

Holy Week 2001

A Devotional Guide from Matthew's Gospel



Lexington Avenue
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Danville, Kentucky

A Word from Our Pastor

Holy Week is a special time in the life of the church. This time of year reminds us of the rebirth that can take place in the life of each individual. Such rebirth occurs because of the love of Jesus Christ, which is seen most clearly in the last week of our Lord's life.

In the following pages you will find Scripture passages and devotional thoughts for each day of Holy Week beginning with Palm Sunday and concluding Easter Sunday. Use these passages and thoughts as you walk through the last week of our Lord's life. You will discover a week of anticipation, uncertainty, betrayal, denial, death, grief, and rejoicing. Your life will be touched by the presence of the Lord in and through your devotional time this week.

Those who have written the devotional thoughts are people just like you. People who have experienced both the heartache and joy of life along with the great sense of anticipation and uncertainty of life. It is my prayer that this Easter will truly be something to celebrate in your life each and every day. May we remember the words of the Angel to Joseph, "they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us" (Matthew 1:24, *New Revised Standard Version*)

Dr. S. Thomas Valentine
Pastor

Palm Sunday, April 8

The Triumphal Entry

(Matthew 21:1-11)

by Dave Garrett

Daily Reading: Matthew 21:1-17

“Who is this?” The question was asked that day on the road to Jerusalem and the question is still being asked today. It is asked everyday by our co-workers, our friends, and our neighbors and by strangers. During this Holy Week 2001 we must again ask ourselves the question, “Who is this?”

On the night Jesus was born, Mary traveled into Bethlehem on a donkey. The Christ child and his mother were carried to His holy birthplace by a common work animal—an animal born to serve people. During the last days of his life, as they approached Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of his disciples into the village to bring him a donkey and her foal. He instructs the two disciples, “If anyone says anything to you, tell him ‘the Lord needs them.’” Christ would take the last trek of his journey into the city of the cross on a long-suffering, headstrong animal with an untamed nature.

As the disciples spread their cloaks across the donkey and her foal, did they really understand who was going to sit on them? As they took their most valuable personal possessions and laid them across the back of a smelly, dirty animal, did they ask the question, “Who is this?” Did the donkey and her foal know they were born to carry the King on that day of entry. Did they realize they were to transport the Savior of the world? Did they know Jesus had called for them specifically and said, “tell anyone who asks, ‘the Lord needs them.’” As Christ mounted this borrowed animal and her foal, did they understand the great blessing of serving the people of God by carrying the Son of God? As the donkey and her foal traveled the road and heard the shouts of the people did they ask the question, “Who is this?”

As the large crowd spread their precious outer garments on the road and while others cut branches from the trees to cover the path of Christ, did they grasp the meaning of the moment? As they followed and shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the

name of the Lord!” and “Hosanna in the highest!” did the question, “Who is this?” burn in their hearts?

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and the question was yelled louder than ever louder—“Who is this?” “Who is this?” Did the crowds who answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee,” understand they were sharing the gospel?

This Holy Week 2001—before Jesus begins his journey into the city; before Jesus calls for the donkey and her foal; before the crowds lay down their cloaks and cut branches to lay on the dusty road; before the people begins to shout “Hosanna,” “Hosanna,” “Hosanna,” before the people of the city yell the question; before the crowd shouts back the answer; before this Easter is here—let us, the people of God, again ask the question, “Who is this?” Let us search our hearts for the answer. Let us look into the eyes of our neighbors and friends and family and even people we don’t know and ask the question, “Who is this?”

When Christ calls us into service, may it be said of us, “the Lord has need of them.” When Jesus sends “disciples” for us, may we be ready to serve the people God loves by carrying Christ to those we meet as we journey along. When we walk life’s road and the crowd shouts “Hosanna” to us, may we remember the words of praise for our accomplishments are because we carry Christ in our hearts. When the dusty road before us is made soft by someone’s act of kindness, may we realize it is because of the Christ they see in us. When we are the long-suffering, headstrong animal with an untamed nature and Christ calls for us, may we answer the question, “Who is this?” by saying, “this is Jesus, my Christ, my Salvation, my Friend, my Lord!”

Be The Best!

Monday, April 9

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

(Matthew 21:23-27)

by Eloise Roberts

Daily Reading: Matthew 21:18-24:2

Yesterday was an awesome day in Jerusalem. Multitudes of people (Maybe 2.5 million according to Wm. Barclay) crowded in here to celebrate the Passover Feast. Everyone was so enthusiastic as they acclaimed Jesus “King.” However, there were some chief priests and elders present who refused to acknowledge Jesus as “King” and became angry.

Today’s activities infuriated them even more. This morning Jesus went to the Court of the Gentiles part of the Temple where local Jews were engaging in profiteering over the visitors. They charged extra fees (which they pocketed) to exchange the outsiders’ coins for Temple currency and also for the pigeons and doves needed for sacrifices. Jesus overturned the tables and drove out the greedy, noisy traders. By this, Jesus demonstrated His authority in the Temple, but these chief priests and elders (the Sanhedrin) considered themselves in charge. These religious leaders became so enraged that they diligently sought some way to kill Jesus.

This evening, they found Jesus teaching in the Temple. They disturbed His class to fire a question at him: “By what authority do you do these things?” or restated “Who gave you this authority?” (to drive exchangers and sellers out of the Temple.)

If He claimed authority from God, they would arrest Him for blasphemy. If He claimed authority from men, they would say that belonged to the Sanhedrin. If He claimed royalty, He would have trouble with the Romans. They hoped to put Jesus in such a dilemma that they could find Him so guilty he would be punished by death.

The time wasn’t right for Jesus to give a direct answer that His authority came from the fact that he was the Son of God. To do so would precipitate the end. There was still so much teaching and healing for Jesus to do on earth for the end to come now. Besides, Jesus knew that it was not God’s timing and he worked on God’s schedule.

So, he countered the questions of the Jewish leaders with one question of His own that would place them in an even greater dilemma than He was: “Was the baptism of John the Baptist from Heaven or from men?”

If these members of the Sanhedrin agreed that John’s work was divine, they would be compelled to accept Jesus as the Messiah. On the other hand, if they said that John’s work was merely human, they knew quite well that the listening people would riot and probably stone them to death. So, they were compelled to face humiliation and say weakly, “We do not know,” and thereby freed Jesus from giving an answer to their question.

This whole scripture is a vivid example of what happens to man who will not face the truth. He, who does not, has nothing but the prospect of deeper and deeper involvement in a situation that leaves him helpless and ineffective.

The man who faces the truth may be embarrassed or have to endure punishment, but at least his future is strong and bright.

Just now, what question are you facing? If you know the truth, you are under obligation to tell the truth.

Tuesday, April 10

The End of the Age

(Matthew 24:3-14)

by Phil Rector

Daily Reading: Matthew 24:3-26:5

December 31, 1999, people all over the world sat ready for a catastrophic event. Some waited for computers to crash and cause pandemonium. For months prior they had stored up water and non-perishable food in anticipation of “Y2K”. Others sat in anticipation of another event – the second coming of Christ. As you read this today you know that neither happened or if it did we got left behind.

In Matthew’s account of the gospel, the disciples, still not fully aware of what Jesus was trying to teach them or who he was, asked, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Jesus responded by pointing out signs that would take place before the end but he never said when. The parables that follow all send an important message—be ready. The point is this. The gospel makes it clear that we do not know when Christ will return or when the “end of the age” will be. In Mark’s account of the gospel we are told that neither angels nor the Son of Man knows the time. It is obvious that we must be ready at all times. That doesn’t mean to store up water, food, warm clothing, or fire-fighting gear. It means quite simply, to know God and trust in his mercy and grace and accept his gift of eternal life to us through Christ the Son.

Wednesday, April 11

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

(Matthew 26:6-13)

by Carolyn Godfrey

Daily Reading: Matthew 26:6-16

The time of Jesus’ death was drawing near. Traveling the countryside with his disciples, He visited in the home of Simon the Leper, a man who Jesus had probably healed earlier in His ministry. Among those present that day was the woman whose anointing of Jesus is used as an example of joyful worship. Although Matthew does not name the woman, there is common agreement that she was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Other accounts of this event are found in the gospels of Mark and John.

As an act of pure worship and devotion, Mary broke open an alabaster jar of fragrant oil from the nard plant. She poured the sweet perfume, no doubt her most costly possession, on Jesus’ head, foreshadowing the preparation of His body for His burial, which would occur only a few days later. Although the disciples rebuked Mary for “wasting” the expensive oil, Jesus, who praised Mary’s worship gift, silenced them.

I imagine that Mary must have been overwhelmed that day: overwhelmed with love for Jesus, the one who raised her brother from the dead; overwhelmed with devotion to her Lord and Master; overwhelmed to be in the presence of the Son of God. Her anointing of Jesus was the joyful response of the heart, a heart tendered by the spirit of Christ.

As we reflect on Christ’s final days on this earth, we have to ask ourselves if we are more like the disciples or Mary. Do we look for a reason to criticize the worship of other true believers? Are we always weighing the costs of our worship? Or do we worship freely and with joy, giving God our best? Do we surrender our lives daily to Him? Are we overcome with love for the One who gave His only Son for us?

Pray that we all will listen to the whispers of the Holy Spirit as He guides us to worship opportunities this week. May the Christ of Calvary tender our hearts.

Thursday, April 12

The Lord's Supper
(Matthew 26:17-30)
by Susie Wright

Daily Reading: Matthew 26:17-75

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, was celebrated for the first time with Jesus and his twelve disciples. During this time, many significant occurrences took place. Jesus first announced to his followers that one of them would betray him. All looked at him with utter disbelief, while Judas painted innocence on his face. One by one, Jesus exonerated the apostles—until it came to Judas. Judas looked up at Jesus with innocent, puppy dog eyes, hoping Jesus did not know the truth. Unfortunately for Judas, Jesus revealed to him, “Yes, it is you.”

Judas was caught red-handed. Knowing this, the other disciples undoubtedly moved away from him, no longer accepting him as one of their own. Jesus even declared, “It would be better for him if he had not been born.” If Judas had not felt guilty up to that point, the feeling must have been unbearable after hearing Jesus' words. In spite of Judas's conspiracy, he was still allowed to participate in a very personal ceremony—the first Communion. Observance of the first Communion included Jesus' closest friends. Judas may not have been in high standings as a friend, but he was included.

Jesus must have felt let down by Judas. Experiencing unfaithfulness from a friend is one of the hardest circumstances a friendship can endure. You share a piece of your soul with your closest friends. Personal thoughts are exposed, and hopes and dreams are disclosed. Once trust is broken, it is very difficult to rebuild. Jesus and Judas never had a chance to work on regaining trust in their relationship.

Having friends you can trust is important to everyone. In being a friend, you may have to follow Jesus' example and love your friend, even though they have betrayed you unforgivably. There will always be one person who will let you down in life. Don't let that one person taint the other eleven close friendships you may have. Just love them like Jesus loved Judas, right up to the end.

Friday, April 13

“Darkness Came Over the Whole Land”
(Matthew 27:45-50)
by Tommy Valentine

Daily Reading: Matthew 27:1-61

I've never really liked the dark. I don't guess any of us really do. As a child, the darkness of night scared me. I was uncertain about what was lurking in the darkness. To help me, my mother would leave the nightstand lamp on when I went to bed. She then would slip in and turn it off after I fell asleep.

As adults, darkness comes in new ways; the darkness of decisions that loom large before us; the uncertainty of the pathway that lies before us; the struggle for inner peace. In all those times we feel surrounded by darkness.

Matthew tells us that as Jesus is dying on the cross, darkness falls upon the land. He cries out, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me.” Jesus feels totally alone. I want to rush past this passage to the resurrection when Jesus shatters the darkness with his light. But Matthew confronts us with the reality of darkness.

I am humbled that our Lord would leave the glories of heaven's light to suffer the despair of this world's darkness for me that, though the darkness may be before me, I am never alone. We call today “Good Friday.” Strange words when our Lord had to suffer such darkness. Yet maybe the “good” in it all is that today reminds us that even when darkness surrounds us, our hope is in the One who has faced the darkness and has conquered the darkness on our behalf. Dark days will still come upon us in this journey of life, they cannot be avoided. But we do not face them alone or powerless. We face them with an unshakable hope in the One who is the Light of the World.

Saturday, April 14

“Make the Tomb as Secure as You Can.”

(Matthew 27:62-66)

by Keith Stillwell

Daily Reading: Matthew 27:62-66

Today is Saturday. The awful events of Friday have ended. On Friday, Jesus was betrayed, arrested, put on trial, beaten, mocked, nailed to a cross, and died. Today is Saturday and Jesus is dead and buried in a tomb. Pilate sent guards to the tomb with the instructions to “make it as secure as you can.”

The guards sealed the tomb to make it secure—Secure against theft, secure against resurrection, secure against doubt. We know however that tomorrow, Sunday, the tomb will not remain sealed and secure. This is not a tomb; this is not a story; this is not a day of security. The two Mary’s watched Jesus’ burial. The disciples hid in fear. The hope that Jesus would be the saving Messiah is gone. For now, on Saturday, we wait in insecurity, in death, in grief, in fear, in defeat.

At some point in our lives all of us must live through Saturday. Sometimes we hear a word and we know its Saturday and life will never be the same again: “You will never walk again.” “Your mother has Alzheimer’s Disease.” “You’re fired.” “Your son was in an automobile accident.” “I’m filing for divorce.”

I knew it was Saturday when my brother-in-law called, “Your Dad’s not doing well, Keith. It doesn’t look good at all.” My father had been in the hospital all of the past week. We had just watched a basketball game together on his hospital room television set the night before. By the time Dianne, Brittany, Kelsey and I could gather our things and drive from Hopkinsville to Louisville, he died. I lost my father.

For the first time in my life I was making decisions about burial arrangements, worrying about life insurance, and planning a funeral service. It was Saturday.

We drew strength from the many visits and words of support. I enjoyed watching daddy’s old basketball and football buddies leaf through his scrapbook at the funeral home. At the funeral service, pastor,

Anne Smith and “Russ,” a lifelong friend of my father, said all the right things. We found comfort among family and friends, yet we grieved. My sister and I lost a dad. My mom lost her husband. Two granddaughters lost their grandfather. One brother and three sisters lost their elder brother. The church lost a faithful servant. It was still Saturday.

So, what do we do on Saturday? We take a deep breath. We make our plans and preparations, like Joseph of Arimathea. We watch and wait like Mary and Mary. We hurt and we cry and we lean on friends who love us and we don’t let anyone tell us we shouldn’t be feeling this way. We take hope knowing that some time the sun will set on Saturday and rise again on Easter Sunday morning.

Easter Sunday, April 15

The Resurrection
(Matthew 28:1-10)
by Edward Clark

Daily Reading: Matthew 28:1-20

It is not yet light and Mary Magdalene has discovered the empty tomb that had held the body of Jesus. She is racked with grief, physically exhausted and is not able to see that death did not hold her Lord. It is an eerie place. The mist of the morning hides the ghosts in the garden. The Psalmist was there lamenting that there was little hope in life and looking for that which could sustain him. He never realized the hope of eternity. He knew his punishment was real but could not understand how the innocent could be made to suffer. Job had needed a champion. And Daniel was there looking for a Deliverer. Who could think that Daniel needed to be delivered? But all across the land there are those who are not delivered from illness, accidents and the circumstances of life. We cry for deliverance and hope that it comes.

The tomb of Jesus was in the garden of death. Once here, nothing returned. Death gives nothing back. Mary sought the body of Christ. She wanted to bury His remains in a place chosen by those who loved Him. But the body was gone!

She saw a man but did not look closely at him. As she wept she heard her name. "Mary", he said. In that moment her heart leaped within her breast. It was Jesus! The excitement of the moment blazed with light and she knew that He was alive! He was resurrected.

When Christ broke the shackles of death a new religion was born. Christianity is founded upon the birth, life and death of Christ. Christian faith differs from other religions with the Advent of Christ. He reveals the Father. No other religion makes that claim or pretends to. If you know Jesus, you know the Father.

Without the Resurrection, Christian faith would be meaningless. To have been born, to have lived and to have died would equate Jesus with the rest of humanity. But the Resurrection, the triumph over that which once held us, is the proof of forgiveness,

of redemption and reconciliation to those who love the Father that Jesus revealed.

The psalmist, Job and Daniel were, like Mary, looking for something. They sought hope, a champion and deliverance. Mary was looking for her Lord's body. When He spoke to her, He found all the others. He did not come to save us from death. He came to save us through death.

The book of Daniel says it best: "Then, then, shall the righteous shine forth like the sun in their heavenly Father's realm."

Holy Week Journal

(For you to record your thoughts, feelings, questions
and prayers during Holy Week)

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