

HOLY WEEK
MEDITATION



Saturday before Palm Sunday - Jesus Anointed at Bethany

⁶ Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a 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. ⁸ And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?" ⁹ For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." ¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly, 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."

Matthew 26:6–13

The ointment was expensive and everyone knew it. To raise enough money to buy another jar of ointment it would cost her nearly a year's wages. Why would this woman do this? The disciples did not understand. They thought she was wasting money that could be used more effectively for the poor. However, she loved Jesus and wanted to express that love by anointing Him. What an act of devotion! She gave everything in order to do this! Unbeknownst to her but known to Jesus, this woman served a greater purpose. She prepared His body to be laid in a tomb, foreshadowing His death and burial to come.

What does it mean to perform an act of worship?

What was significant in the woman's actions toward Jesus?

What does devotion to Jesus look like in your life this week?

Palm Sunday - Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,
⁴² 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. ⁴³ 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 ⁴⁴ 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."

Luke 19:41–44

Do we recognize God? Jesus had come. Jesus had ministered. Jesus had healed. Jesus had taught. He came to his own people but they did not recognize him. In the case of the Jews they were his own people and their inability to recognize him caused Jesus to weep. He knew the blindness of God's chosen people would lead to their own destruction in 70 AD.

How does it make you feel that Jesus, God in flesh, would feel pain and weep? Have you ever wept for the pain of someone else and why?

What does Jesus mean to you?

How do you look for Jesus?

Monday - Jesus Cleanses the Temple

⁴⁵ And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, ⁴⁶ saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers." ⁴⁷ And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, ⁴⁸ but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

Luke 19:45–48

Visitors to Jerusalem were expected to come to the temple and make sacrifices. Many of them needed sacrificial objects so the religious officials took advantage. They found it very profitable to sell provisions for sacrifice there in the temple. While convenient, they charged worshipers exuberant amounts of money for what they were purchasing. Not only were the officials selling animals for sacrifice but many scholars believe they were also selling trinkets and other goods within the grounds of the temple. This led to an area of commerce, and probably loud commerce. The temple, the place of worship, became a gift store of thieves and Jesus would not stand for it.

Was the selling of the animals for sacrifice a bad thing? What was Jesus' motivation to cleanse the Temple?

With what attitude should we approach the worship of God?

The church and the people that make up the church, the Christian, is now the temple of God. How do we treat the church? Not just the building but both the people and the gathering. Why does it matter?

Tuesday - Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹⁸ *In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹ 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.*

²⁰ *When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" ²¹ 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.*

²² *And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."*

Matthew 21:18–22

When a fig tree has leaves, it is supposed to produce fruit. This one was not. In this story from Tuesday of Holy week, Jesus seems pretty harsh. He sees a tree and condemns it causing it to 'wither' because it didn't produce fruit. However, Jesus was not mad.

Jesus had a point to make. Much like in the story of Jesus cleansing the temple, this tree looked as though it was healthy. The truth is that the tree was far from healthy. The point Jesus was try to make was that those who seemed most religious made their faith about them and not about God. There is a difference between the appearance of faith and real faith in the God who can move mountains.

How do you identify kinds of trees? What is revealed about a tree if it does not produce fruit?

What does faith mean?

What is the fruit of believing in Jesus?

Wednesday – Sanhedrin – The Plot to kill Jesus

26 When 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.”³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,⁴ and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.⁵ But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.” Matthew 26:1–5

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all.⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?”⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. John 11:45–57

The wickedness of men is seen in the condemnation of an innocent man. What were they to do? All the power and influence and even the god whom they worshipped might disappear if “everyone believed in him.” Oh, but how God moves in mysterious ways! Even those who do not know God proclaim and work toward his plan. So, though the wicked men plotted to kill Jesus and did it for their own motives, in the end it accomplished the plans of God.

What do you think would cause the high priest to say, ““You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish?”

How does it make you feel that God strategically places men and circumstances to accomplish his purpose?

The death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection from the dead fulfilled the prophesy of Caiaphas. According to this passage why was it good that Jesus would die?

Thursday - The Passover with the Disciples

¹⁷ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve.

²¹ And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²² And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" ²³ He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me." ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you," ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 26:17–29.

The Passover is a key moment in the Jewish calendar. At Passover the Israelites remember the promise that by placing the blood of a lamb on the door frames of their homes, the lives of their first born sons were spared. In the Lord's Supper, like the Israelites, we remember that Jesus's body and blood was shed for us. He was the sacrifice that saves the lives of those that trust in his work and promise.

What do you typically think about when you take the Lord's Supper (communion)?

Why do you think it was important for the Israelites to remember the event of the Passover with a meal?

Why do you think it is important for us to remember the cross and resurrection by participating in the Lord's Supper?

Friday - Crucifixion

³²^pAs 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.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to

many. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" ⁵⁵ There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, ⁵⁶ among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Matthew 27:32–56.

Jesus went to the cross. The blameless God-man was sentenced to death and suffered. He was beaten, mocked and scorned. He was nailed through the hands and pierced through the side. All of this was Father's will and God's plan from the beginning of time. This was not plan B. Jesus, the Messiah; Jesus, the King, died on a cross at the hands of mankind.

Why did Jesus die?

What does Jesus's death on the cross mean to you?

When Jesus died the earth shook, rocks split, tombs opened and people resurrected. This was an event of epic proportions during which the centurion. Does the Jesus dying cause a similar reaction for you? Why or why not?

Saturday –The Guard at the Tomb

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.

Matthew 27:62–66.

Jesus is dead. Think about that: The God-man died. Today he is in a tomb. Outside, the people worried. The disciples Lord and teacher was dead. Was what Jesus had taught, said and performed pointless? The Jewish leaders had worries of their own. They worried that His body would be stolen away. They worried about the possibilities. Worried about a loss of face. Hope did not exist for either group of people... unless. Hope existed if the disciples remembered. Remember what? Remember that as the crowd mocked on Friday, but would be fulfilled Sunday, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days."

What kind of tension do you think the disciples felt with Jesus in the grave since Friday, yet to rise from the dead?

Why do you think the possibility of Jesus's made-up resurrection scare the Jewish leaders so much?

Why is it easy to worry? Why is remembering that God is faithful important in faith?

Sunday - Resurrection

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

Matthew 28:1–10.

Sunday makes Friday effective. Without today, Jesus dying on the cross means nothing. Mary however did not know that yet. To her, the man she had followed had been killed and she was in mourning. When she got the tomb she found out there was hope. Why? Because He was not there. Jesus had risen. Now a new world had begun. Her hope was fulfilled and the future was limitless.

Why does it matter in your life that Jesus rose from death?

Explain a time you have experienced profound sadness followed by hope.

Why do you think the women had both fear and great joy?

