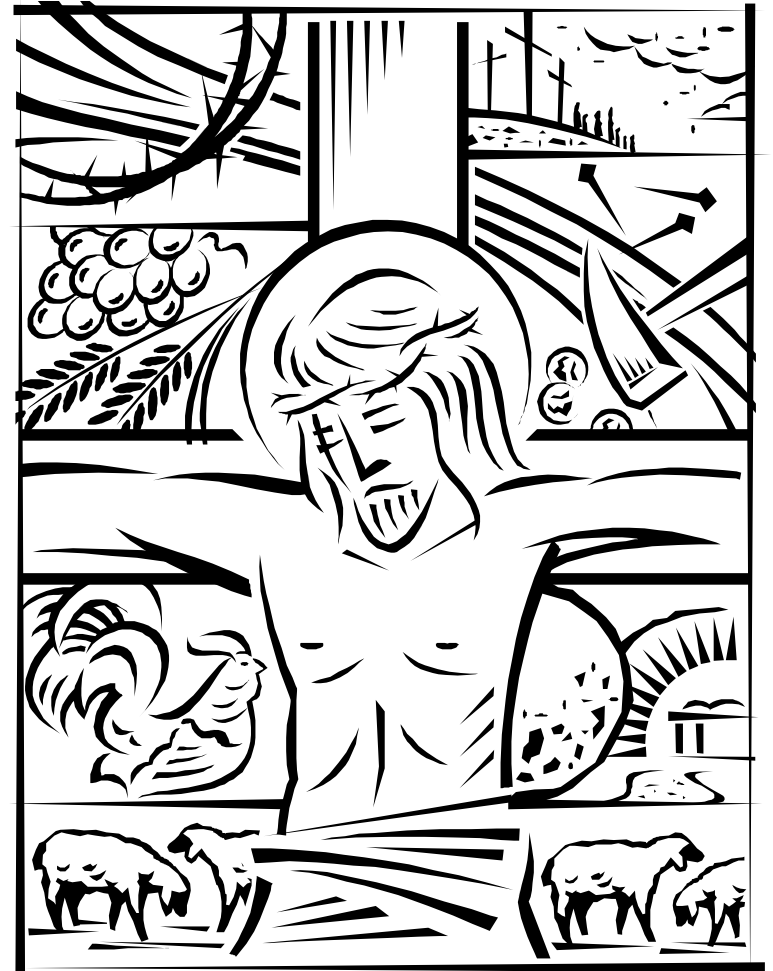


Holy Week 2003

A Devotional Guide from **Luke's** Gospel



Lexington Avenue Baptist Church
Danville, Kentucky

A Word from Our Pastor

Holy Week 2003 finds our country engaged in war. Uncertainties envelope our emotions. We feel saddened, discouraged, angry, lonely, afraid. I suspect we could add many other adjectives describing the way we feel this year as we approach Easter.

As I consider the final week of Jesus' life I find that both he and his disciples experienced many of the same emotions we are feeling right now. As you use this devotional guide this week, let the words of Scripture and the words of the devotional writers speak to your life. In these passages and these devotional thoughts you will hear hope, encouragement, love, and faith.

It is my prayer that this devotional guide will prepare our hearts for Easter and bring us as individuals into closer fellowship with our God. The words of the angel were simply "He is not here! He is risen!" Let's discover the beauty and the majesty of that truth this Easter.

With God's Love,

Tommy

Palm Sunday, April 13

What Might Have Been

(Luke 19:28-48)

by Jennifer Valentine

Daily Reading: Luke 19:28-48

*“As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city,
he wept over it...” Luke 19:41*

This passage has traveled with me for over a week now. It has loomed with me as I drive, as I exercise, and as I go about my daily routine.... Jesus wept. To weep is an action that involves more than crying. To weep is to express grief at parting and remorse and sorrow for the dead. Clarence Jordan in his book, *The Cotton Patch Version of Luke and Acts*, translates this verse saying that Jesus “burst into tears.” Luke did not include this by accident. He included it to show that Jesus was a real man with real emotions and that He had a special love for all people. Of course, love involves a risk. That risk will cause us to experience many emotions, including weeping.

We have each wept in our own ways over life and its events and we all express it in different ways and experience it at different levels. The experience Christ is involved in during verse 41, I feel, is even deeper than weeping. Fred Craddock in his commentary on Luke calls verses 42-44 a lament. He says a lament is “a voice of love and profound caring, of vision of what could have been and of grief over its loss, of tough hope painfully releasing the object of its hope, of personal responsibility and frustration, of sorrow and anger mixed, of accepted loss but with energy enough to go on.”

Craddock suggests that this action reveals to us who Christ clearly is. He further suggests that a lament is so complex, that not all humans “are capable of such expression.”

This scene over Jerusalem shows Jesus’ true character and deep passion for His people. Jesus had visited the city to offer it peace but they did not recognize their day of opportunity. They are blind to their need of forgiveness and true repentance for their sins. Jesus knows what could have been. However, they made a choice. Our lives are full of choices from what to eat for supper to whom to marry. Options are presented before us and decisions are made. However, decisions made without Christ could be devastating. Christ stands before us offering His love, peace, grace, and forgiveness. But the choice is ours. He doesn’t force Himself or His ways on us.

Then I asked myself a wrenching question: What choices and decisions have I made in my life that may have caused Jesus to weep? As He saw the events did he envision what might have been? It is a thought that causes me to go to my knees and ask for forgiveness. It is then that I receive the undeserving grace of God. As I repent, He enables me to move forward. True repentance involves turning away from my former actions and pressing forward with a new heart, and to have no desire to return.

Christ did not stay in Jerusalem and weep. He moved on and, with his forgiveness and our repentance, we can move on as well. May God be with you as you encounter Christ on your journey through Holy Week.

Monday, April 14

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

(Luke 20:9-19)

by Phil Rector

Daily Reading: Luke 20:1-19

There aren't many passages more troubling than *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*. At first it seems harmless enough. Jesus tells the story of a man that planted a vineyard; He leased it out to some people to take care of, and then left town for a while. When the time came that the vineyard should have been producing fruit he sent a servant to collect some of the bounty. Those people leasing the vineyard said "no way" and beat him up and sent him away. That happened a couple of more times until the owner said, "Enough, I'll send my beloved son. Surely, when they see who it is they will give him some of the harvest." Instead the tenants thought through the whole thing and decided that with no son to inherit the vineyard they would surely be the ones to get it if he were dead. So they killed him. So far the story makes sense. It seems obvious that God is the owner and Jesus is the beloved son and the tenants are those who persecuted Jesus. Now the story gets a bit more complicated. The question is posed to those listening. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" (verse 15). And Jesus replied, "He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." The crowd gasped, "God forbid!" and Jesus said, "What then does this text mean: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken into pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

I cannot say with certainty that Jesus meant literally that those who rejected him would be destroyed. Nor can I

say with certainty that that is not what he intended. What I can say is that the Good News of Jesus Christ has been a stumbling block for multitudes of people throughout the centuries. Like a great piece of granite it has been discarded and forgotten. Paul Scherer says, "Workmen stumble over it. With infinite pains they try to rid themselves of it; but the ropes break, the girders give way, and it crashes down on them. Until as in a dream it stands one day firmly in its place, and the walls hold, and 'the tabernacle of God is with men' (Revelation 21:3)." Simply put, the foundation upon which our faith rests is unmovable. It may take some hard blows and people will attempt to shatter it but it remains steadfast. Any attempt to discredit God will fail and in the end God will prevail.

Tuesday, April 15

Religious Disputes

(Luke 20:27-40)

by Andrew Godfrey

Daily Reading: Luke 20:20-21:4

Every day in life, we are faced with innumerable decisions. Each day we must decide what we are going to do: what clothes do we wear, who are we friendly to, how will we handle the unexpected. Our society is one in which we are expected to perform to a certain set of standards at all time. Sometimes the emphasis on now overrides the hope that everyone who knows Jesus has. We get so bogged down in what is happening at this or that moment that we fail to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We must learn to focus on the light that God offers to us. What happens now in this life is not of grave importance, although at times it seems to be. Right now, we must concentrate on living our lives as best we can and spreading the Word. We must understand, what the Sadducees did not understand, that what God has in store for us is infinitely better than our lives now. Don't sweat the small stuff; live for God and keep his Word with you.

Wednesday, April 16

Be Aware

(Luke 21:5-36)

by Edward Clark

Daily Reading: Luke 21:5-38

The writer, in these verses, moves between the Roman destruction of Jerusalem [70 A.D.], an historic fact, and the Second Coming of the Lord, an accepted Christian concept of anticipated fact. This book, written some 58-63 years after the birth of Christ and some 25-30 years after His death, contains material that is designed to help Christians of all ages see the importance of living in a daily expectation that Christ could come at any time. Indeed, the writer was so sure of this point that he stated that such an event would occur before all the members of his generation had died. The early Christians, based upon their comprehension of what Jesus said, understood that He was going to return to them in just a few years after His ascension.

The import of what is said, in describing the cataclysmic destruction of a great city with the Second Coming of Christ, centers on the necessity to be aware of what is going on around us. We are advised to observe the fig tree. When the buds form and begin to develop, the fig will grow and mature and the harvest will arrive. Seen in this light, the time in which we live may be that time of harvest. If so, the world as we know it will mature and come to an end. Those who have spent a life-time in church have heard this said so often that we tend to think that while it is going to happen, unlike the author of this gospel, it will *not* happen in our generation. But the lesson is clear. Time will cease to move and everything

on earth will stop in the twinkling of an eye. That's pretty quick, isn't it?

We are told that there are signs that will guide us. Wars, nations contesting with other nations, earthquakes, storms, etc. are given as likely events that can usher in the coming of the Lord. We have seen these signs, year after year, and time does not stop. With that observation clearly in mind, the tendency to ignore it is all too human and we often forget the impact of the warning.

The lesson would teach us to be alert, not lax in our morals and ethical standards on any given day. Should we fail in that pursuit, we may fall prey to sinful conduct that has within it the snare of entrapment that leads us to betray our faith and our fellowmen. The trees tell us that summer is coming and this year's harvest may be the last. If we are alert to the demands of faith, we will be ready.

Thursday, April 17

Jesus' Last Supper

(Luke 22:14-25)

by Jan Sheffield

Daily Reading: Luke 22:1-38

"...remember me."

Several weeks ago members of my family gathered for Sunday dinner in a wonderful celebration of the dedication of my youngest cousin's youngest child. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends enjoyed a rare opportunity for so many of us to be together. We chatted happily about who was doing what, how jobs and classes were going, and the cute and amazing accomplishments of the toddlers. Eventually, we began to "remember when." What a great time we had!

When Jesus met for the Passover meal with His disciples in Jerusalem, it was in celebration of an important event in Israel's history. It was a time to remember that the death angel had passed over the homes of those Jews who had painted the doors to their homes with the blood of a sacrificial lamb. It was a time for family and tradition, not unlike times you and I might celebrate with our families and friends, not unlike my family's recent Sunday dinner. But imagine this: Jesus knew it would be the last meal they would share together. I can't think of what I might have said to my family if I'd thought we were having dinner together for the last time. And what did Jesus say? "Remember me." He didn't give them directions for carrying on His ministry or remembering what He'd done or said. All He asked was that these friends *remember* Him.

What does this say to you? It causes me to think of the human-ness of Christ. Sometimes it is almost *easy* to think of Christ's death and resurrection. After all, He was God—how difficult could this situation have been for Him? He knew everything would be all right. And then I read "Remember me." This Christ was a *man*...and that makes the sacrifice of His death and resurrection even more amazing. I cannot fathom the love that brought Jesus Christ to the point of willingness to suffer a horrible death on the cross for me, the love that bought Jesus Christ to the point of willingness to become something so awful that God the Father had to turn away from Him.

"Remember me." As you consider the events of these last days in the earthly life of Christ, wonder at the sorrow He must have felt and the love that allowed Him to give His life for you. Remember.

Friday, April 18

Forgiveness

(Luke 23:26-49)

by Kay Floyd

Daily Reading: Luke 22:39-23:49

As the time loomed near, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray. He took the disciples with Him and petitioned them to pray but they slept, exhausted from grief and sorrow. Jesus was soon betrayed, arrested, and turned over to the enemy. He was taken before both Pilate and Herod who found no grounds for the death penalty. However, at the insistence of an unruly crowd, the murderer Barabbas was released and Jesus was to be crucified.

A large crowd followed as Simon of Cyrene was made to carry the heavy cross to Golgotha, the Skull, where Jesus was nailed to that cross between two criminals. Jesus was mocked, sneered at, ridiculed, and insulted by rulers, soldiers, and bystanders as He hung in pain and agony. If anyone had a right to be vengeful and retaliatory, Jesus did. Instead, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." He forgave those who nailed Him to the cross! One penitent, dying criminal beside Jesus also received forgiveness when he acknowledged Jesus and asked to be remembered in His kingdom. With tender compassion, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise." What a testimony of Jesus' teachings of love, compassion, and forgiveness!

The Good News is that this same forgiveness is available to each of us. As we acknowledge Him and ask Him to forgive us of our sins, He assures each one of us that "you will be with me in Paradise." Hallelujah! Just as Jesus

extends forgiveness to us, we likewise are to forgive those who hurt, wound, and wrong us. His forgiveness empowers us to be the forgiving people He wants us to be.

Saturday, April 19

Jesus' Burial

(Luke 23:50-56)

by J. Dave Garrett

Daily Reading: Luke 23:50-56

By the time Jesus died the crowd had begun to thin. The arguing and yelling and mocking had stopped. The hill called Calvary was quiet now. Death had come to three strangers. In the crowd that day was a man from Arimathea named Joseph. Though a member of the Council, Joseph did not agree with the decision and action to crucify Jesus. He was a good and upright man who was waiting for the kingdom. In the gospel of Matthew Joseph is described as “a rich man.” Mark calls him a “prominent member of the Council.” The writer, John calls Joseph a “secret disciple.” Whatever his position or status, he was a man whose heart was broken for what he witnessed that day. Joseph, this good, upright, waiting for the kingdom, rich, prominent secret disciple went to Pilate to request Jesus’ body. With the silence of death roaring in his ears, Joseph took down Jesus from the cross, wrapped him in linen cloth and placed him in the tomb. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee, followed Joseph and saw the tomb where his body was laid.

During this Holy week the question may not be “who” you have to bury but “what” you have to bury. What habits or attitudes or actions do you and I need to take to the tomb? What pain from the past do we need to lay to rest? What act of forgiveness do we need to offer an offender? What part of our lives do we need to “take down off the cross” and place it in the tomb?

Be The Best! Dave

Easter Sunday, April 20

The Road to Emmaus

(Luke 24:13-35)

by Keith Stillwell

Daily Reading: Luke 24:1-50

I should have known who was riding with me in my red Renault Alliance, but I was too distracted. I was working as a student chaplain at a psychiatric hospital. Each day I met depression, repression, aggression, and schizophrania and most stressful of all I met my own inhibitions. My mind and emotions were full. The daily drive from my home in Frankfort to Highland Baptist Hospital in Louisville gave me plenty of time to think. The radio was always blaring and, in case I ever got stopped in traffic, a magazine or book was always at my side.

Though harried, I found time to attend a seminar, “The Spiritual Life of the Minister,” led by Glenn Hinson. He didn’t say anything about prayer I had not heard before, but there was something compelling about his spirit. Clearly he was a person who experienced a close relationship with God. I desired that kind of relationship for myself. I came away with a deeper sense that prayer is not just talking to God. Prayer is listening. More than that prayer is a relationship. Prayer is being with God and enjoying God’s company.

I turned off the radio and invited God into my red Renault. I discovered that God had been there all along. Jesus was already riding with me and I did not even recognize him. I invited God into the conversations that were already going on in my head. On the road I found peace, stillness, quiet, instruction, and guidance in the surprising appearance of my resurrected Lord.