

Holy Week 2004

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



Lexington Avenue Baptist Church
D a n v i l l e , K e n t u c k y

A Word from Our Pastor

The devotional thoughts you find inside this booklet are designed to help you fully experience Holy Week. Written and illustrated by some of our members, these devotionals take you from the triumphal entry to the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection. Holy Week is filled with the emotions of life.

We do well to experience the full impact of Holy Week on our lives and understand how those events shape our outlook on life today. The hope of the resurrection gives us the hope to face today.

So read these passages of Scripture, reflect on the insights offered, and pray as you journey with Christ through Holy Week 2004.

By His Grace,
Tommy

Illustrations

(On cover and with each devotional)
by Katie Layfield

Palm Sunday, April 4

The Triumphal Entry

(John 12:12-19)

by Elizabeth Thompson

Daily Reading: John 12:12-50



“Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Faithful believers and supporters of Jesus, who laid their palm branches before him; amazed people, from the crowd that had witnessed Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead; inquisitive Jerusalem citizens, who had heard about the

recently performed miracle; Jesus’ twelve dedicated disciples; these various groups of people came when they heard that Jesus was going through Jerusalem, riding on the back of a young donkey. They came and when they found him, they followed him. What a sight it must have been, to see such a great crowd of people, for different purposes but for the same reason, following a man on a donkey! It must have been quite a procession.

The Pharisees gathered together. They looked out upon the throng jamming the streets of Jerusalem. The Pharisees shook their heads and turned to each other. “See, this is getting us nowhere.” “We’ve lost.” “You see that you are accomplishing nothing.”

“Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Beholding such a great mass of people, it would

certainly *seem* like the whole world had begun to follow Jesus. For every person to follow him is what Jesus wanted. Of course, the whole world *had not* begun to follow him, neither literally nor figuratively, because many of the Jews and Romans weren’t joining the group after him, and obviously the Pharisees weren’t following him.

Today, it has become more and more apparent that the whole world is still *not* following Jesus. Every time you look around, you see another person putting Jesus down, or leading someone to a different conviction. Sometimes, it can seem that the easiest thing to do is to pursue another path instead of the one that Jesus has gone down. However, it is then that we must realize, as Christians, we are compelled to rejoin the believers and disciples. We must not be intimidated by the “Pharisees” of our world and forget to follow our Savior. Also, like the witnesses of Jesus’ miracle, we need to spread the word about Him and bring the inquisitive people along to join “the triumphal entry.” Through this, though what they said was false, we may be able to make the Pharisee’s statement true.

“Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Monday, April 5

WWJD-What Would Jesus Do?

(John 13:1-20)

by Betsy Tumey

Daily Reading: John 13:1-38



We often see the words, *What Would Jesus Do?* They are seen on bracelets, T-shirts, bumper stickers, desk plaques, or just about anywhere. The story about Jesus washing his disciples' feet seems to illustrate how we are to answer this question.

Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem for the week of the Passover Feast. A room was needed where they would eat supper together and one was secured at the “zero hour.” No one had remembered to find a servant to be present to wash their feet, a necessary custom of those days. Jesus knew that this was the last time He would be with His disciples where He could talk with them. He was quite disturbed about the arguments they had been having in recent days about which of them was the greatest. Jesus loved them all so much and this attitude was very disturbing to Him. They still just didn't seem to understand how God wanted them to live.

It came to the moment when feet were to be cleansed. None of the disciples volunteered to remedy the problem. So, Jesus humbled himself and took up the role of servant. He did for each of them what none of them would do for each other.

Peter, at first, refused to accept this gift of service that Jesus offered him. Jesus said that those who do not accept Jesus, or gifts given in His name, do not accept God.

Jesus washed the feet of Judas, who He already knew would betray Him. Jesus said that we are even to love and serve our enemies.

“All things, all power” had been given to Jesus by God. Even though He might have had supreme pride, He had supreme humility. Love is always like that. Jesus came into the world to serve. Just as Jesus did, we are to love each other as God loves us and we are to show it by our actions of humbleness and service to others.

When we ask ourselves, “What Would Jesus Do?” we need to remember that He never thought of himself, but always of others. He wanted all of us to know God as He knew Him, the one who loves us unconditionally and is **LOVE**. Another good question we might consider to ask ourselves is whether what we do in our daily lives is to promote ourselves, or God's Kingdom. In other words, “God's Glory, or Mine?”

Tuesday, April 6

Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

(John 14:1)

by Dave Garrett

Daily Reading: John 14:1-31



My heart is not troubled when I am driving the LABC bus and our youth are laughing and singing. My heart is not troubled when I see and cheer for our youth as they swim in the regional swim meet. My heart is not troubled when I enjoy the performance as our youth sing at All State Choir. My

heart is not troubled when LABC members continue to seek God's will and way for their lives after burying a parent, a child, or a spouse. My heart is not troubled when I see and hear our youth play in the state band championship.

My heart is not troubled when I look into the eyes of a horse I'm working with. My heart is not troubled when I smile and remember the great staff persons I have been so blessed to serve with since 1986. My heart is not troubled when I hear youth pray honest caring prayers for their family and friends. My heart is not troubled when a senior adult tells me they pray for me— everyday. My heart is not troubled when I see high school seniors continue to grow in their faith as they prepare to graduate. My heart is not troubled when a dog, I have never met before, greets me tail wagging, a wet nose and licks on my face.

My heart is not troubled when I sit in silence and know that God is God. My heart is not troubled when the LABC weekday preschoolers march and laugh and learn and play around our building. My heart is not troubled when I am asked to pray about something. My heart is not troubled when young people, and not so young people, make professions of faith and are baptized. My heart is not troubled when a two thousand pound bull decides to chase me (though it does beat really fast as I run really fast). My heart is not troubled when I remember the faith of my mother.

My heart is not troubled when I come to LABC on Wednesday nights and the wonderful kitchen crew has prepared the tables and the meal is ready for us to eat. My heart is not troubled when I am riding a curvy stretch of highway with my best friend (since 6th grade). My heart is not troubled when I look at photos of family and friends. My heart is not troubled when a youth tells me... "I love you." My heart is not troubled when a 10 year old reads the scripture during the Sunday morning worship.

My heart is not troubled when I gather with men at 6:30 a.m. on Thursday mornings to discover the scripture and pray. My heart is not troubled when a cat, which after an accident is now scared and has only three legs, is loved and cherished all the more.

My heart is not troubled when a friend calls— just because. My heart is not troubled when I am called "Coach." My heart is not troubled when I come at night to our empty, quiet sanctuary to pray. My heart is not troubled when I remember Holy Week, the cross, the tomb and the resurrection of Christ. My heart is not troubled when for a moment I attempt to understand what price Jesus paid for me... for you.

What keeps your heart from trouble during Holy Week 2004?

Be The Best!

Wednesday, April 7

Jesus is the vine. We are the branches.

(John 15:1-11)

by Shawna Stomberger

Daily Reading: John 15:1-16:33



My husband, John, still complains about his childhood chore of picking up dead branches in his family's tree-filled yard. His father made him pile the branches to burn. Why? Because they were ugly, worthless, and harmful. It's a shame all the branches didn't just stay on the tree and produce leaves—but, they didn't. Jesus gives us the choice; simply, stay on the tree or don't. Seems to be an easy decision, right? None of us want to be worthless branches. But, Jesus said if we "remain in the vine" (or on the tree) we "will bear much fruit." So, I have to ask, *am I* bearing fruit? Well, I have two sons, drive an SUV, and participate in a fun Bunco group. Is this the fruit to which Jesus was referring? I don't think so; "worthless branches" can have those things. Fruit from the father brings *glory* to him . . . like witnessing for Christ, living a humble life, raising godly children, practicing self-control, loving all others, living by faith, praying without ceasing, and giving to the needy. So, again I must ask—am I producing fruit? The answer to that question proves whether I'm on the tree or not.

Unfortunately, if you drive by my home in the summer, you'll see I have much experience with branches producing no fruit. It is embarrassing for me, the gardener, when people witness dead flowers in my front yard. My prayer is that my life will produce enough fruit so God, my gardener, is not saddened when the world looks at me.

Thursday, April 8

Jesus Prays

(John 17:25-26)

by Brittany Stillwell

Daily Reading: John 17:1-26



A dear friend recently gave me a CD. As I read John 17, I hear one of its songs that starts:

*Oh what I would do to have
The kind of faith it takes to
climb out of this boat I'm in
Onto the crashing waves...
(Casting Crowns).*

In this chapter, Jesus earnestly prays for the faith of his friends. He lived in the world—he knew the disciples would need faith to survive. Earlier, they confessed “We don’t understand.” They didn’t understand God’s plan. They did not understand what Jesus was trying to tell them; yet, they still followed him.

Do you ever wonder what God is doing?—Why God allows God’s children to go astray?—Why God is sometimes silent?—Why God allows us to go through the pain of losing someone we love?

*To step out of my comfort zone
Into the realm of the unknown where Jesus is
And he’s holding out his hand....*

Jesus held out his hand to his disciples and to us as the nails drove through his hands. He knows God and promises to reveal himself to us. When these questions surround you, you should stop. When you simply do not understand God and His plan in your life, you should step out of your comfort zone and firmly grab Jesus’ hand. He continues to pull you closer and closer to God.

Friday, April 9

Good Friday

(John 18:36-37, 19:16-30)

by Keith Stillwell

Daily Reading: John 18:1-19:30



Kelsey was born on Good Friday. Dianne and I held her for only a short time before the doctor hurried her away. Something about her breathing concerned them. She was placed in the nursery with a clear plastic oxygen rich bubble placed over her head. I called it a space helmet. Sometime in the night

we learned that her lungs were not fully developed. The next morning a medical team from Vanderbilt Hospital came for her. After connecting her to numerous monitors and placing her in an incubator, she boarded the specially equipped ambulance called, “Angel One,” a baby intensive care unit on wheels. They carried her from Clarksville, Tennessee, where she was born, to Baptist Hospital in Nashville, known for their superb care of premature babies.

So, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit became Kelsey’s home, and ours, for the first week of her life. One nurse took care of her and only two other babies and a doctor was on the floor at all times. Various other specialists also cared for her. Through an IV in her foot she was fed and given medicine. Her temperature was monitored continually. A respirator controlled her every breath, almost. Kelsey’s breaths per minute were carefully numbered and, at first, the respirator

controlled most of her breathing to keep her at the appropriate number. Her blood gases were checked regularly to make sure the oxygen level in her blood was not too low and the carbon dioxide level was not too high. If acceptable levels were maintained, then the number of breaths forced by the respirator could be lowered, forcing Kelsey to breath more on her own. We watched the respirator numbers with great anticipation knowing that single digits meant she could be taken off the respirator.

By Easter Sunday, Kelsey was well on her way to breathing on her own, and we knew she was safe and healthy. We attended Easter services in the hospital chapel. Later that day, as I watched her sleeping peacefully in her incubator, I had time to reflect. I thought, “Maybe the problem is not that she has to be in here, but that she will have to come out. Right now she is safer than she will ever be. Doctors, nurses, and many other medical specialists are hovering over her. Her temperature, diet, and every breath is carefully monitored and controlled. Here she is safe and warm. Soon she will have to enter our dangerous and sometimes cold world. There are no doctors and nurses in my house. Daily she will be at risk to physical and emotional hurt. She will enter a world that can be cruel, unjust, and harmful.” This father’s heart sank a little as he thought of the hurt that his little girl might experience once she came out into the real world.

Then I thought, “Isn’t that exactly what Jesus did for us? Is this not the message of Good Friday and Easter Sunday? Jesus left the safe right hand of his heavenly father to enter our dangerous world.” He was betrayed (18:5,25), arrested (18:12), falsely accused (18:29-30), beaten (19:1), ridiculed (19:2-3), and crucified (19:18). Jesus left the security of heaven and entered our broken world to show us the love of God. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not from this world. . . For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth” (18:36,37, NRSV).

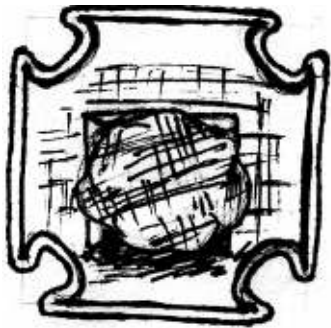
Saturday, April 10

Holy Saturday

(John 19:31-42)

by Tommy Valentine

Daily Reading: John 19:31-42



If ever there were words that resounded hopelessly, they were the words closing this passage—*they placed him in the tomb*. Darkness had descended, the day was ending, the hopes and dreams of the disciples and others who followed Jesus were sealed in the cold, dark, silence of a tomb.

Today is Saturday and we know what tomorrow brings. But when Joseph placed the body of Jesus in the tomb, he did not know that the tomb would burst open in song the next morning. Today, ponder the silence. Consider the darkness. Walk one more day with Jesus through this season.

It's hard to wait in silence isn't it, especially since we know tomorrow is resurrection morning. But know that in the silence, in the waiting, in the darkness when it seems that hope is gone, God is at work in your life and mine. In the silence today, listen for the voice of God calling you by name.

Easter Sunday, April 11

The Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

(John 20:1-21:25)

by Ken Martin

Daily Reading: John 20:1-21:25



We read the newspaper, we watch the news on television, we hear the news on the radio. But most of the news is merely information to us. With the exception of an occasional obituary or some other event that touches our lives directly, most of the facts reported in the news only

remotely impinge upon our daily lives.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, however, is not just another news event. Unlike our daily news, it is an event that demands a response from us, and it demands a new response every time we confront it again. This is one reason why we need to remember the Resurrection of Jesus on a specific day every year. The Gospel of John, perhaps more than any other gospel account of the Resurrection, emphasizes our need to respond.

It is only in the Gospel of John that we read of the risen Jesus coming to Mary Magdalene weeping in the garden. She does not recognize him or even comprehend the meaning of the Resurrection until he speaks her name. Then she responds, “Rabbouni!” and goes to the disciples to say, “I have seen the Lord.”

It is only in the Gospel of John that we read of Thomas.

Some of us criticize him for being skeptical, yet he is just like us in his desire to experience the Resurrection for himself. He had the opportunity to place his hands in the wounds in the body of Jesus. We have an opportunity for the risen Christ to live in our own hearts.

It is only in the Gospel of John that we read of Peter and the other disciples deciding to go fishing; back to what they knew best. But they caught nothing. When Jesus told them to cast their nets on the other side, these professional fishermen had to trust the advice of a rabbi who was the son of a carpenter.

Finally, it is only in the Gospel of John that Jesus tells Peter, “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.” Jesus gives Peter – and each of us – a task of ministry to perform in his name.

We do not merely read about the Resurrection the way we read a news story. We have to respond to it. What is your response today? Do you need to profess your belief in the risen Christ based on your first-hand experience with him, as Thomas did? Do you hear Jesus calling your name, as Mary Magdalene did? Did you need to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus in the non-religious areas of your life, as the fishermen did? Did you need to commit yourself to ministering to others, as Jesus commanded Peter to do? Whoever you are, when the Resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes real in your life, it is not just a news event. It demands a response.