



WEEKLY STUDY

HOLY WEEK

This is Holy Week—starting with Palm Sunday and ending with what the church has called Holy Saturday. During Holy Week, we follow the steps of Jesus as he entered Jerusalem as King, shared a last supper with his disciples, wept in the Garden of Gethsemane, was sentenced to death on a cross, and placed in a tomb. It's a heavy week for those who follow Jesus and for those who are simply curious about Jesus. I pray that you will find meaning in the way that the events of Holy Week are reflected in today's world. Consider exploring a new spiritual practice this week as you set your heart on the suffering of Jesus before Easter. You may choose to go on a quiet prayer walk, or fast from food for one day this week. As you explore a new spiritual practice, consider how you are seeking God in the middle of a heavy week, and how your heart might be better prepared for the Easter feast!

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JOHN 12:12-16 (NIV)

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

¹⁴ *Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:*

¹⁵ *"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;*

see, your king is coming,

seated on a donkey's colt."

¹⁶ *At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.*

- In the prophecy of Zechariah we find these words, “See, your King comes to you...humble and riding on a colt”. Generations had been waiting for this moment. Surely, many forgot that these words existed! Most of us have experienced the energy of a crowd. The enthusiasm of a moment like this is often beyond words. Members of the crowd have different motives, but everything seems to be moving in the same direction. Everything was moving towards Jerusalem, towards the Garden of Gethsemane, the cruel cross of crucifixion, and the tomb where the King’s body would lie at the end of this week. **How did Jesus feel in this moment as he fulfilled the prophecy and was recognized as the true King? Did the disciples or anyone in the crowd grasp the enormity of what was unfolding before their eyes?**
- *O God, let the palm branches be for us signs of Jesus’ victory. Lead me to follow him in the way that leads to eternal life. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ISAIAH 11.1-5 (NIV)

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

² *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—*

³ *and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.*

*He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;*

⁴ *but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.*

*He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.*

⁵ *Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*

- It would be understandable if a person who was about to be persecuted were to lose focus on the larger picture. As Jesus walked the difficult path from Palm Sunday to Good Friday, his focus on the mission seemed to grow. We will see that he (in his humanity) considered whether there was a different path, but the mission stayed in focus. All that would transpire on Holy Week was in order that the Son of God could seek and save the lost. **When are you most aware that you are a part of something far bigger than yourself? Does that help you to face difficult things?**
- *Holy God, as I walk through this day, help me to walk in the way of the cross. Lead me to peace through your son Jesus Christ. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: MATTHEW 26.14-16 (NIV)

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests¹⁵ and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver.¹⁶ From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

- Judas had seen the very best that Jesus came to offer the world. He heard the teachings and witnessed the miracles, and yet he was willing to leverage his proximity to Jesus for his own gain. Maybe he envisioned the road ahead and saw that it would require too much from himself. Perhaps he couldn't see past the immediate threat and was willing to give up Jesus in order to live another day. It's difficult to know exactly how any of us would respond in such a moment, but it's much easier to identify with the immediate regret Judas must have felt after he betrayed Jesus.
How do you feel about Judas and the role he played in the story of salvation?
- *God, Give me grace to endure the sufferings of this Holy Week. I will not be overwhelmed because of the glory that is being revealed through Jesus. Amen.*

THURSDAY: MARK 14.22-26 (NIV)

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

²³ *Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.*

²⁴ *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.* ²⁵ *"Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."*

²⁶ *When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

- This is the institution of what the church calls Holy Communion. Jesus took the elements of a traditional Passover meal, the seder, and revealed that his body and blood were about to be offered up for the salvation of God's people. When we receive the bread and juice of communion, we find ourselves at this table with the disciples. From this table, Jesus faces death on a cross.
How will you follow Jesus through the coming days?
- *God, on this Holy Thursday, remind me of the great commandment to love you with all my heart and to love others well. Allow me to serve others as Jesus served all of humanity—with humility and compassion. Amen.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 23.44-49 (ESV)

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"⁴⁸ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

- This is the darkest day in the Christian calendar. And even in this story of darkness we have a clue from the centurion. If Jesus was innocent, then he was indeed who he said that he was. And if Jesus truly was the Son of God, then the story wouldn't end in a dark tomb. But to every observer, this day felt heavy. It felt final. **When have you felt that you were facing a dead end? How did you deal with that feeling?**
- *Father God, your Son was lifted high on a cross so that the whole world might be drawn to him. Thank you for the promise of salvation that is true even in the tomb. Amen.*

SATURDAY: LUKE 23.50-56 (NIV)

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man,⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God.⁵² Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body.⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.⁵⁴ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.⁵⁶ Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

- These events following the death of Jesus seem to drive home the point—Jesus was really dead. All of the typical things had to be done following a death. The body had to be appropriately taken care of. Spices and perfumes were being prepared, but there was a delay in using them on Jesus' body. It was the sabbath. A day for everything to stop. That particular sabbath seemed to amplify the silence of the day between Good Friday and Easter. **How will you pay attention to the silence of this day?**
- *God, be near to me in the waiting of this day. Draw me deeper into the quiet of the tomb and allow me to rise up into new life tomorrow! Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Did you “give up” something for Lent? Did you “take on” something new? Describe your experience with that exercise over the last several weeks.
- Talk through your experience with the following spiritual practices.

Sabbath

Prayer

Fasting

Scripture Reading

- Are there any special ways you or your family observe Holy Week? How do you mark the events that took place between Palm Sunday and Easter?