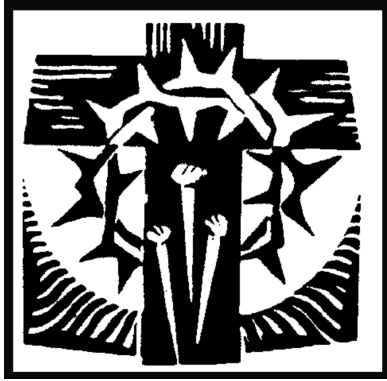
If you would like to think more about a particular day, NW did a Lenten sermon series on the 7 last days of Jesus called "The Last Week." You can access those messages on our website.

<https://app.branchcast.com/user/accounts/north-wake-church/series/the-last-week>

There are also some helpful day-by-day resources on the Gospel Coalition website:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/final-days-jesus/#thursday-april-2-ad-33>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/topics/holy-week/>



Following Jesus on Saturday/Lazarus Saturday

John 12.1-11

Studies and reflections on the last week of Jesus' life often begin with what we call "Palm Sunday" and "the triumphal entry"...

But I would like to back up a day, and begin our journey with Jesus on what the Eastern Orthodox Church calls "Lazarus Saturday"

You can find it in John 12. There we find some friends are having a dinner for Jesus. It was a remarkable gathering of friends... Simon the leper (who likely was given his health back by Jesus), Lazarus (who had been given his life back by Jesus!) and Mary and Martha (who had been given their brother back by Jesus!). It must have been quite a meal!

But then the crowds found them. And so did their enemies.

John 12.1-11

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.



Following Jesus on Sunday/Palm Sunday

Matthew 21.1-17, Mark 11.1-11, Luke 19.29-44, John 12.12-19

Time slows down it seems. The Gospel accounts do, too. The overwhelming focus of the material we have in the gospels focuses in on this one week (nearly half of John's gospel - from ch 12-20!). On this Sunday, Jesus, at the Mount of Olives, sends two disciples to secure a donkey and a colt. He then makes his "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem and weeps over the city as he declares the coming judgment of God upon them.

Luke 19.28-44

And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they said, "The Lord has need of it." And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Jesus Enters the Temple Area, Then Returns to Bethany

Mark 11:11

And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.



Following Jesus on Monday/Fig Monday

Matthew 21:18-22, Mark 11:12-19, Luke 19:45-48

On Monday, it seems that Jesus must have had a hard day... Cursing the fig tree as a prophetic act against God's unbelieving people... Driving out the greedy money lenders from the temple... These harsh acts remind us that this is not "Sunday school Jesus." He really does judge sin and unbelief angrily.

How thankful should we be that there is "grace greater than all our sin" and that we have been granted faith to believe in that same grace! We are richly blessed... because of this week and where it would all lead.

Thankful to be on the grace side of things,

Pastor Larry

On Monday Morning Jesus and the Twelve Leave Bethany to Return to Jerusalem, and Along the Way Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

Matthew 21:18-19

In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

Matthew 21:12-13

And 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. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

In the Evening Jesus and the Twelve Leave Jerusalem (Returning to Bethany)

Mark 11:19

And when evening came they went out of the city.



Following Jesus on Tuesday/Teaching Tuesday

Matthew 21.23-26:14, Mark 11.20-14:11, Luke 20.1-22:6

Today, Tuesday, of his last week, it appears that Jesus did a lot of teaching on a variety of topics... His resurrection, spiritual opposition to his ministry... But three things stand out to me...

1. He was concerned that we should pray in expectant faith.

Matt. 21.20-22

When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

2. He was concerned that we should be ready for his sudden and very unexpected return. We should order our lives as though this could be the day we stand before Him to give an account. I think we all want that day to be a good day, even our best day! What if it was today?

Matthew 24.36-46

"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

3. He wanted us to know what was the most important thing we could ever do, the one thing we must order our lives around every day...

Matthew 22.33-40

And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching. But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 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. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

These things seem of the utmost importance to Jesus. Surely they must matter to us if we are to follow him.

Following Jesus with you all,

Pastor Larry

Here is a link with all his Tuesday teaching and actions

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/holy-week-what-happened-on-tuesday-2/>



Following Jesus on Wednesday/Spy Wednesday

Luke 23.3-6; 1 Peter 5.8-9

It's hard to figure out these middle days of the week with precision. Many refer to Wednesday as "silent Wednesday", since there is no explicitly recorded activity (see below). The chronology one blog uses puts Judas' choice to betray Jesus on Wednesday, however. Regardless of the day, this is a chilling account.

Luke 23.3-6

³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴ He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

The idea that someone so close to Jesus, even chosen by Him to be one of the 12, could be so influenced by Satan brings several things to mind:

- this is pure evil, to seek the death of the holy Son of God.
- And this evil is in opposition to us as followers of Christ. Satan is a liar and a murderer and he is eager to turn us against Christ. Peter's words are important for us to hear,

1 Peter 5.8-9

Be sober- minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Following Jesus with you all,

Pastor Larry

Notes: *The record of the gospels moves from late Tuesday to Thursday afternoon, omitting entirely any explicit record of the events of Wednesday. (It's for this reason that those who insist that the Triumphal Entry occurred on Sunday and the crucifixion on Friday - speak of this day as "silent Wednesday.") Jesus doubtless remained in Bethany. But it was a busy day, as elaborate preparation was made by Jesus's enemies for the arrest and trial (all designed to get Jesus on the cross before the city woke up, as His enemies and the Romans remembered the wild-eyed devotion to Him they had seen on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday), and as Jesus made preparation for the room in which He would keep the Feast with His disciples. - from Doug Bookman*



Following Jesus on Thursday/Maundy (Commandment) Thursday

Matthew 26.17-35, Mark 14.12-42, Luke 22.7-46; John 13-14

Thursday is a day rich with the teachings of Christ and the great events that precede the cross. Thursday night he celebrated the Passover with His disciples, instituting what we refer to as "the Lord's Supper." From there He went to the garden of

Gethsemane to pray (where His sweat in prayer became like drops of blood while his disciples fell asleep). This led to his arrest and trials throughout the night that would ultimately lead to the cross.

But before they all left the upper room and the last supper to go to the garden, John 13 says,

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. (NIV 1984)

...and then, He washed His disciples' feet.

This is the shape our love for one another is to take. Humble, even humiliating service. Like washing someone's feet. Like dying on a Roman cross.

There's a reason why this Thursday is called "Maundy Thursday". "Maundy" comes from the word for "command". Jesus said,

John 13.34

a new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

To follow Jesus is to love by serving, even in the most humiliating of ways. Paul would put it this way,

Philippians 2.3, 4

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."

Following Jesus with you all,

Pastor Larry

You can see all the passages that follow Jesus on Maundy Thursday here:

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/04/01/holy-week-what-happened-on-thursday/>



Following Jesus on Friday/Good Friday

John 18-19, Luke 22-23, Mark 14-15, Matthew 26-27

Today is Good Friday... throughout the night Jesus has endured betrayal by Judas, arrest by the mob, denial by Peter and 6 trials (3 before the Jews and 3 before the Romans). He was beaten and mocked and spat upon, and finally, about 9 am, made to carry His own cross to Calvary where he was nailed to the tree, suffering the curse of God for our sin. Read the accounts slowly,

thoughtfully, prayerfully. What wondrous love is this???

The Apostle Paul described it this way,

Galatians 3.13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"

Jesus, God's beloved Son, bore our sin and was cursed by His Father. He hung on the cross for our sins, not his...

2 Corinthians 5.21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

On this day the love of God is on graphic display for all to see, to believe and to follow.

Following Jesus with you all,

Pastor Larry

Here is a short excerpt by RC Sproul on what it means that Jesus bore the curse for us. It's a good read for Good Friday.

The key to understanding the cry (of forsakenness) of Jesus from the cross is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13, NIV).

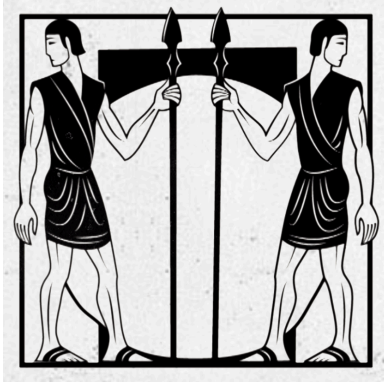
To be cursed is to be removed from the presence of God, to be set outside the camp, to be cut off from His benefits. On the cross, Jesus was cursed. That is, He represented the Jewish nation of covenant breakers who were exposed to the curse and took the full measure of the curse on Himself. As the Lamb of God, the Sin Bearer, He was cut off from the presence of God.

On the cross, Jesus entered into the experience of forsakenness on our behalf. God turned His back on Jesus and cut Him off from all blessing, from all keeping, from all grace, and from all peace.

God is too holy to even look at iniquity. God the Father turned His back on the Son, cursing Him to the pit of hell while He hung on the cross. Here was the Son's "descent into hell." Here the fury of God raged against Him. His scream was the scream of the damned. For us.

Reflect on what Jesus did for you on Calvary. Give thanks for the Lamb of God who bore your sin.

Taken from "Treasuring Redemption's Price" by Ligonier Ministries.



Following Jesus on Saturday/Black Saturday/ Black Sabbath

Matthew 27-28, John 20-21, Luke 24, Mark 15-16

Matthew 27:57-66

The Burial of Jesus (late on Friday)

⁵⁷ When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released. ⁵⁹ So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated there, facing the tomb.

The Closely Guarded Tomb (Saturday)

⁶² The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive He said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ Therefore give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come, steal Him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead.' Then the last deception will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ "You have a guard of soldiers," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ Then they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard.

Good Friday ended with a beautiful act of devotion by Joseph of Arimathea as he publicly requested and cared for the body of Jesus. As a religious leader, to so identify with a public opponent of the religious leaders of the day, not to mention someone who had been publicly crucified as a lowlife criminal, evidenced no thought of his own reputation and a great love for Jesus. He gave his own tomb up for Jesus, too. Joseph of Arimathea is one of my heroes.

Saturday would have been the sabbath, so the Jews, including all of Jesus' disciples, would have done no work on that day. The women even waited to go to the tomb until the following day so as not to violate the sabbath. But the Romans had no such scruples. (and it is interesting that the chief priests were willing to 'do business' with Pilate on the sabbath)

It was on Saturday, the sabbath, that the religious leaders procured a roman guard to watch the tomb. What they did not know was that no Roman guard and no governor's seal would match the power that was about to be unleashed there at that tomb site in just a matter of hours from then.

Following Jesus with you all,

Pastor Larry



Following Jesus on Sunday

Resurrection Sunday

Matthew 28:1-20

Jesus Has Risen

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

At last, resurrection Sunday! He is risen! As soon as he rises, Jesus seems intent on encountering his followers to help them believe. This is what the risen Christ does for the 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension to heaven. He helps people believe. And since he is still alive, this is still what he does. By his Spirit, he helps us believe. Should you ever doubt, cry out to him and he will help you, for he is risen! He is risen indeed! This is the Good news we share with our friends and neighbors and even to the ends of the earth!

The Great Commission

Matthew 28.16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Following Jesus with you all, all the time... for He is worthy!

Pastor Larry



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