

JESUS IS ALIVE

7 DAY HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

INTRODUCTION

Each day of Holy Week provides us with an opportunity to slow down, remember, and worship. This is exactly what we hope to do as we lead up to Easter Sunday together. In this reading plan, you will find a day by day devotional reading through each day of Holy Week. Through reading in the Gospel of Matthew, you will follow along with the events of each day as you prepare your heart for Easter Sunday. Most importantly, each day begins with reading the Scripture and taking your time looking at the story. After the Scripture reading you will find a short devotion for that day. Lastly, there are a few questions provided to spark personal prayer time in response to what you have read. These questions are simply meant to help start time in prayer. Hopefully you will find your prayer and worship extending past those questions.

OUR HOPE IS THAT THIS
WEEK WOULD BE FULL OF
WORSHIP FOR YOU.

"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Hebrews 13:20-21

DAY 1: PALM SUNDAY

April 14

Matthew 21:1-11

Reflection:

Palm Sunday. Many of us will know this day of Holy Week by this title and as we read the story that unfolds, we quickly see why. On the last week of Jesus' life, Jesus makes the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, welcomed by people spreading palm branches before Him. Triumphal Entry is a peculiar way to describe the events that happen on this Sunday. Many may think that Jesus would come into the city high, mighty, and making much of himself, but instead Jesus comes lowly. He comes meek. He comes humble. Jesus enters the city being acclaimed as the Messiah, but He comes in such a lowly form. As much as this arrival may shock us, it makes complete sense as we look at who Jesus is. Philippians 2:1-11 tell us all about the humility of Jesus as He came to this earth to save. Jesus, though He had everything, takes on flesh, humbles himself, and comes to save us. Jesus who was perfect in every way, actually comes to die in the place of sinful men and women so that we could be saved. This is the very heart of Jesus. Palm Sunday is a reminder that our King has come for us, but He has come in humility. He has come to save us, serve us, and bring us into His family. Today we must remember as we start off Holy Week, Christianity is not about what you can accomplish for Christ. Instead, Christianity is completely about what Christ has done for you. Our Savior has come to us in a way we were never prepared for. He took on flesh, was born in a lowly way, and on the last week of His earthly ministry, He enters the city in that same manner. Today, marvel at Jesus and His humility that has been poured out to save us.

Questions for Personal Prayer:

What strikes you about the humility of Jesus in this passage? Does the Gospel overwhelm your heart to the point of complete worship or has it become too familiar? How often do you slow down and simply thank God for His grace?

DAY 2: MONDAY

April 15

Matthew 21:12-17

Reflection:

The final week of Jesus' earthly life happened during Passover week, a time when Jewish people from around the world gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate God freeing their ancestors from Egyptian slavery. Part of celebrating Passover included visiting the temple to worship God by making gifts and sacrifices. On Monday of Holy Week Jesus entered the temple, possibly for this purpose, only to find it set up like a marketplace. Temple leaders sold sacrificial animals at inflated prices to those traveling in from long distances. Money changers charged people a fee to convert their currency to temple currency in order to purchase these animals. People far from God were ignored and the poor were taken advantage of, all while the religious attempted to hide their hypocrisy behind temple activity. In the words of the Prophets, this house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7) had been turned into a den of thieves (Jeremiah 7:1). Upon recognizing this, Jesus came undone. In righteous anger he turned over the tables of the money changers, drove out those selling animals, and openly rebuked the temple leaders. He then went on to heal the blind and lame in the temple as the children cried out to him as Messiah! This dramatic and emotional scene serves as a great reminder that Jesus hates hypocrisy. More specifically, the type of hypocrisy that dishonors him, hurts people he loves, and then uses religious behavior as a cover up. We do this today when we attend church, give money, serve in ministry, go to Bible studies, and practice morality all to hide the fact that our love for God and people is lacking. Simply going through the motions without genuine affection is a sure sign of religious hypocrisy. The good news is, Jesus died for hypocrites too. So if this sounds like you, grace is available today.

Questions For Personal Prayer:

Where do you see religious hypocrisy in your life currently? Are your affections truly set on Jesus? Where are your affections divided? How are you failing to love people, and what types of people are you failing to love?

DAY 3: TUESDAY

April 16

Matthew 21:23-46

Reflection:

Actions speak louder than words! This is probably a familiar statement to most of us. It's often stated or implied by a leading movie character attempting to develop some moral truth within the storyline, or perhaps we've heard our parents, grandparents, or spiritual mentors quote it verbatim. While our Scripture reading for today doesn't specifically mention this statement, it most definitely can be seen in principle as Jesus teaches some very hard truths to the chief priests and elders in the temple. After returning from spending the night in city of Bethany, Jesus makes his way to the temple where his authority is challenged by the religious leaders. These men had been entrusted with God's word and his plan for redemption, but they had failed to be obedient stewards. They failed to recognize John the Baptist as a true prophet, Jesus as the true Messiah, and the Gospel being made available to all who believe. They didn't steward what they had been given by God very well. They were simply not obedient to the Word of God. Their actions failed to live up to their words.

We have been given the same incredible truth to steward, and the key is not so much how well we speak it, but how well we obey it. Yes, speaking the truth is extremely important, but we had better obey if we are going to be faithful stewards and credible witnesses for Jesus. As we prepare for Easter Sunday, we must ask ourselves if we are living as obedient stewards of the Gospel. In other words, do our actions speak louder than our words?

Questions for Personal Prayer:

Do you ever find yourself struggling to obey God's word?

Are there specific areas of God's word you have trouble obeying (relational, physical, emotional, financial, etc.)? If so, will you commit to lay those down in repentance?

DAY 4: WEDNESDAY

April 17

Matthew 26:1-16

Reflection:

What is our motive for worshipping Jesus? In our Scripture reading for today, we see a stark contrast between someone whose heart is devoted to Christ through giving sacrificially to Him, and someone who seeks personal gain from Jesus. After Jesus makes it very clear that in two days he would be handed over for His crucifixion, we see a beautiful picture of worship. A woman takes her personal burial oil, which was very expensive, and pours it on the head of Jesus as an act of worship. This moment was so significant that Jesus said it would be recorded in Scripture. Wow! She was overwhelmed by who Jesus was and she sacrificed something for the Lord that cost her dearly. In contrast, Judas, one of Jesus' own disciples, does something very different. Instead of giving sacrificially to Jesus and honoring him in an act of worship, he seeks to gain monetary compensation for selling him out. His motive was impure and selfish.

While our acts of worship may look a little different than what we see in our text, our motives can be the same. We can come to Christ in humble adoration, or we can come to Him seeking selfish gain. It's a matter of the heart which will ultimately reveal what Jesus really means to us. As you approach Easter Sunday, will you ask the Lord to prepare your heart for worship?

Questions for Personal Prayer:

What are your heart's motivations for worshipping the Lord? Is it for selfish gain, or out of humble adoration of Jesus? What may be keeping you from fully surrendering all to Him?

DAY 5: MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 18

Matthew 26:20-75

Reflection:

Today is known as Maundy Thursday. This phrase Maundy comes from the Latin rendering of John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." Maundy Thursday is known as the Thursday of the commandment that Jesus gave. Love is a word that has lost much of its meaning in our culture today. We "love" everything. We love important things, but we also love silly things. We love our spouses, family, and friends but we also love our favorite foods and sports teams. With love being such a broadly used term, what does it mean that Jesus loved us? How has He loved us? After Jesus spends Passover with His disciples, washes their feet, and institutes the Lord's Supper with them, Jesus goes to pray in Gethsemane. This was no quick prayer asking for "traveling mercies" for the next day. Instead, when Jesus goes to pray in Gethsemane, verse 38 tells us that Jesus was sorrowful, even to death. He prays that if it is possible, that the cup He was going to face would pass from Him. What is happening here, and what does it have to do with love? As Jesus prays in anguish at Gethsemane, He is looking forward to the "cup" that He was going to face the next day. Jesus, preparing for the cross, sees that the cross is not only physical suffering, but there was going to be something else taking place that day. Jesus was seeing the payment He was going to make for the sins of God's people when He goes to the cross. As we prepare for Good Friday, we should see here that our sin is no "small thing." When Jesus goes to the cross to be sacrificed in our place, He was going to pay the debt in full. This is love. Jesus laying down His life for His friends. He has done just that. He paid the debt in full.

Questions for Personal Prayer:

Do you see the sin in your life as small and insignificant? How does Jesus' actions display His love and humility towards us as His people? How is the love of Jesus different from other worldly loves that you know?

DAY 6: GOOD FRIDAY

April 19

Matthew 27:1-61

Reflection:

Mocked. Accused. Beaten. Tortured. Condemned. This is how Good Friday began for Jesus. The clothes were stripped from his body, his hands were tied to a post above his head, and trained Roman soldiers took turns tearing away his flesh using a whip comprised of leather, bone, and glass. A purple robe was placed on his back and a crown of thorns onto his head while more soldiers spit on him and jokingly saluted him as the King of the Jews. Afterwards, a wooden beam weighing 75-125 pounds was strapped to his shoulders as he was forced to march toward his execution site. Being too weak to carry the beam on his own, a man from the crowd was chosen to help. When Jesus finally arrived at Golgotha, nails were driven through his hands and feet, his cross was dropped into the ground, and for hours he hung there, naked and covered in his own blood, sweat, and tears. Unfortunately this was not the worst suffering Jesus would experience. At noon that day, darkness fell over the land and God poured out his wrath and judgment on Jesus. For the first time in eternity the relationship between Father and Son was broken, and the Son cried out in agony: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:46). The answer: for you and me. Jesus became our sin that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). Every ounce of judgment reserved for us fell on Jesus at the cross. God abandoned him to adopt us. Jesus tasted hell so we would never know hell's reality. As Jesus breathed his final breath, the curtain in the temple separating sinful man from Holy God was torn in two. The way to God was now open to anyone who would come in faith through Jesus! The earth shook, rocks split, tombs opened, the dead came back to life, and a Roman Centurion declared in faith, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt 27:54). May we stand at the foot of the cross today in awe and wonder at what the Son of God has done for us.

Questions For Personal Prayer:

Are you still captivated by the cross like you were when you first met Jesus? Are you amazed that God would give up his Son to make you a son or daughter in his family? How is this incredible demonstration of love affecting your life today?

DAY 7: SATURDAY

April 20

Matthew 16:21-28

Reflection:

I want you to imagine what Saturday of Holy Week would have been like for the disciples of Jesus. The man that loved them, served them, sacrificed for them, and taught them so much had just been put to death. These men left so much behind to follow Jesus and now He was gone, brutally put to death. On top of losing the one they loved, many of them are surely now feeling guilt and shame over the events that took place on Friday. As Jesus went to His most desperate hour, many of them had fled, and even Peter denied Him three times. On this Saturday, while there may have been a range of emotions, there should have been a great amount of hope. Matthew 16:21-28 are incredible verses to look back on with the events that have transpired on Holy Week. In these verses, Jesus perfectly foretells everything that was going to come on this final week. While Friday was an agonizing day for the disciples, Saturday should have been full of anticipation with the promise that Jesus would be raised. We find ourselves in this place in life. Many of us are familiar with suffering, pain, and agony. We hate the sin that plagues us and we desire to be free from it. We are fighting the flesh, waging war against the enemy, and long for the day that we see Jesus face to face. In a similar way, we sit here today in a position that is like the disciples on this Saturday. We are waiting on Jesus. Today, are you longing to see Jesus face to face? He has promised that we will be with Him someday, and that we will be free from everything that plagues us. On that day, we will know Him in a way that we haven't yet. Free from sin and experiencing perfect communion with Him. Let your anticipation be full of hope and not despair. We wait eagerly today for the day that we will finally be with Jesus forever.

Questions for Personal Prayer:

Do you long to be with Jesus or have you become caught up in love of temporary things? How does God use seasons of waiting to fix our focus on Him and things above? What unshakable hope do we have as Christians despite whatever circumstance we may face in life on this side of eternity?

DAY 8: EASTER SUNDAY

April 21

Matthew 28

Reflection:

"He is not here, for he has risen." These are life-changing, eternity-altering, and assurance-giving words that are spoken about Jesus on the day we celebrate as Easter Sunday. Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus made many extraordinary claims, gave great promises, and even assured that His disciples would be with Him forever. As Friday came and ended with the crucifixion of Jesus, surely all of these claims were now in question. Those who were skeptical had a moment to scoff. Those who were hopeful, now confused and questioning. But then Sunday morning comes and an empty tomb is discovered. Sunday morning comes and the Jesus that was put to death on Friday, that very same Jesus is now alive. Sunday morning happened and assurance comes rushing back into the picture. With Jesus rising from the dead, this is the "stamp of approval" over everything He ever said, taught, and promised. This stamp of approval means that we, now and forever, have a Savior. This means that our sin has been paid in full and that we will be raised to new life, even if we have to taste death on this earth. The resurrection of Jesus changes absolutely everything for His people. Do you find yourself tired, weary, and broken? Remember your Savior. Are you apathetic, bored, and wandering in your faith? Come back to the one who was killed, buried, raised, and is now alive! This Easter, turn your eyes completely to Jesus, because it is only in Him that we can have life.

Questions for Personal Prayer:

How does Jesus' promise to be with us always empower us to live out our faith in the world today? Why is the resurrection so essential to our faith?