

2025

HOLY WEEK

Devotional



Getting Started

The following devotionals have been written by members of Valley Life Church. We hope and pray that they are a blessing to you and your family as you prepare to celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Valley Life Church
Sundays at 9:30am
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Fraser, CO 80442

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Romans 8:25-30

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Palm Sunday

By Codee & Sarah Sanford

Today's reading is from:

Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-44; Jn 12:12-19; Ps 118:26; Zec 9:9; 2 Sam 7:12-14; Is 62:11

Jesus began his last week on earth humbly riding into Jerusalem on a donkey through a road of palm branches. The crowds that were following Jesus went ahead rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Jn 12:13; Ps 118:26). To announce that he was indeed the Messiah, Jesus chose a *time* when all of Israel would be gathered at Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, a *place* where huge crowds could see him, and a way of proclaiming his mission that was unmistakable. The Pharisees thought the crowd's words were sacrilegious and blasphemous. They didn't want someone challenging their power and authority, and they didn't want a revolt that would bring the Roman army down on them. So, they asked Jesus to keep his people quiet. But Jesus said that if the people were quiet, the stones (the tombs on the Mount of Olives) would immediately cry out. Why? Not because Jesus was setting up a powerful political kingdom, but because he was establishing God's eternal kingdom, a reason for the greatest celebration of all!

Unfortunately, the people who were praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They were sure he would be a national leader who would restore their nation to its former glory, and thus they were deaf to the words of prophets and blind to Jesus' real mission. We see how Jesus' heart is filled with sorrow for the people. He weeps over Jerusalem 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" (Lk 19:42). The people were blind to their sin and the divinity of Jesus. It broke his heart that they couldn't see him for who he is - a Savior who came to rescue humanity from eternal death.

Take time today in prayer to praise God for his eternal kingdom that was established through Jesus! Seek forgiveness and for God to reveal where you are blind to God's hand in your life. In supplication, pray on behalf of those who are deaf to the truth of Jesus. If you aren't sure who Jesus is, ask him. We can seek God because of his compassion at the cross and power in the resurrection! In Jesus' name.

Holy Monday

By Jon Christensen & Jessica Smith

JESUS AND THE TEMPLE

Matthew 21:12-17

When we read this story, we often focus on the interaction between Jesus and those using the temple for their own profit. "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers" (v. 13). In Matthew's telling of the story, however, we see four different groups of people coming into the presence of the Lord in His temple:

First, we see those who came to gain for themselves through buying and selling. Their focus was on themselves and what they could benefit. His response to them was a hard rebuke and discipline. Second, we see the blind and the lame coming with only a humble, desperate need of Jesus. Their goal was solely to experience Jesus and his healing power. This group of people were met with his grace and mercy and were healed. Next, in seeing what Jesus had done, children worshipped the Son of David with shouts of "Hosanna!" We honestly do not really know why they came, but we know how they responded, and that was with utter adoration and praise to the King. Defended by Jesus, he showed the extreme value he has for children; a group that was overlooked in this time and society. The final group is the chief priests and teachers of the law. Since their focus is trying to make themselves look good by trying to debate Jesus indignantly, their ears were deaf to any sort of truth. Sensing the hardness of their hearts, Jesus' interaction with them was short and he then left their presence.

All these people deeply needed Jesus. All these people came to him with a specific intent. And all of them experienced Jesus in a different way. Jesus' interaction with each group reflected the exact redemption they needed: discipline, healing, validation, and truth. All experienced the goodness of Jesus, but those who humbly approached, thirsty for his presence, experienced a completely different interaction than those who did not.

This leads us to a couple questions for you to dwell on this Holy Monday:

1. Why do you enter the presence of the Lord? What is your heart posture before him?
2. What are the ways Jesus is interacting with you? How are you receiving this?

What we know about Jesus is this: Jesus' character and life always exemplified his love for us and desire for our redemption. He did this through coming to earth, dying on the cross, absorbing God's wrath, and rising again. Since that is our King, you can be sure that whatever way he is interacting with you is for that intent: redemption and love. It comes down to the truth we see in this passage: we ALL need Jesus in the various ways he chooses to do so. We are never going to do things perfectly; therefore, we will need different reactions from him for our benefit. Praise be to God that we have this King who is always willing to do this on our behalf!

Holy Tuesday

By Brittany Cramer

“And they were amazed at him” - Mark 12:17

Think back to elementary school. Imagine a crisp fall day, soccer is about to start, and you're finally old enough to play. With that comes the honor of a blue t-shirt, two sizes too big, that matches all your best friends. It's not just a fun shirt to wear but has a purpose. It marks you as belonging to your team. Why does belonging matter so much to us as humans?

Read Mark 12:13-15

It's Tuesday. Jesus is confronted about whether loyal Jews should pay taxes to Rome. If he says not to pay, he's opposing the government; however, if he says to pay, he's supporting the oppression from the Romans. At first glance this story is about the responsibility of being a good citizen, paying taxes, and giving to the church.

Read: Mark 12:16-17

Now, imagine Jesus holding the coin, flipping it over so you can see it, and asking “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” (v. 16). You would have seen Caesar's face and inscription. Jesus seems to be drawing their attention to the image and inscription, not just the coin. Where might the Jewish mind go with this reference to image based on their knowledge of the Old Testament? Where is the first mention of image in the Bible?

Read: Genesis 1:26-31

So why were they amazed at Jesus' response about taxes? Not because of his financial advice, but because of what he taught about their identity and belonging. Caesar's image was on the coin, so it belonged to him. God's image is on you, and it's not a blue t-shirt you can choose to take off or grow out of one day. God's mark of belonging is on each of us because he made us in his image. “[Give] to God what is God's” (v. 17) means that we should give God what bears his image - us. Our response should be nothing short of giving our lives to God (Gal 2:20, Rom 12:1). In reality, this passage has little to do with finances, and has everything to do with our identity, belonging, and value as God's creation. And this is why they were amazed.

Reflection:

1. When you look in the mirror, what false images or lies are you tempted to believe about your identity and what can you do each day to remind yourself that you bear God's image and belong to him?
2. How can you give yourself more fully to the Lord? What parts of your life are you holding on to?
3. This interaction occurred as Jesus was headed toward the cross to give his whole life for our redemption. Write out a prayer of gratitude and amazement to God, who from the beginning of time made us to bear his image, belong to him, and had a plan to redeem us out of our brokenness.

Spy Wednesday

By Timothy Pawley

On this Wednesday of Holy Week, we consider the betrayal of Jesus. My hope for this time is that you are challenged to live the abundant life which we have been given and called to in Jesus and that you are encouraged and changed by the incredible love Jesus has for you. Before you read God's Word, take a moment to quiet your mind, ask God to give you wisdom and understanding, that you may know him better and be changed by the truth. Now look at Matthew 26:14-25. Take time to read this passage as if never before; read every word, slowly. Was there a detail you've never noticed?

Judas was "one of the twelve" (v. 14) people closest to Jesus, chosen by him to accompany him, to see him up close and personal. Judas asks, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" (v. 15). In other words: "Is it worth betraying Jesus?" For me this is the challenging part: Do I have a price to betray Jesus? Another word for betrayal is disloyalty. What do I accept or desire in my life that causes disloyalty to Jesus? Is it money, status, comfort, removing discomfort, giving someone "what they deserve", being right, being seen a certain way, another's opinion, bitterness, fear of the unknown? Do you have a price to betray Jesus?

In Matthew 27:3-5, Judas realizes it was not worth the betrayal. Judas "changed his mind" and cries out "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (v. 3, 4). In those moments when "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41) and we live out of our flesh, we soon realize the truth: sin never satisfies. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).

Now look at Jesus. He knew that Judas was the betrayer. Jesus shared his table, his fellowship, and his food with his betrayer. In John's account of this night (Jn 13:1-5), after Judas had decided to betray Jesus, before dinner, Jesus washed Judas's feet!! What a picture of the love of Christ!!! Serving the one who would betray him, just as he is about to lay down his life for all who are "weak," "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies of God" so that we may become "justified," "saved," and "reconciled to God" (Rom 5:6-10).

Spend time in prayer. Ask the Lord to reveal if there is a price you take to be disloyal. If so, confess it to the Lord. Thank the Lord for his mercies, which are "new every morning" (Lam 3:22-23). Ask that God would root and ground you in love, giving you the "strength to comprehend...what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:17-19). Amen.

Maunder Thursday

By Harper Aumock

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” - Mark 14:38

After the Last Supper, the evening before Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus, despite his divine nature, was also completely human, feeling the weight and difficulty of the impending suffering that awaited him. During this important and heavy time, he sought the comfort and companionship of his inner circle of disciples (Simon Peter, James, and John) by asking them to “remain here, and watch with me” (Mt 26:38).

After praying, he returned to his three friends only to find them fast asleep. This happened three times. Finding them asleep, he rebukes Simon Peter specifically, saying, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mk 14:37-38).

The “spirit” in this verse should not be confused with the Holy Spirit. The spirit here refers to the rational spirit in a person. It is the power by which we feel, think, and decide. The flesh refers to the earthly, broken nature of humanity apart from divine influence; it is the part of us that is prone to sin and opposed to God. By telling Simon Peter that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, Jesus is telling him that his zeal to do right far outruns his ability. Peter is forced to see that while he has all the right desire to remain faithful to Christ, he is unable to do so.

Jesus' challenge to Simon Peter in his inability to carry out his good intentions is to “watch and pray” (v. 38). The challenge to “watch and pray” is not just an ancient command, but a timeless invitation for us to actively engage with our own weakness. Earlier in the passage Jesus already told the disciples to “watch,” and they failed. But here is the second part: “pray.” We must stay alert to where we are weak, and in those moments when we recognize our weakness, we must pray for God's strength to carry out our zeal to do what is right.

What are the ways you have seen your flesh overpower your best intentions? Pray and confess them to the Lord.

Good Friday

By Tyson Menke

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends." - John 15:12-13

This scripture demonstrates exactly what Jesus did for us. Jesus chose to give up his life because he loves us so much. Jesus was humiliated and suffered a lot of pain because he cares for you and me so deeply.

Have you ever watched the movie from 2004 called *The Passion of the Christ*? The primary focus of the movie is about the last 12 hours before Jesus' death. I have watched it a few times and each time I usually end up in tears. I often wonder if those are tears of mourning or tears of joy. At first glance, I thought it was more about mourning. However, it is more about the joy I receive knowing that Jesus went through all the pain and suffering on Good Friday to pay the punishment that I deserve for my sins. Good Friday was not a day of tragedy but a true gift that we should be grateful for. Without Good Friday and all the suffering that Jesus went through, there would be no need for Resurrection Sunday. This movie seemed to bring it to life for me in ways that helped me to realize that Jesus's death on the cross was the greatest demonstration of God's love for you and me.

How about you? Do you tend to celebrate or mourn the events of Good Friday? Do you find yourself fast forwarding to Resurrection Sunday and beginning the celebration?

I have read about Good Friday many times; trying to understand all the pain and suffering Jesus endured during this time. Asking myself, "Have I ever experienced pain like that?" We all go through suffering and pain at some point in life. It's in those times that it can be easy to cave in to those sufferings and focus our attention on the pain - what's wrong in our lives. God reminds us that he is always there turning things around. There are things that should be celebrated even in the midst of our suffering. At a minimum, remember that God is always right there with you. God sees and feels your pain. And when we remind ourselves to focus on him, he reminds us of why we get to celebrate!

As we go through this Holy Week, may our hearts be filled with hope. We are not alone. Jesus will be with us each and every step of the way. If Jesus can defeat death, he can surely help us overcome the challenges that we face on this earth.

For more reflection on Good Friday, read John chapters 18 and 19. It may also be a good time to watch or rewatch the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. Don't forget the tissues!

Silent Saturday

By Alaina Young

Silence. It sounds great in theory, especially because the world we live in surrounds us in chaos most of the time. We book relaxing vacations chasing after peace and quiet, we shut the door to our bedrooms for a moment of silence, we go on a hike to experience silence and solitude, but if we are completely honest most of us tend to be very uncomfortable when actually faced with the silence we chase.

Silence can feel awkward. It can stir up anxiety. Silence can raise questions and not provide immediate answers. It can cause doubt in our hearts and minds as well as our relationships. It can produce fear. The simple act of silence can have all of these effects and more, if we allow it. And in the case of Jesus' friends and followers, we can only imagine that the silence accompanying Jesus' body in a tomb was deafening.

Not only were they experiencing immense grief at witnessing the brutal crucifixion of Jesus, but they were also faced with complete silence seemingly bathed in confusion and despair. Jesus tried to prepare them. He shared many times that he was going away, that the Lord's will was coming. He told them of things to come and spoke divine instruction, but the disciples couldn't have and didn't fully grasp the meaning of his words. They had witnessed firsthand the signs and miracles, had experienced the love of the Father bestowed on themselves and others, but it wasn't until they experienced Jesus' death on a cross that they had to learn to trust through the pain, confusion, and silence. To trust in his plan. To trust in his goodness. To trust in his faithfulness. To trust in his promises.

Sunday is coming and if you are like me, you can't wait to celebrate our risen Savior, but on this Silent Saturday take a moment to reflect. And if you are brave enough to experience potential discomfort, choose to sit in pure silence. Think about how our lives so often mirror the lives of the disciples. We have the chance be in close relationship with Jesus and accept his gift of salvation through the gospel. We can walk through life seeing the very evidence of him at work in our lives. We can witness miracle upon miracle if we choose to look for them. But life is also very hard - seasons of grief, pain, sickness, confusion, despair, unfair circumstances and hardships. It is in those moments we are tempted to ask God, "Where are you?" "Why are you silent?"

Silent Saturday calls us to trust in the face of silence and uncertainty. Thankfully we know the end of the story but for today, take your doubts, fears, and frustrations to the Lord and choose to trust in his plan, his goodness, his faithfulness, and in his promises. He will prove himself trustworthy - not just on Easter Sunday but time and time again.

Easter Sunday

By Adam Young

THE DAY DEATH DIED

"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Today is a day of celebration. It's a day in which we celebrate the resurrection of Christ with other Christians around the world. But why should we celebrate? Why does the renewal of one man's life have any bearing on my life? Why does an event that took place millennia ago in a place far away change my life in the here and now?

Paul, a man who spent the early parts of his adult life working to destroy everything Jesus had built, might have asked very similar questions. Even though the distance of time and space between his life and that of Jesus of Nazareth was not as far apart as ours, Paul didn't buy it. On Easter, there was no celebration for him. That is... until the day he met the risen Jesus Christ face-to-face (Acts 9). It was at that moment that Paul knew the resurrection of Jesus changed everything. He spent the remainder of his life and eventually gave his life to preaching the gospel - the good news of Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection - that had been foretold long before in the ancient Jewish Scriptures we now call the Old Testament. It mattered to Paul because he saw in the resurrected Jesus the solution to the problem humanity faced: death.

Physical death is an inescapable reality for us all, but it doesn't get the final word. Physical death no longer defines when our life actually ends. As Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (Jn 11:25). When Jesus was resurrected, it signaled a radical shift that everything had changed. What was once temporary and fleeting, had become secure and permanent. In the resurrected Christ, Paul realized that death had died and new life had begun.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- 1 Corinthians 15:54-57