

HOLY WEEK

IN THE WORD



HOLY WEEK

It is a period of eight days, during which we remember the ancient plans and promises of God which are so mysteriously, mercifully, and mightily revealed and fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ. As we shall explore in this daily devotional and prayer journal, the events of the last week of Jesus' life upon the earth have much to reveal about who He is. Each day, we shall ponder how the scriptures reveal one vital aspect of who Christ is as King, Judge, Wisdom, Chosen, Given, Broken, Buried, and Risen.



IS MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLY THE SPAN OF TIME BETWEEN PALM SUNDAY AND EASTER MORNING.

As you carefully and mindfully study the suggested scripture readings each day, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart what God would further reveal about who Jesus is in your own life. As you will see, we have provided space to journal what you sense God speaking, or for your prayers, or for your reflections for that day. Take your time. Listen. Reflect and write. Let this devotional guide you into deeper meditation in the Word. Let it prompt you to unhurried prayer in the Lord's presence each day. And may we be changed in this journey through Holy Week as we come to better love and know Him for who:

HE IS...



PALM SUNDAY

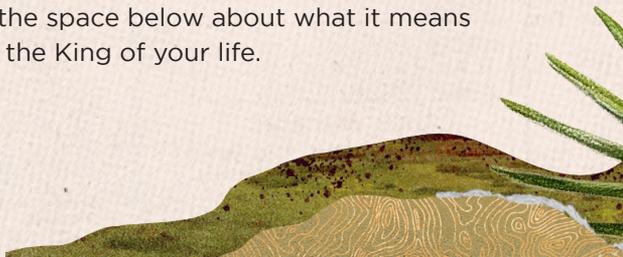
HE IS KING

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Zechariah 9:9-17; Luke 19:29-4; John 12:12-19

What does it mean to say, “Christ is King?” On Palm Sunday, we hear the Gospel writers declare how the centuries-old promise given through the prophet, Zechariah, is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ: “Rejoice, O daughter, Jerusalem! For your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). Imagine, the streets of Jerusalem were bustling, filled with Jewish pilgrims in the city to celebrate the annual festival of Passover. Psalm 118, sung year after year by the faithful as they reunited to celebrate, now rings out with fulfillment like never before for those accompanying Jesus as he entered the city: “Hosanna! (save us, we pray!) Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” (John 12:13; Luke 19:37-38). But what kind of a king does Jesus reveal himself to be in and through the events that will follow in this final week of his earthly life? How will this king save us? How will Jesus prove to be triumphant and victorious, even in his humility, suffering, and death? What kind of a difference does a king like Jesus make for people like you and me today?

IS JESUS THE KING OF YOUR LIFE?

If He is, it means you are willing to surrender your entire self to him. To live as if He is King means we fully place our lives, our faith, and our expectations in the hands of this one who displays royal authority and power in ways so unlike any other king. With the scriptures for this day in mind, take some time to reflect in the space below about what it means for you to profess He is the King of your life.



MONDAY

HE IS JUDGE

Mark 11:12-19; Jeremiah 7:1-15, 8:13; Isaiah 42:1-9, 56:1-8

Throughout the Bible, prophets have a way of putting themselves in harm's way. It just goes with the role, and it seems Jesus is no exception. When one speaks out against injustice, oppression, and disobedience toward the will of God for God's people, certain people get upset. They may even plan and attempt to do whatever it takes to silence such a voice, permanently (Mark 11:18).

DO YOU KNOW TRUE JUSTICE?

We hear so much about not being “judgmental” these days. We also hear a great deal about injustice. But how are we to live justly without some measure of judgment? And by what standard are we to know true justice? If anyone can wield authority to judge according to the will and word of God, surely it is Jesus. In this way, He is Judge, and in His prophetic passion, He will “faithfully bring forth justice” (Isaiah 42:3). Spend some time prayerfully meditating upon the word given through Isaiah and Jeremiah, whom Jesus quotes as he drives out those buying and selling in the temple that day. Like a fig tree bearing no fruit, how were God's people failing in their role and responsibility? How do you hear Jesus' words of judgment against those abusing the House of God and the People of God? How may we be guilty of the same today?



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TUESDAY

HE IS WISDOM

Matthew 21:23 – 25:46; Isaiah 50:4-9a

While Jesus had much to do that first Holy Week, He also had much to say. As Isaiah wrote, the suffering servant of God was certainly “given the tongue of a teacher” (Isaiah 50:4). And in those final days before his arrest, the Messiah would prove He is Wisdom embodied, the ultimate instructor of the will of God and the way of the Kingdom. Through dialogue and discourse, parables, and proverbs, Jesus teaches as if it may be His last chance to do so. He expounds upon the scriptures, even summarizing the law and the prophets in two simple yet profound commandments (Matthew 22:36-40). He rebukes those who offend God with their hypocrisy and tells His followers what signs to look for that will signal His return. He also paints a series of vivid pictures with His words concerning what the Son of Man will be seeking when He comes again in glory and judgment (Matthew 25).

HOW DOES THIS RESONATE?

Take your time reading through these teachings of Jesus. Knowing He is Wisdom, how does his teaching resonate in your heart and life today? What stands out to you the most right now, given the present circumstances of your life? As you write your reflections below, consider how they may lead you into a time of prayer inspired by the wisdom of Christ.



WEDNESDAY

HE IS CHOSEN

Mark 14:3-11; Isaiah 49:1-7

Throughout the Bible, to be anointed is to be chosen. Often, it is a designation for a special role as a king or priest, of which Jesus is certainly both in His own way. But when this woman honors Jesus in the house of Simon, the leper, Jesus says she has “performed a good service for me... she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial” (Mark 14:6,8). This is a different kind of chosen.

How did Jesus handle knowing where Holy Week would ultimately lead him? Have you ever truly considered the burden He bore as this week progressed? We all desire to be chosen for honor and promotion. Yet, while Jesus would certainly receive these things from our Father, He shows us a very different way than most would expect by which He will receive them. Jesus has been given “as a light to the nations, that the salvation of God may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). He is Chosen, and he will glorify God not only in His life but also in His death.

WHAT DO HIS WORDS MEAN TO YOU TODAY?

Jesus said, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25). While we may never face a literal cross in the way Jesus did, what do His words mean to you today? He is Chosen, and if you have placed your faith in Christ, you are chosen to “take up your cross” and follow Him. Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord how this truth may apply in your life. As God ministers to you, write down what you may be sensing in His response.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

HE IS GIVEN

John 13-17; Luke 22:7-62; Isaiah 53

“A new commandment I give you,” Jesus said, “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). For John, this commandment given by Jesus serves as the very centerpiece of what Maundy Thursday is all about. On this night of Holy Week, Jesus has much to share with His disciples. There is gracious teaching, washing of feet, and the breaking of bread in the intimacy of communion with God and one another. The Passover celebrated by Jesus and His most beloved companions becomes even more fully realized in what we know today as the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion, which we trace back to this night. Because of what He will yet endure and what He will achieve on our behalf, Christ is indeed our Passover Lamb, “who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29, 36).

Tonight is when Jesus will be publicly betrayed by one of his disciples and forsaken by all the rest. He will ask in prayer for another way, but will fully surrender His will to the Father, as Jesus has always done. The prophecy of Isaiah 53, attributed to Israel centuries before, will now find its greatest fulfillment in what Christ shall endure on our behalf in the hours ahead. Surely, in His body broken and His blood poured out, like the bread and wine we share, He is Given... for us.

WITH ALL MAUNDY THURSDAY ENTAILS, WHAT SPEAKS MOST DEEPLY TO YOU TODAY?

Is it Jesus humbly kneeling to wash the feet of those who will abandon him only hours from now? Is it how He prays, so raw yet reverent, in the garden? Or is it what Jesus

GOOD FRIDAY

HE IS BROKEN

John 18:28 – 19:42; Matthew 27:1-61; Psalm 22

Of all Christian symbols, perhaps none is more universally recognized than the cross. We wear it as jewelry, tattoo it on our bodies, and even print it on bumper stickers we slap on our cars. But perhaps, with all its familiarity, the cross has become too comfortable for us. We claim to know what it means and what Christ does for us in dying upon it. But do we really?

The Bible tells us in the mystery of the crucifixion, “God made Him who had no sin to become sin for us so that in Christ we might be made right in our relationship with God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Have you ever felt utterly forsaken? Have you ever stood alone, embarrassingly exposed, wrongly accused, unjustly condemned, in deep suffering and grievous pain? Jesus has. And He experienced it willingly. For us.

On Good Friday, we especially humble ourselves before the cross of Christ. We remember what He chose to endure for our sakes, how He shouldered the crushing weight of our sin, which we cannot bear, how He entered the deepest darkness of death that we might be forgiven and freed from the power of sin, death, and the evil one (Hebrews 2:14-15). As you prayerfully read the selected scriptures describing the events of this day, what does it mean to you personally to know Christ loves you enough to endure such suffering and even die for you?

HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU TO KNOW THAT ON THIS DAY, HE IS BROKEN, SO THAT WE MAY BE MADE WHOLE?



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HOLY SATURDAY

HE IS BURIED

Matthew 27:62-66; Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

“Dead and buried” – A phrase we use to describe something that is over, finished, done, with no hope of coming back to life. On this day of Holy Week, there were certain Pharisees, the chief priests, and even Pilate, who hoped this would remain the case with Jesus. In Jewish tradition, Saturday is the sabbath day, a day of rest. Yet how restful could it have possibly been for all those wondering, “What now?” Did any of Jesus’ followers remember His words about how He would be raised from the dead? Or were they understandably overwhelmed in their grief, fearing their hopes and dreams for life in the Kingdom Christ alone makes possible were now as dead and buried as He was?

He Is Buried... But this is not the end.

In the silent waiting of this Holy Saturday, carefully read through the selected verses of Lamentations. Originally composed by one who personally experienced the “rod of God’s wrath,” read it now considering Jesus as the One testifying with these words. In the space provided, reflect upon this question: How does it make you feel knowing there is nowhere we can go where Christ has not gone before us, even into the depths of death itself? On this day, no matter what may seem “dead and buried” in our lives, may we find comfort in these ancient words which promise, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in Him.’” (Lamentations 3:22-24).

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL KNOWING THERE IS NOWHERE WE CAN GO WHERE CHRIST HAS NOT GONE BEFORE US, EVEN INTO THE DEPTHS OF DEATH ITSELF?

EASTER SUNDAY

HE IS RISEN

John 20:1-18; Luke 24:13-49; 1 Corinthians 15; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

He Is Risen! Hallelujah! As the Apostle Paul explains, everything the Christian faith stands for and stands upon is rooted in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Corinthians 15). While the cross secured our forgiveness and redemption from sin, the resurrection completes the work of God in Christ, proving and guaranteeing the supremacy of Christ in and over all things – even death. Jesus is Lord and Savior, indeed! He has conquered sin, the devil, and death through dying, by the power of the indestructible life of God (Hebrews 7:16). He is Risen!

Try and imagine the shock, utter amazement, and absolute elation of the women and men who were closest to Jesus upon seeing Him alive once more! Of course, there was doubt and confusion among some at first. How could there not be? And it remains much the same today. Although the truth of the resurrection of Christ seems impossible to believe for many, rest assured there were plenty of skeptics in the first century as well. That's why Paul gives a list of verifiable eyewitnesses to the presence of the resurrected Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

If Jesus is truly alive, everything is different! All His teaching about “the first shall be last, and the last shall be first,” or “the greatest among you will be the servant of all,” or “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” cannot be dismissed as impractical advice from some cult leader who ended up killed by the imperial superpower of His day. No! The resurrection proves the way of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God is the one and only way of life eternal, life abundant, and life everlasting, in both this age and in the age to come! Even death itself cannot defeat the Way, and the Truth, and the Life that Jesus Christ not only brings, but that HE IS! Hallelujah!





Christ Church
NASHVILLE