

THE POINT KNOX

HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

LENT 2023



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A Letter From Pastor Adam

Thank you for joining me on this Holy Week journey. If you've never spent much time focusing on Holy Week, this is a great opportunity to lean into the events and teachings of Jesus in the final week leading up to his death, burial, and resurrection. It's a time to pause, reflect, and then rejoice in the power and wonder of Jesus' love and sacrifice.

We've taken some time to prepare a series of 8 devotions, beginning on Palm Sunday. Each of these devotions will include a prayer as well as some discussion or reflection questions. I encourage you to do this devotion with your whole household, be that a roommate, spouse, or kids. Allow the devotion and questions to start a conversation, but please don't feel bound to stop when you get through the questions.

In addition to the daily devotions, some days have short activities to further help you connect with Jesus. We anticipate 5-15 minutes will be needed each day.

I hope you find great joy in this week, and that these devotional activities help you experience the love of Jesus.

In Christ,
Pastor Adam

Palm Sunday

READ:

Matthew 21:1-11

DEVOTION:

Up until this point, Jesus had proven himself quite well. It made a lot of sense to follow Him. His disciples were convinced He was the Messiah - they were eyewitnesses to countless miracles and teachings. His current followers were convinced He was the Messiah - the crowd that had seen him bring Lazarus to life was still following him now into Jerusalem.

You see, once you see a few dead people raised to life, it makes sense to pay attention to the guy doing the rising. It makes sense to obey the guy, even when he says to casually borrow a stranger's young donkey. It makes sense to start spreading the news about the Messiah when you've met the guy who raised your very dead friend back to life.

It makes sense.

It makes sense to celebrate as he enters the holy city - and what a celebration this crowd threw! Palm branches, shouts of "Hosanna!", a *donkey*. (You know it's party time when the donkey shows up!) **Can you imagine the scene?** Jesus is smiling and laughing while sitting on a small donkey. In typical Jesus fashion, He's chatting with the kids running beside Him and paying attention to the people the rest of the world ignores. The crowds

are waving palm branches and laying out their cloaks in front of Him as he heads toward the city. The disciples are fully reveling in the experience - finally, some hard earned positive attention! The Pharisees rebuke Jesus from the crowd and He's right there with the clap-back: "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!" But there was no need for stone-singing - it was a praise party if there ever was one! **Close your eyes and try to picture it.**

Jesus was the only one who knew this "triumphant entry" was the first of a series of events that would lead to the crowd changing their tune. By the end of the week, "Hosanna," would change into "Crucify him!" The palm branch wavers would turn into crucifixion onlookers.

Remember how we said it made sense to obey and follow Jesus up to this point? Well, by the end of the week, it's going to make less sense. This crowd, even his disciples, they're all going to begin second guessing their original decision to follow Him. Because that man who raised others to life is going to be killed. He's not going to put up a fight. He's not going to miracle his way out of it. He's going to die like a "lamb led to the slaughter." (Isaiah 53:7)

It's easy to follow Jesus when we see Him working. It's easy to praise Him when we can pinpoint the ways He is moving in our lives. But what about when He's silent? What about when He doesn't do what you expect? What about those seasons when you don't feel anything at all?

We learn through Palm Sunday, that Jesus knows. He sees the bigger picture. He's still worthy of our obedience, even when we don't understand the command. He is still God, even when He's not moving in ways we see. He is still the best to follow, even when it doesn't make sense.

Want to read this story in the other Gospels?

John 12:12-19, Luke 19:28-44, Mark 11:1-11

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.)
Jesus, thank you for seeing more than I can see. Thank you for being worthy of my obedience and praise no matter what. Thank you for loving your disciples, the crowd, and me - even when we're fickle, even when we mess up, even when we disappoint you. God, help us praise you in good times and bad times. Help us listen for your voice and obey you, when it's easy and when it's hard. And Lord, please be with us this week as we walk through Holy Week - that we can get to know you better and fall in love you more. Amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think Jesus felt as He went into Jerusalem?
2. What are you hoping to learn or experience during Holy Week this year?
3. How are you seeing God move right now?

Monday

READ:

Mark 11:12-19

DEVOTION:

When we think of Jesus, the kind and tender-hearted miracle worker often comes to mind. The gentle Jesus who feeds the hungry and eats with sinners seems so inviting. Yet today we see Jesus angry. He's cursing fig trees and flipping tables. After yesterday's warm reception into Jerusalem, what went so wrong?

On the surface, perhaps he was tired (vs. 11). Or maybe he was "hangry" (vs. 12)? Both of those reasons could lead us to lose our cool. Yet neither seem like Jesus. When we read about the money changers and those who bought and sold (vs. 15-16), it's tempting to even believe his anger was just about the commercialization of faith. Perhaps Jesus doesn't like money or economic gain. But even this seems a little shallow for Jesus.

The Passover marked one of the most important holidays for the people of God. The hustle and bustle of activity, to the normal observer, was a sign of lots of energy, excitement, and passion. It was evidence of faithful believers from all over the region gathering to sacrifice, remember, and celebrate God's goodness.

The money changers played an important role, allowing people to exchange foreign currency for

their annual temple tax, as well as to offer their sacrifice. Why would Jesus be mad at people being able to join in worship and connect with God?

Well, like the fig tree, all the signs of life bore no fruit. Specifically, the money changers set up in the outer court, the court reserved for Gentile believers. As a result, those on the “inside”, the Jewish believers, could come and go freely to connect with God, yet those “outside” the Jewish family were hindered in their celebration and connection with God. The noisy, busy activity gave the appearance of life, yet bore no fruit in blessing all nations and connecting all people to God.

Sure, they were busy “doing” all that God had commanded them. But God desires more for his people than just doing the right things; He wants his people (all people) to be with him. Including those often “outside” or disconnected. This is why Jesus declares that, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations” (vs. 17).

And this is the point of it all: No amount of doing the right stuff matters if it is disconnected from being with God and experiencing his love. When our busy life, even our religious activities, prevent us from being with God, Jesus is angry. Angry enough to clear tables, to curse trees, and even give his own life that we may live.

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.) Jesus, you desire that all people would be able to come to you in prayer. More than anything, you want us to learn to be with you. Forgive us for the ways we are too busy to connect with you. As we go through this Holy Week, reveal the good yet distracting things we need you to remove from our lives. Help our faith bear fruit, not only *in* us, but also *through* us for those still disconnected. Amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Picture the scene in the temple. The day after praising Jesus as King, the people witness him overthrowing tables and disrupting worship. How do you think they may have felt watching this?
2. In what ways does Jesus overturning tables make you uncomfortable? On the “flip” side (haha, get it?), how does it bring you comfort?
3. As you go about your week, what activities or busyness make it difficult to connect with God? Is there anything Jesus may want to remove from your schedule to help you connect with him?

Tuesday

READ:

Matthew 26:14-16, Matthew 27:3-5

DEVOTION:

Judas. It's hard to not feel bad for the guy. For over three years, he walked in Jesus' close circle of 12. He witnessed the miracles, heard the teachings, and participated in the work of Jesus' ministry. Yet, despite all these incredible experiences and moments, when the opportunity arose, he betrayed Jesus.

History remembers Judas for this one moment, this one betrayal. Perhaps he betrayed Jesus with malicious intent, eager for Jesus to suffer. Perhaps his selfish heart desired nothing more than to make a buck (or 30 pieces of silver). If this is true, it seems fair to remember Judas for his failure and betrayal.

Yet, according to Matthew, Judas' motives may have been more misguided than evil. Consider the circumstances: Jesus, a seemingly ordinary man from Nazareth comes on the scene at the age of thirty. Sure, the invitation to follow was nice. The lifestyle and public attention wasn't that bad either. It was cool to be in the inner circle.

But Jesus, he was making some big claims. He claimed to be sent by God, to have the power to forgive sins, even to be the very Son of God. In the few weeks leading up to this moment, Jesus had

even begun to claim that he would be killed and rise from the dead. Jerusalem and Judea were in a frenzy - the people wanting Jesus as King, the religious leaders believing Jesus was misguided and heretical at best, and the political leaders fearing an uprising or insurrection were on the horizon.

So, given the chance, what would you do? Would you consider helping a friend? Would you hope the priests could help your lost and misguided friend find his way? So Judas asks, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" (26:15). Is it worth it to risk my friendships, my status, my life to try and stop a friend from believing he holds power over death itself? Apparently, for Judas, it was not.

Only a few days after agreeing to betray Jesus, just hours after actually doing so, Judas regrets the decision. He returns to the priests to try and make it right (27:3). But it was too late. The very people responsible for forgiving sins refuse to forgive Judas (27:4). Left with his sorrow and regret, he commits suicide.

And so, regardless of his motive, we remember Judas for his actions, for his mistakes, for his regrets. We call him cursed as one unforgiven. Yet, his error led to *our hope*. For in his betrayal, Jesus suffered and died. And therein lies our hope for forgiveness - that our actions, mistakes, and regrets need not define us. So perhaps, in a weird way, we should be grateful today for the man who would betray Jesus.

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.)
Jesus, thank you for not defining our future by our past regrets. Thank you for forgiving us, that even our darkest moments may be made new. When the world tempts us to betray you, give us strength to trust in you instead. Amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. It's possible Judas betrayed Jesus in part because of the unbelievable things Jesus said and did. What story of Jesus' miracles or teachings is hardest for you to believe?
2. Have you ever felt like Judas? Why or why not?
3. When Judas was remorseful, he was refused forgiveness. Who needs your forgiveness today? Are you able to give it to them?

Wednesday

READ:

Mark 12:28-34

DEVOTION:

If you were asked to summarize the entire Old Testament, what would you say? Would you highlight certain characters or recount key events? Would you focus on God's judgement and wrath, or jump straight to the promises of a coming savior? For Jesus, when faced with this challenge, the answer is simple: Deuteronomy and Leviticus. *Really?* Come on, Jesus.

In the middle of this busy and exhausting week, the religious leaders begin bombarding Jesus with questions in an effort to trap him (you could even say they were "texting in questions" before it was cool). Finally, one leader asks this question: "Which commandment is the most important of all?" (vs. 28) to which Jesus quite simply answers, "Love God," and "Love your neighbor."

Simple, right? But how easily we overcomplicate it.

We fill our hearts and minds with worries, cares, and distractions and then wonder why God seems so distant. Comparison moves us to believe we are missing out, not enough, or even somehow better than others. We place conditions on our love, only giving it when we get something in return. We begin to see those who think, act, or believe differently than us as the problem, telling

ourselves it is more important to be right than to be loving.

And before we know it, we've accumulated for ourselves an exhausting list of to-do's, self-improvement goals, and unrealistic expectations that keep us far from God and even further from our neighbor.

Into this mess, Jesus speaks clearly: **Love God. Love your neighbor as yourself.** It's really that simple.

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.) Jesus, you have summarized all of God's law into two commandments: To love God and love others. Help me today to love you with all my heart. Calm my mind that I may focus on you. Give me strength to love my neighbor. And when I overcomplicate things, remind me of who you are and what you've done, that I too can love without condition. Amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think the disciples reacted to Jesus' answer to this question?
2. Think about your daily or weekly habits. Which habits help you to love God more? Which habits help you to love your neighbor more?
3. What is one way you can love your neighbor today? Take a moment to do something special for someone else today.

Maundy Thursday

READ:

John 13:1-17

DEVOTION:

Have you ever had to hang out with someone who you know said something mean about you behind your back? Or maybe they went over your head to your boss or teacher? Perhaps they didn't invite you somewhere and they invited everyone else?

It's not fun to be betrayed.

But Jesus hangs out with the man who He knows is going to betray Him... and you know what He does? Jesus washes his feet. And He eats dinner with him. And He still loves him.

I love at the end of verse one where it says, "He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end." Jesus knows his friend Judas is going to betray Him later that night. He knows Judas is the one who will put the narrative into motion that will lead to His death. Jesus knows. And it's not just Judas.

Jesus knows the other disciples will fall asleep later on when He asks them to keep watch while He prays in the garden. He knows they'll scatter when the guards come. He knows Peter will straight up deny Him three times. Jesus knows all of this. But He "loved them to the very end."

Jesus, the One who has authority over all things, chose to do the work of a servant. He chose to bend down and wash his friends' feet.

Let's pause for a second and think about these feet. Men in Jesus' day would have worn sandals. This was dinner, so they would have been wearing those sandals all day long down dirt paths. These were some dirty feet.

But one by one, Jesus washed their dirty feet. He washed the scatterers' feet. He washed the denier's feet. He washed the betrayer's feet. And then He sat down and ate the Passover meal with them.

Humans fail. Our friends, family, coworkers and classmates - they'll all disappoint us; but we love them anyway because Jesus loved us anyway. (1 John 4:19) When Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He gave us an example of how to love our people no matter what. He gave us an example of how to love sacrificially - with action and humility and authenticity - even when we're tired, even when they've failed us, even when we're walking into something very, very difficult.

We, like Jesus, love them to the end.

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.) Lord, sometimes it's hard to love. It's hard to love when I feel betrayed or let down or hurt. Help me love people who have hurt me the way you loved Judas. Help me never feel too important or too busy or too sorry for myself to love. Help me love

like you. Thank you for loving me, even when I fail at this. And thank you for loving me first. Amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn about Jesus' character in this story?
2. When was a time you felt let down by someone you love? Were you able to love them anyway?
3. How can you follow Jesus' example this week?

ACTIVITY:

In the Bible passage we read earlier, Jesus said, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."

So let's do it!

For families/roommates:

Fill a bowl up with water and take out a washrag. Take turns washing each other's feet like Jesus did. How do you feel? (The answer to that question may be "REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE, THANK YOU" at first - but try to push through that awkwardness to the good stuff!)

For individuals:

Fill a bowl up with water and take out a washrag. Put your feet in the bowl, close your eyes, and imagine what it would be like for Jesus to wash your feet. How do you feel? What would that experience have been like for both the disciples and for you personally?

Good Friday

READ:

John 19:1-42

DEVOTION:

On Good Friday, we remember Jesus' death.

Holy Week seems like a natural time to remember Jesus' humanity. Sure, He's about to save the world in a very specific only-God-can-do-it way... but did you sense the humanity this week?

Did you sense the humanity when He clapped back to the Pharisees on Palm Sunday: "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!"?

Did you sense the humanity when He overturned the tables at the temple?

Did you sense the humanity when He had dinner with his friends? When He washed their feet?

When He prayed desperately in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Jesus is fully God and fully human. With all the amazing miracles and wise parables and never-ending compassion, it can be easy to overlook the human part. But He was a real guy who had real conversations and ate real food and had real friends. He was a real guy who got real dirt on his sandals and made real jokes and had real emotions.

And He really died.

The night before He died, it says in Luke that He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood." (Luke 22:42-44) Pause for a second and picture Him praying this in the garden. Imagine the scene. Try to hear how He would have said those words in the moment.

Do you sense the humanity?

Jesus wasn't looking forward to the upcoming suffering. Who would? He surely wasn't looking forward to being whipped and suffocated and crucified. He surely wasn't looking forward to being jeered at and mocked. He surely wasn't looking forward to having the actual weight of the world's sins on His shoulders. He wasn't some robot who was programmed to self destruct.

He was in "agony of spirit."

Love spurred Him forward anyway. He chose to go forward to the cross. *God so loved the world.*

Jesus was arrested, put on trial, sentenced to death, crucified, and died in one day. Good Friday.

The man Jesus Christ, son of Mary, friend of Lazarus, mentor of Peter, brother of James - He

died in your place. He, the perfect sacrifice, allowed himself to be killed so the rest of us could live.

He took our place, carried our sin, and died the death that should've been ours... so that we could be redeemed and have eternal life.

Come join us in-person for a Good Friday Service tonight (April 7th) at 7:15pm ET.

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.)
Jesus, thank you for stepping in and dying the death that should've been ours. How can we ever thank you enough? Thank you for your deep, endless, incredible love, your unthinkable sacrifice, your amazing grace. Lord, help us to remember the cross when we don't feel loved. Help to remember the cross when you don't seem to be listening. Help us to remember the cross when all seems lost. Thank you for all you've done for us and all you continue to do for us, Jesus. In your name we pray, amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What strikes you in the verses you read? Does anything surprise you, stand out to you, or bring up questions?
2. What does it mean that you are "redeemed"?
3. What does Jesus' death have to do with your redemption?

ACTIVITY:

Put these times in your phone's calendar. As you go about your day today, keep in mind Jesus' approximate schedule on that Friday. When you are reminded of each moment, take a minute to reflect on the promise that the real life Jesus walked through this day for you!

MIDNIGHT: Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane

4AM: Jesus is sent to trial before Annas the high priest and Caiaphas

6AM: Jesus is sent to trial before Pontius Pilate and then to Herod,

7AM: Jesus is sent back to Pontius Pilate where He is sentenced to be crucified

8AM: Jesus carries His cross (with the help of Simon of Cyrene) to the site of the crucifixion (named Calvary in Latin or Golgotha in Aramaic)

9AM: Jesus is crucified

9:30AM: The soldiers divide Jesus' clothing. He prays for them.

10AM: The soldiers mock Jesus while they observe the crucifixion.

11AM: Jesus speaks from the cross to the thieves, and then to Mary and John.

NOON: Darkness covers the land for three hours.

12PM-3PM: The earth quakes, the temple curtain is torn, Jesus thirsts.

3PM: Jesus cries out, "It is finished," and dies.

Saturday

READ:

John 19:38-42

DEVOTION:

Every now and then, seemingly small and disconnected incidents work together for significant impact. For example, consider our first Christmas Eve service in this building. Filled with excitement for a new space, we carefully considered all the logistics to make the most memorable service possible - everything from fires and hot chocolate in the courtyard to how to safely blow out candles in a pandemic.

And then it began to snow. And snow. And snow.

So with great disappointment, we canceled the fires, moved the hot chocolate to the front porch, and went about our evening a little bit disappointed.

But then, after the service, at the same exact time people would have been walking through the courtyard to the fires and refreshments, several big limbs came crashing down from our old tree - limbs that could have been the end of anyone underneath them. All the little disappointments and setbacks suddenly became a great source of joy. It was in the little things that God worked something great, keeping us all from harm and injury.

Today, as we read of the burial of Jesus, we could be tempted to see all the little details as disconnected and insignificant. Yet even in these details, God was doing something great.

With the Sabbath quickly approaching, Joseph and Nicodemus request permission to remove Jesus from the cross and place him in a tomb. Forbidden to work during the Sabbath (which included moving bodies and carrying the spices needed for burial prep), they needed to work quickly. As it happened, the place where Jesus died also had a nearby garden with a brand new tomb, the tomb of a wealthy man.

And in this dark and painful time, God worked these little details for significant gain. You see, unintentionally, the hurried actions of a few closet disciples helped fulfill an old promise of the coming Messiah.

Nearly 740 years earlier, a man named Isaiah wrote about the one who would save the people (read Isaiah 53 if you're interested). This coming savior would be despised and rejected, he would be pierced for our transgressions, like a lamb led to slaughter, he would remain silent; and finally, though he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth, "they would make his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death (Isaiah 53:9).

The best part is, Isaiah promises the one who fulfills this scripture will be the one who bears our sin. By his wounds, we will be healed.

And so it is that with the hurried actions of fearful men, God connects the little, seemingly insignificant moments together. As the world came crashing down for Joseph, Nicodemus, and all the disciples, God used these little moments to keep us all from harm and injury, to heal us from our sin.

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.) Jesus, we sometimes don't see your plans. We're often left wondering why things happen or how to make sense of them. We see the small, disconnected moments, but you see the big picture. Help us to trust in your plans when our worlds come crashing down. When all feels lost, make your way known to us. And whatever may come, be it purposefully or accidentally, may we be useful in your story. Amen.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Think of a time when things didn't go as you planned, but turned out for the better. When did you realize the unplanned events were more significant than you first thought?
2. Consider the pain Joseph and Nicodemus may have felt. What types of questions do you think they were wondering?
3. What is something happening in your life right now that you need Jesus to bring clarity or direction to? Who can you talk with to help find a bigger picture or better plan?

Easter Sunday

READ:

Matthew 28:1-8, Romans 8:9-11

DEVOTION:

Good morning and Happy Easter, friends! This is the day we gape over an empty tomb, stuff our faces with ham and chocolate, and celebrate Jesus RISING FROM THE ACTUAL DEAD.

Because Jesus didn't go through the gruesome experience of Good Friday so that we could try to be morally impressive people who are generally a little busier on Sundays than the average Joe.

No, He went through it all so that *dead people* could *come alive* - and then He went ahead and proved it by doing it Himself. In rising from the dead, Jesus successfully annihilated sin (BOOM), death (BOOM), and the devil (BOOM) forever. We have hope in eternal and abundant life, friends!

And the same Spirit that rose Jesus from the dead? He lives IN YOU.

Read that again.

The same Spirit that rose Jesus from the dead Lives. In. You.

So on this Easter Sunday, the sun is rising. You are beginning to rise as you become transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit (spurred on by the power of coffee and candy). And Jesus has risen. He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!

PRAY: (Feel free to pray your own prayer, or use this one.)
You are alive, Jesus! You are good and you are mighty and you are more than worthy of every ounce of our praise. So we praise you! Thank you for loving us enough to die and rise again. We love you, Jesus. Amen!

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How has your life been changed by Jesus' resurrection?
2. What do you think Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were thinking and feeling when they got to the tomb? How would you have reacted??
3. How will you live in the reality of the resurrection everyday?

ACTIVITY:

Join us at The Point in-person or online (thepointknox.com) at 10:30am ET to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

Before or after, enjoy some coffee and candy to help *you* arise as well! 😂