

THIS WEEKEND

at The Crossing



Last Days
The Garden
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing a two-week series called Last Days. We started with Jesus' grand entry into Jerusalem through the Golden Gate, but the expectations of the observers of this event were quite different from the reality. They wanted a king to come and end the Roman rule of Israel and they thought Jesus was the one, but the Kingdom He came to rule was one of salvation, the overcoming of evil, full of righteousness, obedience, humility, submission, and love for Him and other people. Their moment of pure, victorious joy on Palm Sunday was followed something else altogether – something choreographed by Satan himself.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 26:20-21 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, He said, "Truly I tell you one of you will betray me."

Matthew 26:36-39 Then Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with Him, and He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then He said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me."

Matthew 26:45-50 Then as He returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" While He was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With Him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest Him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Romans 8:17-18 Now, if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

¹ All scripture is NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

OBSERVATION

What we call Holy Week began with the fulfilling of Zechariah's prophecy about Jesus arriving in Jerusalem, riding on the colt of a donkey. By Thursday, Jesus had routed the moneychangers at the temple, taught many more truths to His followers and was sharing a meal with the Apostles at the Last Supper. There He told Judas to go and complete his betrayal with the priests – selling the arrest of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the cost of a slave in that culture. From there, Jesus led His followers went to Gethsemane to pray. It is there where we see an intimate picture of Jesus as both God in the flesh and as a human being. The poetic nature of this moment is that the name of this garden means “oil press,” and Jesus was in the “press” as He pondered how He would be crushed by our sin at the cross. He asked His Father to take away the beatings, the mocking, the humiliation and the horrible crucifixion, but accepted “not His will but God's.” This is the major takeaway from the garden experience where Jesus teaches us how to have victory over suffering: “Yet not my will but Your will, Father God!” This journey of following Jesus is recognizing that, if we don't get our way, God's way is always better.

QUESTION: When have you pushed ahead with your plans – not asking God first – and regretting it?

QUESTION: When have you not understood what God was doing in your life yet you were able to submit to His will anyway?

The week ended on Good Friday with the execution of our innocent Savior, the Messiah of Israel, on a cross. No one expected this week to go so terribly wrong. The disciples were fearful, confused, worn out from grief and devastated by the loss of their beloved friend. Why was this happening?

QUESTION: When have you recently asked God, “Why is this happening to me?” What did He answer? What is a more appropriate question?

APPLICATION

Just as in our lives, the disciples were experiencing a totally unexpected event where a seemingly obvious future was turned upside down overnight. It is like when we are being good parents and then our kids do something completely out of line with our teaching; when we think our marriages are going well and then not so much; when our health seems fine and then the doctor changes the future; when we think our finances, relationships, and appliances are under control and then – surprise! – they're not. The truth is that, as human beings we want certainty – being human means experiencing uncertainty. Some of us need to hear this because we are incredibly good at stuffing things down deep inside. We are so tightly wound that we haven't allowed ourselves to feel. We listen to voices in our heads that say “it's weak to feel things,” or “real men don't show their feelings,” or “people will take advantage of us if they know what we're feeling.” But when we are busy stuffing, we're not walking with the Spirit of God, and rage, anxiety and anger can take over. We humans use temporary things like drugs, devices and numbing behaviors to survive and we run, hide, and fight instead of going God's way and praying. C. S. Lewis wrote: “I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.”

QUESTION: What is an area in your life where your will is in charge?

When we pray sometimes God surprises us with His answer. Maybe there's silence or even a "NO." That's when we need to remember: "Pain is not incompatible with faith. Pain is an invitation to faith."

QUESTION: What's the thing you are wrestling with right now? What is keeping you up at night and tying your stomach in knots?

faith." In the challenging moments of our lives, it is not God who needs to change – it is what needs to change in us. Let us keep praying, reminding ourselves of what is true – that we are loved and God never promised that our walk would be easy. If it were, everyone would be a Christian, so don't give up; don't run from God – run toward Him. The good news is that He brings us hope and there is "joy coming in the morning" and yes, next Sunday morning especially, as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus – the foundation of our faith.

QUESTION: As we embrace Easter next Sunday, how will you express your joy and gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice for you?

QUESTION: Who are you inviting to Easter services and possibly baptism?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, hear our prayers. When we are in pain and struggling with life, lift us up with gratitude and hope because we know the end of the Story: Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God, WINS. In His name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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