



THE WEEK
that **changed**
THE WORLD

Holy Week Devotional Guide

Welcome

Holy Week at The Church at Trophy Lakes

Holy Week is the most special week of the year for followers of Jesus Christ. There is a rich and full tradition in Christian history of believers worshipping on this special week. Holy Week commemorates the Passion of Jesus Christ. From Palm Sunday when He was received into Jerusalem with palm branches and shouts of Hosanna to His celebration of Passover with His disciples, His arrest, betrayal and trial which led to His death, burial and crucifixion and of course His resurrection on Easter Sunday. Indeed, it was a holy week.

For almost two thousand years followers of Jesus Christ have rehearsed the events of this week with meditations, prayers, singing and scripture reading. It was the opportunity to worship and remember the passion of the Lord

Today we draw inspiration from the week that changed the world. In this brief devotional guide I want to give you some of the history of God's people worshipping through the years and point you to the authoritative scriptural passages that give us the details of what our Lord experienced. Let us worship this year and truly experience the passion that changed the world.

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The Church at Trophy Lakes





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The History of HOLY WEEK



As the church moved into the second century and beyond, followers of Christ began to deepen their annual observance of the passion of Christ. Every Sunday was celebrated as a "little Easter." Yet, the annual observance of Holy Week gave them the opportunity to not only recite the Scriptures but to act them out as well. In a largely illiterate culture, there is no way to overstate its importance. The Gospel was acted out in a day-by-day procession of the most important week the world has ever known. Since that time there has been a rich, colorful, and varied celebration of Holy Week. From the early church to later Orthodox, Roman Catholic and various Protestant practices, the church has a rich heritage of worshipping during Holy Week.

One of the earliest accounts we have of the church's observance of Holy Week comes from a woman named Egeria. She kept a diary known as, *Diary of Pilgrimage* from the fourth century and it contains a first-hand account of how Easter was celebrated. Her diary along with other written liturgies that survived from the time give us an account of how the early church celebrated this special week.

The following account of her writing comes from one of the great contemporary teachers of the church's worship practices, Robert Webber.

According to Egeria what we call Holy Week was known as the "Great Week" in fourth-century Jerusalem. This week of the climactic events of the arrest, conviction, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the most extraordinary week in the Christian calendar, the week in which the redemption of the world happened, in which the re-creation of the world began.

EGERIA DESCRIBES THE DAY-TO-DAY EVENTS OF THE GREAT WEEK:

On *Palm Sunday*, all the Christians assembled at the top of the Mount of Olives. Grasping palms and branches in their hands, they sang, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," as they walked slowly to the church in Jerusalem. The bishop of Jerusalem, symbolizing Christ, was in the midst of the crowd. When night fell, evening prayers were celebrated, concluded by a prayer in front of a cross erected for the occasion.

On *Monday*, they continually sang hymns and antiphons, and read passages from the Scriptures appropriate to that day in Holy Week. Egeria reports that these readings and songs were continually interrupted with prayers.

On *Tuesday*, they did the same except for this: "The Bishop takes up the book of the Gospels, and while standing, reads the words of the Lord which are written in the Gospel according to Matthew at the place where he said, "Take heed that no man deceives you" (Matt. 24:4).

On *Wednesday*, everything was done as on Monday and Tuesday except that the bishop read the passage where Judas went to the Jews to set the price they would pay him to betray the Lord (Matt. 26:1ff.; Mark 14:10f; Luke 22:3-6ff). Egeria reports that "while this good passage is being read, there is such moaning and groaning from among the people that no one can help being moved to tears in that moment." (This and similar comments throughout her account, suggest the powerful effect that re-enactment can have on the worshipers' feelings.)

On *Thursday*, evening, Communion was celebrated. Then all went home to eat their last meal until Easter, and later returned to worship all night as a way of re-enacting the gospel accounts of Thursday night." They continually sing hymns and antiphons and read the Scripture passages proper to the place and to the day. Between these, prayers are said."

Early on *Friday*, after worshipping all night, the Christians proceeded to Gethsemane, where they read the passage describing the Lord's arrest (Matt.26: 36-56). Egeria reports that "there is such moaning and groaning with weeping from all the people that their moaning can be heard practically as far as the city." They then went to the place of the cross where the words of Pilate were read (Matt. 27:2-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28; 19:16). Then the bishop sent the crowd home to mediate, instructing them to return about the second hour so that everyone would be "on hand here so that from that hour until the sixth hour you may see the holy wood of the cross, and thus believe that it was offered for the salvation of each and every one of us."

On Friday night, they acknowledged the cross as the instrument of salvation. A cross was put on a table and the people passed by "touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and after kissing the cross, they move on."

On *Saturday*, worship was conducted at the third and sixth hours. After nightfall, the Easter Vigil was held. Although Egeria says little about this service, we know from other sources that it was a dramatic re-enactment of the Resurrection. It included a service of light that celebrated Christ as the light of the world and the annual baptismal service in which people were baptized into Christ's dying and rising.(The early church practice of baptism by immersion was a graphic enactment of burial and resurrection.) And the glorious service that occurred on Sunday morning (after the all-night vigil) celebrated the resurrection of Christ through readings, antiphons, preaching and the Eucharist.

Consider the involvement, the total immersion in the death and resurrection of their Lord that the worshipers must have experienced. For weeks they had prepared for this service. Then, throughout Holy Week, they had been exhausted by the intensity of following after the events in Jesus' life that led to his death.

Now, after another night of vigil and anticipation, the moment of Jesus' resurrection came. Because these people had entered the tomb with him, they were able to experience his resurrection – in a way that would never happen apart from the dramatic journey they had taken.

Finally, Egeria tells us that Easter did not end on Easter day. It was followed by eight days of celebration. The worshipers fast was over. They identified no longer with death, but with resurrection and life. For eight days the Christians gathered in worship. These festive services were in sharp contrast to the sober preparations for the Passion. They extended the Resurrection side of Easter even as fasting had prepared for the Crucifixion.

(from Robert E. Webber, "Easter: Reliving the Mystery," in *Christianity Today* March 21, 1986, Vol.30, No. 5, pg. 16)

Palm Sunday

DAY ONE

Scripture

Matthew 21:1-11 Luke 19:28-40

John 12:12-19

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty Father, in Your tender love that was manifested for the world to see, You sent Your Son, Our Savior Jesus Christ to take our nature upon Him and to die upon the cross. The humility He demonstrated is beyond our comprehension. Out of Your mercy, may You grant us to walk in His footsteps sharing in the way of humility, prayer, obedience, suffering and also in His resurrection power that we might reign with You forever and ever. Grant unto us the wisdom and direction to walk through this Holy Week with anointing and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, Amen.

DEVOTION

According to the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus enters the city during His triumphant procession on Palm Sunday the entire city was moved (Matthew 21:10). The word translated "moved" in our English Bibles comes from the original word, "seismos" which of course we get our word seismological. The movement was so strong it was like an earthquake was taking place. The disciples cried out, the people gathered, palm branches were waved and placed in His procession. He rode on a donkey. This fulfilled ancient prophecy of the coming Messiah:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. **Zechariah 9:9**

Matthew also includes the statement that as they were moved, they said, "Who is this?" Can you imagine the audacity and the ignorance reflected in that statement? Jesus had spent three years demonstrating the reality of who He was by His words, His teaching in the Temple, His miracles, and His repeated acts of compassion. He walked on water, fed five thousand people with one lad's lunch, he raised the dead, and He delivered people from demonic powers. On and on it goes and yet they had the ignorant audacity to say, "Who is this?"

On this Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, we must center our attention on Jesus Christ. Who He is, what He did, what He is going to do, and what He is doing in the world today. It begins with time in the Scriptures and what is revealed happened on this day. Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came into this world and took upon Himself human flesh. Palm Sunday is the day He began the week of His passion by making a triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

APPLICATION

1. Read the Scripture as it recounts the Lord's Palm Sunday experience in Jerusalem. **Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19**

2. How did the person who owned the donkey know to release Him to the disciples? **Matthew 21:23**

3. What can we learn from the crowd that shouted "Hosanna" on Palm Sunday but just five days later, many of the same crowd was shouting "Crucify Him, Crucify Him"?

4. If you are asked, "Who is Jesus Christ?" what will your response be? Write it down.



5. What is the one thing about the experience of Palm Sunday that stands out to you? Why? **Matthew 21:1-11**

Prayer Monday

DAY TWO

Scripture

Matthew 23:37-39

Mark 11:15-19

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty Father, Maker of Heaven and Earth we pray that You will grant us wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We pray that You will direct our paths during this Holy Week to follow the footsteps of our Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us. Our Father we confess that we are all too like the people who shouted Hosannas one day only to fail to recognize Your work the next day. O holy God please forgive our inconsistencies and make us sensitive to the Holy Spirit that will ever keep Christ before us, lest we forget Your awesome work of sacrifice for us during Holy Week. We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

DEVOTION

The Bible records that on Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem, He turned over the tables of those who had turned the temple area into a money-changing business bazaar. Jesus declared:

"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves" **Mark 11:17**

The emphasis in this verse is not what it was, but what it was supposed to be. The gathering of the people of God should be characterized by connecting people to God not erecting obstacles. Jesus did not call it a house of meetings, a house of singing, or a house of preaching. It is a house of prayer. God's earliest people were described as those "who call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26).

God's people have always known that if you are in trouble that you can call upon the Lord and he will answer. The patriarchs Abraham and Isaac built altars and called on the name of the Lord. Jeremiah exhorted the people to call on the name of the Lord and in the New Testament it is written:

"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"
Romans 10:13

After observing the Lord and all of His spectacular ministry the disciples are not recorded asking Him to teach them to preach or do miracles like He did but they did ask Him, "Lord, teach us to pray?" They understood there was a direct connection between the prayers of Jesus and the power of Jesus. Jesus operated out of His dependence on the Father during His earthly ministry and the disciples observed the connection between power and prayer. Therefore, they asked to be taught to pray.

When Jesus cleansed the temple and called them back to prayer the result was power. It was an attractive power. The Bible records that the lame and the blind came to him to be healed. Traditionally the lame and blind were excluded from the temple, but the power of Jesus attracted them. The Gospel is the power of God for everyone. When God's people pray, and God's power is manifested then people who have been excluded are attracted and receive healing. This power was also a life-changing power. He healed all of them. The power of God is able to heal all of those who call upon Him in faith.

On Monday of this Holy Week, we find ourselves remembering the power of prayer and it first priority among us as a people. Ultimately, because of Jesus' passion week, the doors to the throne room are open for us. What is keeping us from asking for great miracles today?

APPLICATION

1. Read the scripture that tells the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple

- **Matthew 21:10-17**

2. Why do you think Jesus became so passionate about these moneychangers?

3. See if you can place the following words besides the corresponding verses of this passage: Purged, Prayer, Power, and Praise



Hint

It begins with a cleansing (purging) then a Call to Prayer, then Power comes and that results in Praise.

Worship Tuesday

DAY THREE

Scripture

Matthew 24:4-25:46

OPENING PRAYER

O Holy Father, we come into Your presence on this Tuesday of Holy Week and ask that you help our wandering minds stay focused upon the work of the Son during His passion. Help us bring all our minds, soul, body and strength to worship You as You deserve. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit who keeps our minds sanctified to the truth can we keep our minds focused upon You. Please fill us with the Holy Spirit that we might not have any confidence in the flesh. But always rejoice in Christ Jesus by the Spirit. We pray these things in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

DEVOTION

During this Holy Week as we think about the footsteps of our Lord it is important to remember how He warned us during what we call the Olivet discourse teaching. He warned us about the future, after the passion and after He would return to heaven. He warned that as the years passed there would be temptations for us to forget and move away from being prepared for His return.

Most of the time we think of warning the wicked for the last days but there are at least eight warnings given to believers for the last days.

1. BEWARE OF A FAITHLESS HEART

"... when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"
(Luke 18:8)

2. BEWARE OF AN OFFENDED HEART

"And then many will be offended" (Matthew 24:10)

3. BEWARE OF A COLD HEART

"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."
(Matthew 24:12)

4. BEWARE OF A DECEIVED HEART

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many" (Matthew 24:11).
For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24)

5. BEWARE OF AN APOSTASIZED HEART

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons". (1Timothy 4:1)

6. BEWARE OF A SELFISH HEART

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2Timothy 3:1-5)

7. BEWARE OF A POWERLESS HEART

"having a form of godliness but denying its power." (2Timothy3:5)

APPLICATION

1. Last words are important. Why do you think Jesus spent so much time warning his disciples (and future disciples) about being prepared in the last days?

2. How can we prepare our hearts to not fall prey to these warnings from Jesus?

3. Consider the following verse and ask yourself why it would be more important to be faithful to church in the last days?

"not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching". **Hebrews 10:25**

4. Which one of the seven warnings do you see as the most prevalent in the modern church?

5. Jesus exhorted the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane to "watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation." What does it mean to watch and pray?

Closing Prayer †

Our eternal Father, You are wise and benevolent in Your grace to warn us of the pitfalls and temptations of the last days. We pray that You will grant us a watching and praying spirit that we might not succumb to the lawlessness of this age and may remain passionate and pure in our devotion to you. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

REFLECTION

Meditation Wednesday

DAY FOUR

Scripture

Matthew 26:1-16 Luke 22:1-6
Mark 14:10-11

OPENING PRAYER

Most loving and gracious heavenly Father we come to You on this Wednesday of the Holiest Week of the year and ask for Your divine guidance and wisdom as we serve You on this day. We ask for the Holy Spirit to fill our minds and hearts with the truth so that we might enter the height, depth, and breadth of Your love for us that was demonstrated when Jesus endured the week of the Holy Passion. May we enter the sufferings of our Lord so that we might also enter the joy of the Lord. On this Wednesday of Holy Week, we ask for Your divine guidance as we worship You in Spirit and Truth. In the Name of Jesus Christ, the great lover of our souls we pray, Amen.

DEVOTION

Probably one of the most famous paintings in the world is Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper. He painted it in 1497. He painted it over 500 years ago! About thirty-five years ago people became concerned for the painting because it was faded and covered with dirt. People who traveled to the Santa Maria delle Grazie Church in Milan were disappointed in what they were able to see. Fearing for its future a two-decade process that cost over \$8 million was begun. Over the years the tempera-on-stone painting has been the victim of nine known re-touching attempts; destruction by Napoleon's troops, who used the church grounds as a stable; grease buildup from a nearby kitchen; and the Allied bombing of 1943. But now the dirt has been washed away as the grime and dirt was flaked away a millimeter at a time in a delicate process.

When I read about that story, I thought about how easy it is over time to allow the junk to accumulate in our lives that separates us from our simple loving relationship with our Lord. The difficulties in life, our sinful choices and the temptation towards more traditions that lose their purpose all accumulate and push us away from the simple acts of devotion that mark our first love experience with the Lord.

In Matthew 26:1-16 there is a great contrast between two people and their relationship to Jesus. On the one hand, we are told of Judas Iscariot. And on the other hand, we are told the story of a woman who pours out a very costly perfume on Jesus in an act of selfless love and worship.

All four Gospels record the story of the woman who is identified as Mary of Bethany who poured out the costly fragrance on Jesus. It is a powerful observation that every time she is mentioned in the Gospels she is found at the feet of Jesus.

Her devotion and love were *extensive* (Matt. 26:6) she was willing to go to Simon the lepers house to anoint Jesus. True love of Jesus will compel us to go great distances in our actions and attitudes. Her love was *expressive* (Matt. 26:7) she was willing to express her love in front of everyone. She was not ashamed of her love of Jesus. Her love was manifested as *expensive* as well (Matt. 26:7). She willingly poured out her most expensive possession. Even the disciples had the thoughts of selling something this expensive and giving it to the poor.

These kinds of expressions of love for Jesus make everyone uncomfortable. However, Jesus always defends those who are extravagant in their love towards Him. The great act of God in saving His people during the passion calls forth for extravagant worship on the part of the people.

All of this is contrasted with the treachery and betrayal of the religious leaders and one of Jesus' own disciples. Judas had been with Jesus throughout His public ministry but in taking the role of the saddest and tragic part of Holy Week, his betrayal hits the lowest note.

APPLICATION

1. How do we keep the grime of sin from accumulating in our life over time and marring our pure devotion and love for Jesus?

2. When was the last time you did something so expressive and extravagant because of your love for Jesus that it made others uncomfortable?

3. In our above passages there were two extremes of behavior with Judas' betrayal and Mary's devotion. What about the "lukewarm" middle of the road people? How does Jesus respond to them? See Revelation 3:15-16

Closing Prayer †

Faithful God who demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, sent Christ to die for our sins, we are overwhelmed with Your love. May You allow us to express our love back to You with an extensive, expressive, expensive and explosive love. You deserve no less than our very best. We love You in Jesus name, Amen.

REFLECTION

Maundy Thursday

DAY FIVE

Scripture

Matthew 26:17-35 Luke 22:7-38

Mark 14:12-31

OPENING PRAYER

Most infinite all wise and holy God, we come before Your presence to ask for divine grace that will enable us to worship You in this Holiest of seasons. Father, we ask that you allow us to walk in the footsteps of our Savior, which takes us into the upper room Passover celebration. Grant us to learn the humility of our Lord who washes the feet of the disciples and imparts truth in this holy moment. Our Father, we pray in Jesus name.

DEVOTION

One can only imagine the infernal scene at this Passover meal. What should have been a very holy and intimate moment between the disciples and the Lord was invaded by the enemy. Judas reached out his demonized hand to take the bread and, in the process, it was as if Satan himself was reaching out to take and destroy the body of Jesus. Things have not changed. Today, Satan still is reaching out with his manipulating fingers to destroy the body of Christ.

Satan knew Jesus' kingdom was about to come so he made a direct assault at the disciples to stop it before it ever got started. Satan had already entered Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3) and Jesus spoke somberly of it (Luke: 22:21-22). Satan now prepares himself to take another disciple.

What he sees is a virtual smorgasbord of proud and selfish disciples.

You can imagine as Satan sizes each one of them up:

- Nathaniel-Jesus said there was no guile in him.
- John - He is too close to Jesus.
- Peter - Just right!

Jesus called Peter the rock. Jesus had said he would build his church through the confession of Peter. Satan must have thought If can get him then I will destroy the very foundation of the church.

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." **Luke 22:31-32**

We learn from this experience that Satan will attempt to derail and destroy our confession and our witness. The passage says that he desired to "sift" Peter like a man sifts wheat. All disciples of Jesus will find themselves in the sifter at one time or another. We must remember that Satan must ask for permission to do this, and sifting is a purifying process in our life. Sifting is intense spiritual warfare, and it comes with a very special promise. The promise is found in Jesus' words to Peter, "I am praying for you."

Jesus was in the middle of the greatest spiritual warfare a human being has ever experienced and yet He promises Peter that He will be praying for him through his testing. Our Lord was always putting the needs of His disciples above His own.

In the end Peter and Judas are a contrast in results. Judas was the false disciple who when his sin was exposed, went out and hung himself. He had no hope, and the Bible says he went to the place reserved for him in hell. However, Peter was the true disciple and when He was faced with the reality of his sin of denying Jesus he wept bitterly and found Jesus and was restored. He found out that Jesus uses restored people to build His kingdom.

No Pain, No Palm. 
No Thorns, No Throne. 
No Gall, No Glory. 
No Cross, No Crown. 
-**William Penn**

APPLICATION

1. Read the passages in the Gospels listed above that detail the treachery of Judas during the holy gathering of the disciples to observe the Passover.

2. Try to name one character in the Bible that does not have a significant failure in their life.

3. Jesus uses the term "sifting" to describe what Satan is about to do to Peter. Have you ever experienced a time of spiritual warfare over your faith that you would call "sifting?"

4. Read John 21:1-17 as it talks about Peter's restoration. What did Peter do when they realized it was Jesus on the shore (John 21:7) and why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?"

Closing Prayer †

Almighty Father who is supreme in holiness yet always tender in forgiveness toward our failing hearts for Jesus' sake, we give thanks to You today for Your infinite grace and Your love which has no end. Be glorified in our lives today and magnify the work of Your Son our Savior on this Thursday of Holy Week. In His precious name we pray, Amen.

REFLECTION

Good Friday

DAY SIX

Scripture

Matthew 26:36-56, 27:2-6 Luke 23:1-25
Mark 15:1-15 John 18:25 -19:16

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God maker of heaven and earth, You alone are able to make that which is bad good. You transformed the worst day of rejection into a day that is simply known as "good." How can we be thankful enough for what Christ did for us? May the Holy Spirit that brings life to our souls awaken us, inspire us and bring revelation to us of the immensity of the depth, breadth, height and length of Your amazing love. We stand amazed on this day You gave Yourself for Your people. We praise You, Amen.

DEVOTION

The centerpiece of the Bible is the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Everything before it looks forward to it and everything after it looks backward to it. It is the centerpiece of God's revelation to mankind. His life and death are the center of human history. There is before and there is after. And yet when we arrive at this most holy moment of the most holy week, we only find three simple words: **THEY CRUCIFIED HIM**. On this Good Friday let us take a moment to survey the truth contained in these three powerful words.

THEY speaks of the men involved in this most hideous of deeds: the crucifixion of a man who only was guilty of love and truth. Who is responsible for the death of Jesus Christ? Some say Judas Iscariot. His betrayal was the worst, but the Bible teaches us that Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him. Some say the Roman Empire and its failed judicial system that condemned an innocent man to death. Caesar, Pontius Pilate and the Roman Soldiers were all guilty, but Jesus said they did not take His life, but He laid it down willingly. What about the Jewish people? Jesus was a Jewish man, and these people had the law and the promises. Jesus was the Messiah who came unto His own and His own rejected Him, yet we cannot ultimately place the blame at the feet of those who rejected Him.

We can look at a more sinister plot and think maybe it was the Devil himself who killed Jesus. Certainly, this archenemy of God had attempted to stop the plan of God at every step and worked his infernal plan of violence but again God is greater than the devil and so the devil cannot be blamed alone.

Maybe we need to look further to all of humanity as the reason Jesus died and to be specific, we must all take personal responsibility. When it all comes down to the bottom line, I merely must insert my name in the place of "they." I crucified Him. I must take the blame.

CRUCIFIED speaks of the means of His death. Crucifixion was one of the most horrible forms of execution that man has ever employed. Widely used in the Roman times it not only caused the one being crucified a painful death it provided a means of deterring others to commit any crimes against Rome as well. The greatest shame a person could experience would be crucifixion and yet today we make our crosses of gold and wear them as jewelry. As always Jesus transforms the ugly into something beautiful.

HIM speaks of the mediator who died. It was not a criminal; it was not a guilty man and it was not an ordinary man. It was the Son of God on the cross and God was in Him reconciling the world to Himself.

THEY CRUCIFIED HIM. Three simple words but they are the centerpiece of God's revelation to the world. They contain the heart of what we know as Good Friday.

APPLICATION

1. In what way can you as a Christian take responsibility for the death of Jesus? Read John 3:16 and understand that although He gave His life of His own accord, He did it for you.

2. Take time to do some simple research on the act of Crucifixion in the first century of the Roman Empire. What can you learn about this horrible method of execution?

3. How does the fact that the Bible teaches that God dies for us rather than us dying for God make Christianity different than all other religions?

4. What makes the words, **THEY CRUCIFIED HIM**, the center of biblical teaching?

Closing Prayer †

Wonderful Father full of love and grace, thank You for the gift of Your Son. Truly You have demonstrated Your awesome love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He was innocent and we were guilty, He was just, and we were unjust, He was sinless and we were sinful, He was perfect and we were imperfect. But because of Your great redemptive act we are transformed as new creations to be called the Sons of God ourselves. In Jesus name, Amen.

REFLECTION

Holy Saturday

DAY SEVEN

Scripture

Matthew 27:57-66 Luke 23:50-56
Mark 15:42-47 John 19:38-42

OPENING PRAYER

Father, I pray on this Holy Saturday You might grant to us the wisdom and revelation of Jesus Christ that we know Him and the power of His resurrection being made conformable to His death. On this day may we learn hope when all our hopes have appeared to be dead. Our Father, we ask for You to give us strength and to never grow weary in well doing for all our hopes will be fulfilled in You. God be pleased to speak into our needy hearts life in Jesus Name on this special day, Amen.

DEVOTION

Man can live without food for some thirty to forty days before starvation that threatens his existence happens. Man can live some three to five days without water before finding themselves in real danger. The same man can live a couple of minutes without oxygen, but no man can live any amount of time without hope. We will construct our gods of whatever we have to in order to find some hope. The real problem is that every god we have made with our own hands fails. It does not matter if it is a person, a political system or a philosophy. There is only one hope that can stand the test of time and be considered genuine. It is the hope that is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter constructs one of the greatest passages in the entire Bible in 1 Peter 1:1-9. He is writing to scattered Christians all over the Asian province. They are suffering greatly for their faith. Persecution is real and deadly for many during this time. During this first great worldwide wave of persecution, he writes to them to remind them of their assurance. This comes before any instruction on how to live for Christ. The rest of this Epistle is filled with ethical instructions and exhortations to be faithful. But you cannot read it out of order. Many want to live the Christian life without Christ and that it is impossible. You must go to first base before you go on to second, third and home.

In these verses of 1 Peter 1:1-9 every thought drips with honey covered morsels of truth. Every word is pregnant with revelation of new life. Peter is writing to a group of Christians who are experiencing suffering specifically because they have chosen to identify with Jesus Christ. He does not give them a pep talk or a dose of the power of positive thinking. He gives them real hope. The only real hope that is in the world. Look at our genuine real and lasting hope.

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Peter proclaims hope as a birthright of every believer. It is a hope that is unravaged by enemies (incorruptible), unstained by evil (undefiled), and unimpaired by time (fades not away). Peter had experienced the dark days of uncertainty when Jesus was in the grave. It was a time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. It was a time when all hope seemed to be lost. Peter witnessed the resurrected Jesus, and it taught him forever to never give up on God. This is the truth He communicates in this beloved passage of scripture.

Peter explained that our trials of faith have a purpose. They test the reality of our faith (1 Peter 1:7) Peter uses the analogy of precious metal that is tried in the fire to illustrate that our faith will be tested. Peter also tells us that ultimately our faith will be revealed and rewarded when Jesus is revealed from heaven.

Holy Saturday teaches us to never lose our heart, never lose our confession, and never ever lose our faith.

APPLICATION

1. What emotions were the disciples manifesting when Jesus had died but before they experienced His resurrection?

2. How are these same emotions present in our lives when our hope is delayed?

3. In the New Testament epistles, the Apostles were always most concerned that the faith of the people remained strong more than they ever were concerned that the persecution or suffering was stopped. Why do you think that is so?

4. How does the resurrection of the Jesus Christ make our hope a living hope?

Always Have
HOPE

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. **Hebrews 11:1**

Easter Sunday

DAY EIGHT

Scripture

Matthew 28:1-8 Luke 24:1-12 Acts 4:33
Mark 16:1-8 John 20:1-10

OPENING PRAYER

Great God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God of David and the Prophets, and God and Father of Lord Jesus Christ, hear our prayer. We thank you for this day and all that it means to us. Your power was manifested as power that is greater than all other powers combined when Jesus came forth from the dead. You are the blessed God, and we thank You that for all of us who believe we also participate in and experience the resurrection of the dead. What a God, what a Savior, and we praise You with all our hearts this day.

DEVOTION

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single greatest moment to which all of Christendom points for its faith. Christ breaking the shackles of death culminates the events of the Word becoming flesh and living among us. God incarnate, having fully identified with human life from birth to death emerges from a grave heralding to His followers victory over death not only for Himself but for them as well.

The problem is these truths, as powerful as they are, do not move us very much anymore.

I mean what am I going to say about the resurrection that will add to anyone's knowledge of these great events. We have heard the story over and over. I doubt anyone hearing my voice can say they have not heard of the Gospel. For too many of us...

- ☹️ The mystery is gone
- ☹️ The surprise discovered
- ☹️ The suspense is eliminated
- ☹️ The miraculous has become the mundane

The resurrection of Jesus Christ seems commonplace and to be taken for granted nothing more than a ho - hum on the agenda of our mechanical days.

What do we really need? How can we go back and enter in once again to the surprise and mystery and suspense of Easter once again? How can we recover the dangerous side of our faith once again? How can we recover this Passion that changed the world?

The answer is simple:

We must experience what they experienced: The power and possibilities of the resurrection of Jesus is not limited to the first century disciples. It is an experience that can be ours for the asking.

How far the modern church has strayed from its roots in the book of Acts. When we open our Bibles and compare their experience with our experience, we see much difference. When they prayed the building was shaken, when they met together there was real fellowship, and when they preached thousands got saved. The same God of Pentecost is alive today. If He wants to save 3,000, He can do it. What is the difference?

The key is their unshakeable conviction that Jesus rose from the dead. It was this resurrected Lord that they experienced every day.

So much so that Dr. Luke who wrote the book of Acts gives us this summary:

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. **Acts 4:33**

The undeniable experience of a resurrected Lord led the disciples to an unquenchable enthusiasm for the resurrected Lord. They turned the world "right-side-up" because of this power. The resurrection of Jesus changed the world. The resurrection of Jesus is changing the world. Has the resurrection of Jesus changed your world?

APPLICATION

1. Is it possible to hear about the resurrection of Jesus Christ so much that we grow used to it and lose the ability to be moved by its awesome reality?

2. How can we come back to embrace the power of the resurrection and be amazed by it all over again?

3. What new tradition can you begin for yourself or your family that calls you back to embrace the resurrection truth and experience its power?

4. Ask God to fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit and to give you the boldness to witness to others about the truth of the Gospel.

Closing Prayer †

Father, we thank You that this week has reminded us once again of the passion that changed a world. We pray that You will wakes us up every day with a greater longing to know You and be a witness of this resurrection power. In Jesus name,
Amen.



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www.TrophyLakes.org



Whoever you are; Wherever you are from;
You are welcome here.