

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

2020



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PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 5

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TRIUMPHAL ENTRY
JOHN 12:12-19
BY DWIGHT LOVAN

Everyone loves a parade. Marching bands, marching soldiers in perfect step, floats, teams of horses, sirens blaring, candy thrown and so much more. The music makes your heart pound: John Phillip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" or maybe Music Man's "Seventy-Six Trombones." Even now I can sense those feelings with my imagination.

This parade was somewhat different, but nonetheless the crowd was fired up.

"He is entering the City!"

"I want to see this man who has taken the countryside by storm."

"Finally, someone who is going to show those Romans 'what for'!"

"They call him the King and say he is a miracle worker."

"There he is...but on a donkey?"

"He sure does not look very impressive or intimidating."

Jesus said, "My time has come." Maybe as he rode into Jerusalem that day he also thought, How many of these people will be cheering for me by Friday? How many will support me this time next year? How many of them will be yelling 'crucify him' by Friday? How many will walk to the cross with me!?

I have been in and seen many parades in my life. I have played those marches. I have been that military marcher in perfect step. I have propelled a float and ridden on one. In doing so, I never once thought about what I was getting into, never once did I think by the end of the

week many in this crowd will be against me, and never once did I know by the end of the week my time on earth was coming to an end.

I have also been in the crowd. The music struck me, and I was impressed by the perfect step of the military and wowed by the floats and other units. You could feel the excitement in the watching crowd, but the enthusiasm quickly waned as the parade moved away from us. My heart and mind quickly moved on to "what's next."

Every year on Palm Sunday the excitement returns. I am part of the crowd, excited to see the King, certain I will follow him no matter what may come, but then I know SUNDAY IS COMING. I know more than that first crowd knew. I know he will overcome the Roman Empire and every empire to come. I am excited, but as the week goes by, my enthusiasm sometimes wanes; I wonder if I really want to meet the needs of the poor, sick, and imprisoned; I wonder whether I am really committed to being all a disciple is called to be; I know Sunday is coming, but do I honestly want the rest of the week? What do you wonder?

Lord, forgive me when I let the calling of the parade pass me by without committing to fully participate in the week to come all the way to the cross and what it really means. Instill within me a desire to follow you no matter the consequences.



MONDAY, APRIL 6
MARY ANOINTS JESUS' FEET;
PLOT TO KILL LAZARUS
JOHN 12:1-11
BY REV. RICK WHITE

The text is a mixture of the commonplace and startling; so is life.

It doesn't surprise us that Jesus, with the Cross looming on his horizon, would want to spend time with friends. It doesn't surprise us that he would be in the home of the one he loved—Lazarus—and it doesn't surprise us that Martha assumes her usual role of serving. Commonplace all. What startles us is Mary, a reputable woman and her extravagant, what some would characterize irresponsible, actions. She applies a perfume of pure nard to the humblest part of Jesus, his unshod feet. She wipes off the excess with the most glorious part of her body, her loosened hair. Judas Iscariot condemns Mary's action as wasteful since the treasured perfume was valued at a year's wages. What others thought, Judas voiced.

Why is Judas even present at this private dinner? Do the 12 "crash" every party to which Jesus is invited? Mark 14:3 identifies the home as that of Simon the leper. In John 6:71 Judas is identified as the son of Simon. Is Judas the elder brother in the family of Lazarus, Mary and Martha? One scholar calls Judas a "masculine Martha gone wrong"! Another surprise? Perhaps. To be sure, it is a strange mix of belief and skepticism, insight and confusion; once again the commonplace and startling together.

Immediately Jesus rebukes Judas, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial." Mary performs a prophetic

act by anointing his body for burial and Jesus acknowledges Mary's understanding and defends her impulsiveness. What others condemned as irresponsible and extravagant; Jesus receives as gift. It is more than his closest followers have done for him. It is more than what Judas will do to him!

Others, even fellow Christians, may not always understand what we do for the Kingdom or why we do it; especially if they view it as irresponsible or extravagant or doesn't meet their expectations. Our actions and decisions are off questioned at best; condemned at worst. Acts of sacrifice, compassion, and faithfulness which others judge or don't comprehend, Jesus receives as gift and responds to our critics, "Leave her alone...leave him alone!" The humblest act of love or the most extravagant gift are received by the Lord with the same sense of gratefulness and kindness.

What do we bring to Jesus and others during this Holy Week; acts of kindness and understanding or words which fracture and judge? The commonplace or the startling?

The text yields one more astonishment; the plot to kill Lazarus. Do you not see the irony? The crowds gawk at Lazarus and fail to see Jesus as the source of his life, their life, our life. They have eyes but do not see. Because Lazarus is alive, the chief priests plot his murder. Once again, the commonplace and startling in one place.

"...The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." May gifts of kindness, understanding, and compassion offered to God fragrant your house and become commonplace. May you always be startled by the depth of God's care and compassion for you revealed in Jesus and his love inspired sacrifice on the Cross. Amen.



TUESDAY, APRIL 7
JESUS SPEAKS ABOUT HIS
DEATH
JOHN 12:20-36
BY CONNIE CROWE

This passage of scripture can be broken down into two distinct segments with Jesus speaking in verses 20-26, likening himself to, “a kernel of wheat [that] falls to the ground and dies, [and] it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (Luke 12:2, NIV). Likewise, a man’s life can be compared similarly—If a person loves his life, he or she will lose it but if he hates his life, he will keep it in eternal life. Jesus goes on to say that those that follow him will receive honor from his Father. I believe this speaks directly to Dr. Felton’s recent sermon which advised congregants that we must be missional in our approach to Christianity—that is, we must live our lives by example and if we hold ourselves up as Christians to the world, our lives must exemplify our faith. That means being a missional church. That means showing kindness to those we may have ignored or not seen before. That means living our faith as a case in point.

After Dr. Felton’s sermon that day, I shopped at a local retailer. With the message still in mind, I attempted to deliberately be more kind and to help the other shoppers by offering to let someone go ahead of me, complimenting the cashier, etc. My change in attitude definitely made my experience better and made me more grounded in my faith.

Seguing into the second passage, verses 27-36, Jesus admonishes the Greeks and others present, including Philip and Andrew, saying, “Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Some congregants hear thunder; others hear

an Angel speak. The Lord admonished the crowd by stating he had glorified Jesus' name and would glorify it again. Jesus goes on to allude to his death, but the crowd does not comprehend the meaning behind his words.

The crowd responded by asking who was the Son of Man. Jesus attempts to explain to the crowd that the Light (i.e. himself) will be here only a short time longer, "Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light."

I believe Jesus' message behind these statements is intended to show us we have a limited time on this earth and we are to exemplify our relationship with Jesus by shining his light to the world. Again, repeating the theme, our role as Christians and as followers of Christ are to live our lives in such a way that we exemplify his glory, faith and mercy.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

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JESUS FORETELLS JUDAS'
BETRAYAL
JOHN 13:21-32
BY JULIA RHORER

With all of my 18 years of life I have been blessed with, I have learned how precious friendships are. Friends are gifts and blessings. Friendships generally have reciprocated feelings in the relationship, correct? Otherwise, we would all be best friends with our favorite singer, author, etc. When I read about Jesus foretelling Judas' betrayal, I can only wonder, "How was Jesus able to remain friends with Judas after discovering the fate to come?"

If a close friend were to forget to save me a seat in the cafeteria, yes, I would be upset, but I would forget about the little event in 10 minutes, tops. When Jesus is predicting his betrayal, he states to his disciples, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." (John 13:21). After this statement, Jesus does not flee from the dinner, lash out at his betrayer, or cry out in despair. He continues on with dinner as if his foretelling was just a little event that would become a forgotten memory within minutes.

Jesus knew in his heart who was going to betray him and what was to come within the next few hours. Jesus could have easily fled the area in order to save himself, but he didn't. He could have easily stopped his betrayer by reasoning with him, but he didn't. Instead, Jesus remained seated with his closest friends surrounding him. How? How was he able to face Judas knowing his fate?

Judas leaves the dinner after discovering he is Jesus' betrayer. Once Judas leaves, Jesus commands to his disciples, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34). In Matthew chapter 5, verse 44, Jesus teaches his disciples to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Jesus stayed true to his words given the difficult circumstance. He was able to face his betrayer with love. Jesus not only faced Judas with love, but he loved Judas unconditionally. No doubt, Jesus loved Judas with his whole heart until the bitter end. Jesus' love for Judas triumphs the hate and greed that consumed Judas' heart. Love always wins.

If you are reading this, you probably have more experience with friendships and relationships than I, but as Christians, we both have room for improvement and learning. Jesus teaches us a valuable lesson on how to treat your neighbor, regardless of whether you like your neighbor or not. Jesus not only sacrificed himself for me and you, but he sacrificed his life for his enemy.

My message for you today is to reflect on yourself and how you handle negative situations with a friend or family member. Acting out of love can be hard, but it is what Jesus commands of us. By acting out of love, you are rewarded with contentment, grace, and peace of heart. For instance, having a little sister is tough at times, but when I act out of love, all is good. It also saves me from arguing with her for the next 30 minutes. You get my point. Treating others with love is better for your heart, soul, and mind.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." ~Martin Luther King Jr.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 9
JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES'
FEET
JOHN 13:1-17
BY DR. KEITH FELTON

What if you knew that today was your last day to live? What would you do? How would you want to be remembered? What wisdom would you impart to those closest to you? How would you say you love them?

These are tough questions which we don't have to answer, because none of us know when our last breaths will be drawn – but Jesus did. Jesus knew on that Thursday evening he was providing his final instructions for his followers. He knew that within hours he would be betrayed, unjustly criminalized and crucified. The gravity of the moment was not lost on him. Jesus had been preparing for these final hours for about three years, if not for most of his life. Steve Bezner once wrote, “Sometimes I joke about what I'd do if I had one day left to live. Eat junk, go crazy, etc. Today it hit me: Jesus knew – and he washed feet.”

Jesus could have done any number of things for his last moments with his friends. He could have had a grand party and feast. He could have put crowns on the heads of each of the apostles. He could have put a crown on his own head. He could have taken them to a mountaintop and allowed them all to see another Transfiguration moment. But he didn't. Instead, Jesus took on the role of a servant. The slaves or servants of a typical household in this time and place would have been responsible for washing the feet of visitors who had been on the dusty roads. Jesus capitalizes on the irony of the cleansing activity. He washes the feet of his disciples even though they understood him as Rabbi, Master or Lord. Peter was correct. They should have been washing Jesus' feet, but in classic Jesus form, the tables were turned.

Massive amounts of sermons, studies, books, scholars and theologians have poured over this passage. There can be multiple teachings and lessons taken from what Jesus did that night. I tend to think Jesus was simply demonstrating what he had been trying to communicate for three years: Sacrificial love with a selfless servant heart is the way to heal the world. "Blessed are the meek... The first shall be last, the last shall be first... Love one another... If any want to follow me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross," Jesus was essentially saying that the way to follow him was to be humble, sacrificial, compassionate, selfless and to love unconditionally.

What examples can we give of our own lives where we figuratively "wash the feet" of others?

Prayer: "Lord, you who have shown an abundance of mercy to me – Help me show this mercy to others. Help me be a servant that reminds people of you. Help me have the strength to even wash the feet of the Judases in my life. May I be known as one who loves sacrificially, humbly and with no regard for acclamation. 'We know love by this: that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.'"



GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 10
JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH
JOHN 19:16-30
BY GENE METTS

If I could somehow be transported back through time to the day Jesus was crucified on the cross, and if I could have been right there, I wonder what I would have done.....

The day was dismal, the sky was dark, and the wind was picking up. I don't know how long I had been there, but I found myself beneath the cross of Jesus. It seemed as if time was standing still, but someone said Jesus had been there on that old rugged cross for almost six hours. I was struck by how cruel the people were! There were some people passing by, and they mocked him and hurled insults at Him. I looked around and saw four soldiers casting lots for Jesus' garment. Near the cross was the mother of Jesus, grieving, and John came over and put his arm around her. Another soldier soaked a sponge in wine vinegar, lifted it up to Jesus' lips and after He had received the drink, He cried out, "It is finished!"

After a while, I had the courage to look up into His face...sorrow and love flowed mingled down. The hands that had recently washed the disciples' feet now were broken, bruised and nailed to a cross! Suddenly, a soldier came and pierced His side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of water and blood...that blood...that precious blood...the only thing that could wash me clean and make me justified in the Father's eyes.

Tears ran down my cheeks! I was overwhelmed with sorrow! My sin, not in part but the whole, was nailed to the cross and I bare it no more! How can it be that my God should die for me? How deep is the Father's

love! The punishment that brought me peace was on Him! He was pierced for my transgressions! He was crushed for my iniquities! Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer! One day I will be there in His presence, totally amazed He could love me, a sinner condemned unclean.

More familiar words from old hymns came rushing to my mind.....

"O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow."

"But this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom."

"He had no tears for His own griefs but sweat drops of blood for mine."

"For the dear lamb of God left His glory above to bear it to dark Calvary."

"There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary."

"Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

"Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

"Oh how I love Him, Savior and Friend. How can my praises ever find end."

Now, back to the present, this Holy Week in the year 2020, I challenge you to read again the account of the crucifixion also found in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23. Get alone in a quiet place and spend some time pondering the things Jesus went through during His crucifixion. Mentally put yourself there, observing the sights and sounds and consider the grace and mercy He **lavished** on us. Marvelous, infinite grace; grace that is greater than all our sin!!



HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 11
THE BURIAL OF JESUS
JOHN 19:38-42
BY REV. MARCUS PERNELL

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Holy Saturday. In the Gospel according to John, 19:38-42, we're told of Christ's burial. Joseph of Arimathea, one of Christ's disciples, disguises his identity and takes Christ's body away per Pilate's permission. Meeting up with Joseph, Nicodemus brings an excess of myrrh and aloe spices to embalm the body. On the Jewish Day of Preparation, the two of them then place the physical body of Christ in a brand-new tomb within a garden where Christ had been crucified.

As I personally read and reflect upon this narrative, several thoughts come to mind. Christ's burial brings the Scriptures' many echoes of the Son of Man dying. The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 asks the question, "Why was he buried?" and gives the answer, "His burial testified that He had really died." Christ indeed completed his mission of what he set out to do. After successfully carrying out this mission, I could not even begin to imagine being Joseph and Nicodemus handling and caring for the physical body of Christ. Could you?

I also wonder what relationship Christ's burial and Holy Saturday have. I think the significance of Saturday rests is the fact that it is a day of Sabbath rest. In the creation accounts of Genesis, it is upon the seventh day that God rested from God's own work. As Christ's body rests on this "Holy Saturday," so, too, does God by abiding in Sabbath rest.

Rest is such a funny, interesting concept to me. What does "rest" mean in our day and age? Sleeping in? Taking a Sunday nap? Vegging out on the couch? Not going to work? The questions could go on and on, but I think they all point back to us - to me - as the individual. Here, on Holy Saturday, I believe rest (Sabbath rest) best resembles those moments suspended in time where we reflect on the very mystery of God. What did that Saturday look like for society after Christ was crucified? Some may have gone about their daily lives, perhaps. For others, I'd imagine it was very sobering and quiet, such is the case I think for Joseph and Nicodemus.

For this Holy Saturday during Holy Week, I invite you to take up the challenge of Sabbath rest and reflect on what the death of Christ means for your life. I call this a challenge, because I think our concept of both rest and Sabbath rest needs to be revamped completely. Be quiet in your mind, body, and spirit. Tune out all the distractions, to-do lists, and the very things that keep us on-the-go. Think and talk about the mystery of God - who God is in the midst of this day.



EASTER SUNDAY

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12
THE RESURRECTION OF
JESUS

JOHN 20:1-18

BY DR. KEITH STILLWELL

This is a strange moment in time. One day I receive an email, “We are monitoring the Coronavirus situation, but for now we are still on for the conference,” (a huge Appalachian Studies Conference I was to participate in). The next day’s email states, “After much spirited debate, we have decided to go on with the conference. The decision was not unanimous.” And on the third day, “The conference is cancelled.” These rapidly changing scenarios continue to be repeated daily. We are on edge, not sure what the future holds, worried about the economy, concerned we might run out of toilet paper, depressed about no basketball, worried about what and who we touch, and we watch church online.

Jesus’ followers were on edge, to say the least. For weeks he had been making strange, dark statements like, “A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me,” (John 16:16 NRSV). Late Thursday, Jesus was arrested and put on trial throughout a long night. On Friday he was crucified. Jesus’ followers were scattered while most of the disciples were locked in a room when Mary Magdalene dared to visit the tomb. Uncertainty continued when she found the stone rolled away. At her news, Peter and John ran to find an even more disturbing situation with the tomb empty, Jesus’ grave cloths still laying there.

Then hope. Angels. “Why are you weeping?” A strange gardener. The resurrected Jesus revealed. Good news! “I am going home to my father

in heaven, who is your father too. I am going to be with God, who is your God as well." Mary's announcement to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." Good news of hope in a dark hour.

The Coronavirus is dangerous. Lives are threatened, and at least disrupted. We don't know how long this will last. There is no downplaying the seriousness of this time. Likewise, all of the problems Jesus' disciples faced didn't go away with his resurrection. The darkness was real. But now they understood what mattered most. In times of uncertainty we are still God's scattered church even locked in our homes. When we are not able to gather in a church building, we are reminded the church is not a building. We are the church. We are people of the resurrection. In the midst of trials, we live by faith, hope, peace, love. We have a mission to share that good news to an anxious world. Christ is risen.



MONDAY, APRIL 13
"AS THE FATHER HAS SENT
ME, SO I SEND YOU."
JOHN 20:19-23
BY DIANE MASON

As a little girl I was a member of GA's: Girl's in Action. We learned scripture, we learned about missionaries, both at home and abroad, and we learned to go and do, to spread our love of Jesus with the disenfranchised.

More than anything, I wanted to be a foreign missionary. I would pray God would make me a missionary but not one of those at home kind of missionaries. I wanted to be a foreign missionary. It broke my heart bit by bit to learn God's will for my life was very different from what I had dreamed. Coming to terms with that heartbreak was a big part of coming to terms with who God was in my life.

I never got to be a foreign missionary, but I learned how to be a missionary from my own home. I got to go to Owsley County with the youth, so they could learn how to be missionaries from home. I cooked casseroles, I hammered nails, I sat and let somebody talk because they were heartbroken.

We all have learned about being missionaries from home. We love the disenfranchised and needy.

Verse 23 always bothered me. There's a lot of power in not forgiving someone. You hold the keys to the relationship, to allowing that person to

be part of your life. It's a heavy burden to not forgive. Perhaps that is why we are encouraged to forgive each other so often.

Here am I, send me, to feel the power of the Holy Spirit, to minister from home base, to forgive those who need to be forgiven and to spread the love of Jesus wherever we are.