

Palm Sunday, April 10, 2022

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

READ: Mark 11:1-11

OPENING PRAYER: Dear Lord, help me face hard times in my life knowing that you are with me. Please help me to feel your peace rather than fear. Amen.

MEDITATION: I remember looking down on Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and thinking what Christ must have thought before he rode the colt down the steep hill across the Kidron Valley and up into Jerusalem.

Twelve years ago, I found out I had cancer by phoning a new doctor's office and listening to a recording before a person came on the line. I was unhappy my doctor's nurse had told me that I had "abnormal proteins" rather than a personal visit to tell me I had a form of cancer. Fortunately, I have loving support from Carol who let me know that we could get through this together. Also, we had faith that death has no hold on our lives! Christ's promise of loving me enough to face death for my sins, gives me the courage to live out my life in peace, loving others and following Christ's example.

CLOSING THOUGHT: Christ faced his death for us carefully, fulfilling prophecy, controlling details, and loving us sinners all the while. What a wonderful example his life is for us to follow. Thank you, Jesus!

Rob Roy Wilson

Monday, April 11, 2022

NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE

READ: Romans 8:31-39

OPENING PRAYER: Dear God, thank you for giving us these priceless words, Paul's passionate affirmation of faith in your love. Help me remember that what *really* matters in this world, are not the struggles, griefs, and pains, but rather that you love us fiercely through all the days of our lives, both here and beyond. Amen.

MEDITATION: I was startled when the subject I received for a devotional was my very favorite passage in the Bible! Paul's words to the Romans, to *us*, are words I cling to and repeat to myself in dark times. This passage strengthens me when I grieve the passing of family and friends, when I contemplate the very uncertainty of our future, and when it seems that the world is becoming filled with anarchy.

Paul cites a list of troubles we may face in this world, but declares that *not any* of this can separate us from the love of God. If we festooned ourselves with bits of scripture as the ancients did, I would have verses 38 & 39 dangling from my wardrobe: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." So be it.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear God, help us to remember that you love the persons next to us, and across the street, and across the city, and in the other political parties, and in the other nations, just as *fiercely* as you love us, that these words Paul wrote apply to ALL of your children, so that we may live in harmony with them. Amen.

Jan Swartz

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS

READ: Hebrews 12:1-2

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help us focus each day on the eternal meaning of Jesus' impending death before his resurrection. Amen.

MEDITATION: This scripture has personal meaning to me, because at a young age I was diagnosed with a severe visual impairment of near sightedness. Without my glasses everything is blurry. This scripture to "Fix your eyes on Jesus" is a healing phrase. It is somewhat of a miracle that my eye doctor can prescribe lenses that sharpen every image I see! Often our choices in life appear blurry, don't they? Jesus Christ teaches us how to love and serve others as He did, in order to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear crucified Lord, we know that your Holy Spirit has the ability to grant us your gracious healing power. Thank you for your amazing plan of eternal life made possible by Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. Continue to open our eyes in ways that lead us to serve the needs of others. Amen.

Carol Wilson

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

SALVATION IS GIVEN NOT EARNED

READ: Ephesians 2:1-10

OPENING PRAYER: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for your many blessings. Help us to understand your word so that we might live the life you created for us to live. Amen.

MEDITATION: Have you ever thought about the best gift you ever received? When I was teaching, I read "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein to my elementary students every year. It's the story of the relationship between an apple tree and a boy throughout their lives into old age. Because the tree loved the boy, it gave everything it had to him, and the boy took it, until finally the tree had nothing left to give.

In Ephesians, Paul writes that we were once spiritually dead. But God loved us so much, he sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, paying for our sins so that we may live in grace and have everlasting life with God. It's by God's grace that we, through faith, are saved and not by anything we have done. What an astonishing gift!

Unlike the boy in Silverstein's story who took everything and gave nothing, Christians know that because of God's greatest gift of salvation, much is required of us. We were created by God to do good works, which he prepared in advance for us to do. God expects us to live a righteous life, do good works, serve, and give thanks for all that he has done for us. Faith without works is not enough. So, let's get busy! Thank God for the greatest gift of all by living the life he prepared for us every day.

CLOSING PRAYER: Holy God, thank you for your grace and your mercy. Help us to live a righteous life every day, holding up Christ's light in everything that we do in order to draw to Jesus those who are lost. Amen.

Pam Shaw

Maundy Thursday, April 14, 2022

JESUS PRAYS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

READ: Luke 22:39-46

PRAYER: Lord, I pray that I will remain alert and able to discern your will for me. Amen.

MEDITATION: On his way to the cross, Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples and then proceeded to the Mount of Olives to pray to his Father. Some of his disciples accompanied him. Jesus specifically asked them to remain alert and to not enter into temptation (American Standard Version). However, being mere mortals, the disciples fell asleep while Jesus prayed.

We too have a tendency to fall asleep or to be distracted by secular things; duties and events that keep us from prayer. It is a temptation for me to become so involved with daily tasks and commitments that I forget to allow myself time to talk with Jesus. Or if I do pray, am I alert to what he is saying to me? Think of the temptations we all face daily; there is always television to distract us, a book, computer time, errands, household chores, even the temptation of eating. I am grateful that our Lord is a forgiving God. He sees our transgressions, but if we confess our sins and shortcomings to him, we are forgiven by his grace. Praise the Lord!

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, I pray that I will never be too busy to spend time in prayer, to thank you for all the blessings you give us, to praise your generous spirit, and to be cognizant of your will for me. Amen.

Laura Page

Good Friday, April 15, 2022

THAT'S NOT FAIR!

READ: Isaiah 53:4-5 (better yet, just read the entire chapter!)

OPENING PRAYER: For our sake, Lord, we thank you that life is not fair. We have so little to offer, and you have so much to give. Thank you for your mercy. Amen.

MEDITATION: Have you ever wondered why life seems so unfair sometimes? You're trying so hard, you've been so nice, and because of somebody else's negligence, you get the short end of the stick. "Life is not fair!" we protest.

Sometimes, we even have the nerve to blame God when we think life is unfair.

Can we talk about fairness for a moment?

Take a minute and read Isaiah 53:4-5. This is one of the "Suffering Servant" passages; one of a number of Isaiah's passages that tells of the suffering that Jesus will endure. Understand that this passage is *explicitly* referring to Jesus, and notice what Jesus receives: pain, suffering, punishment, and affliction. He is pierced (John 19:24), crushed, and wounded.

Now look at who is responsible: "Surely, he took up *our pain*, and bore *our suffering*... he was pierced for *our transgressions*, he was crushed for *our iniquities*...."

CLOSING THOUGHT: Look back at what Jesus received again, and compare that to what we receive: peace and healing. He gets all that, and we get peace and healing in exchange? Do you suppose our sense of justice had any say in this exchange...?

Pastor Brad Epperson

Saturday, April 16, 2022

REDEEMING SHEPHERD

READ: 1 Peter 2:21- 25

OPENING PRAYER: Dear God, thank you that you are in and with us in our suffering. Amen.

MEDITATION: First Peter is a letter written by the apostle Peter to believers in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Christians at that time (about 62-64 A.D.) were under threat of persecution because they refused to give worship to Caesar. Peter writes that believers should live moral and godly lives as a witness to unbelievers even in the midst of suffering. Peter writes, “Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God...” (1Peter 2:12 NIV.)

In our passage, Peter points to Jesus as our example in suffering. Jesus entrusted himself “to him who judges justly” and so can we. Peter points out that Jesus’ suffering secured our salvation and that he cares for and protects us as Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:25 NIV.) It is also worth noting that Peter quoted phrases from Isaiah 53 in the passage showing that he saw Jesus as the suffering Servant/Messiah figure depicted there.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Lord, few, if any of us, will ever suffer for our faith like those First Century Christians or the many believers today living under persecution. Help us live and act in ways that show your love to people and give you the glory. Amen.

Jim Foster

Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

THE RESURRECTION: THE ABSOLUTE GAME CHANGER

READ: Mark 16:1-8

OPENING PRAYER: Father, thank you for the gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for doing for us what we could not do on our own. Amen.

MEDITATION: As horrific, horrendous, and torturous as the death of Jesus was on the cross, there is nothing unique about his death on the cross. On the day that Jesus was crucified, the gospel writers tell us that there were at least two others crucified with him. Historians tell us that, under Roman rule, the Romans crucified thousands upon thousands of people.

That Jesus died is not unique. Every human being who has ever lived dies. That Jesus was crucified is not unique. There were over thirty thousand who died such a death. But only one person in all of history ever conquered death and rose again from the grave!

The death of Jesus on the cross was unlike any other crucifixion and any other death. What makes the death of Jesus unique? The resurrection. The empty tomb of Easter morning changes the kind of death that Jesus died. Because of the resurrection, the death that Jesus died wasn't just dying, but a sacrificial death for all those who trust in him as Lord and Savior. Christ died on the cross for sinners so that we might rise with Christ as God's children on Easter morning.

The resurrection changes everything!

CLOSING PRAYER: Thank you, God, for sending your Son to die on our behalf. Thank you, Jesus, for your obedience and your sacrificial death. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for revealing to us the truth of the resurrection! Amen.

Pastor James Kim