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For Personal and Family Devotions
April 1 to June 30, 2023

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Devotions for April

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Devotions for May

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Meet the Authors

Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck is the executive director of pastoral education for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in St. Louis, MO. He served as president of the North Dakota District (2009–2017) and parish pastor (1987–2009). He is married to Myrna, a Lutheran schoolteacher. They are blessed with three sons, one daughter, and five grandchildren. They love spending time with family, traveling, singing in the choir, playing handbells, and enjoying their home and yard.

Jeana L. Jones is a member of Risen Savior Lutheran Church in Wichita, KS. There, she volunteers as the leader of the K–5 midweek ministry and occasional leader of women’s Bible studies. Jeana and her husband, Marc, are blessed with four children. Now that her kids are older, Jeana has gone back to work part-time in accounting. She works for Fairmount Ministries and Coffee Company, a Lutheran campus ministry and coffeehouse serving Wichita State University and the surrounding Fairmount neighborhood.

After serving congregations in Minnesota and Kentucky, **Rev. Tom Engel** is back in his hometown, Chicago. He is now at St. Philip on the North Side, which is not too far from where he was born. Tom’s son, Clayton, works in the world of finance and is married to Trisha, who is a Lutheran school principal. Every day, you can see Tom taking his English mastiff, CeeCee, for a walk. Everyone around the neighborhood knows CeeCee as the “church dog.”

ORDER OF FAMILY WORSHIP

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader (*With all repeating each phrase*): Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

A PSALM may be read by the leader or by the family in response.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

THE SCRIPTURE READING

THE MEDITATION

THE PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: The almighty and merciful God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us.

All: Amen.

Martin Luther's Morning Prayer

Make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Martin Luther's Evening Prayer

Make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

—Adapted from Luther's Small Catechism

See prayer section for daily prayers, as well as prayers for Church festivals and other special occasions.

Mealtime Prayers

Asking a Blessing

The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, make the sign of the holy cross, fold their hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You, [O LORD,] and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

(Psalm 145:15–16)

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts, which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Returning Thanks

Also, after eating, they shall, in like manner, reverently make the sign of the holy cross and with folded hands say:

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His love endures forever. [He] gives food to every creature. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the LORD delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love. (Psalm 136:1, 25; 147:9–11)

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

—Adapted from Luther's Small Catechism

SATURDAY, APRIL 1



Read John 12:1–8 ♦ Psalm 23

Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus. *John 12:3*

Anointed for Burial

Tomorrow, the Church journeys with Christ to Jerusalem. We journey with Him to His cross, His tomb, and His glorious resurrection. In this great Holy Week, we will die with Christ and rise with Him.

Today, Jesus is the guest in the home of His dear friends Lazarus—whom He had raised from the dead—and Lazarus’s sisters, Mary and Martha. Those at that dinner, including the disciples, knew that Jesus would be entering hostile territory among people who wanted to kill Him.

On their way to the meal, Jesus tells His disciples He will be handed over to His enemies and be crucified but will rise from the dead in three days. Mary believed this to be true as she anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume. There’s no mistaking her intent—she was anointing Jesus for His burial with a lavish burial spice.

With Mary, we, too, believe that Jesus died and rose again. Mary’s spice may have been lavish, but Jesus’ death is more lavish! In His death, He lavishly forgives our sins by taking them upon Himself. In faith, we have been anointed into His death so that we, too, may partake of His resurrection into eternal life.

Jesus, priceless treasure, thank You for Your lavish gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Your death and resurrection. Amen.

SUNDAY, APRIL 2
PALM SUNDAY/SUNDAY OF THE PASSION



Read Matthew 21:1-11 ♦ Psalm 118:19-29

Behold, your king is coming to you, humble,
and mounted on a donkey. *Matthew 21:5*

Ride On to Die

Earthly kings never turn out the way we hope. Old Testament Israel begged God for an earthly king, but God was their king. Earthly kings will always disappoint because they are descendants of fallen Adam. Even Israel's great earthly king, David, confessed, "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3).

Now all eyes are on Jesus. Gabriel had told Mary that her child would be the Son of the Most High and His kingdom would have no end. The Wise Men asked, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2).

Today, we remember when Jesus entered Jerusalem. There is so much hope in this king! Cheers swell: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Will this king be everything they hoped for?

Jesus, God in the flesh, is the King of kings. He does not disappoint us because He is the king we truly need. God humbles Himself in coming to earth to save us. He rides on to die to take on the sins of kings and servants, Jews and Gentiles, you and me. He enters Jerusalem not to ascend a throne but to ascend the cross, where the King of kings crowns us with the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

O Jesus, You do not disappoint us. Thank You for riding on to die for our eternal salvation. Amen.

MONDAY, APRIL 3



Read Matthew 21:33–46 ♦ Psalm 31:9–16

This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.

Matthew 21:38

Killing the Heir

God made a covenant with Abraham to be a blessing to the nations through His people Israel (see Genesis 12:1–3). He calls Israel His beloved vineyard. Yet when He looked for it to yield grapes of faith and good works, it yielded wild grapes of unbelief and rebellion.

God sent His prophets to call His vineyard—His people—to repent of their sins and believe in Him for life and salvation. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God condemned the false prophets who destroyed His vineyard by their unbelief, and He called Israel to repent (see Jeremiah 12:10). Instead, God’s prophets were beaten, stoned, and killed for preaching His Word.

It is Monday of Holy Week. God’s plan of salvation moves into high gear. God sent forth His only-begotten Son into the vineyard. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to be delivered over to death, to be mocked, flogged, and crucified. In this parable, Jesus is exposing the plan of the chief priests and Pharisees to kill the divine heir.

Do not be troubled, for Jesus is in full command. He willingly enters Jerusalem as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. By the Son’s perfect sacrifice, we are made heirs of eternal life, children of God’s holy vineyard, His kingdom, now and forever.

Lord Jesus, You have made me an heir of salvation.

Produce in me the fruits of faith. Amen.

TUESDAY, APRIL 4



Read Matthew 24:15–31 ♦ Psalm 42

They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. *Matthew 24:30*

Looks Can Be Deceiving

This conversation between Jesus and His disciples takes place during Holy Week. Tensions are rising between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Plans to kill Him are underway. Jesus knows of His fast-approaching death, yet He is bold to predict details of the destruction of the temple and His glorious return on the Last Day.

Is Jesus really in a position to be speaking so boldly? How can an ordinary man have any knowledge of the temple's destruction in such horrific detail? How can a man who is soon to be arrested, beaten, humiliated, bloodied, and crucified be giving promises of power and glory, angels and trumpets? Looks can be deceiving.

This Jesus is no less than the Christ, the very Son of God who would suffer to bring about these things. He is the temple who would be destroyed, yet in three days would be raised up. He came as the one true Christ to be destroyed for us for the forgiveness of our sins, to rise from the dead, and to gather us on the Last Day to live with Him in His eternal glory. This week, we see Him as our Suffering Servant. When He returns, we will see Him as our exalted Redeemer, who will give us repentant sinners the crown of eternal life.

Dear Jesus, give us peace in knowing You are the Christ who died for our salvation. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5



Read Matthew 26:1–5,14–16 ♦ Psalm 70

The chief priests and the elders . . . plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him. *Matthew 26:3–4*

Plot or Plan

David wrote, “He plots trouble while on his bed” (Psalm 36:4). We don’t wait to be in our beds to plot against one another out of greed, spite, or revenge every day. What evil are you plotting?

The religious leaders were doing some plotting of their own. They were plotting to arrest Jesus by trickery and deceit—whatever it took to capture Him and put Him to death. They didn’t want to carry out their evil plan during the Passover or in the daylight. This would cause too much commotion among the people and agitate Rome. But a devious opportunity and plot just opened—Judas is willing to deliver Jesus for a few pieces of silver.

While the religious leaders think their plotting is clever and will surprise Jesus, Jesus will use their evil for our good. God became flesh for this moment to carry out the plan and will of God to save us. Even before Palm Sunday, Jesus said, “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Jesus came to give His life for ours. He came to pay the price for our sins with His own blood, with His own death.

God is in control. His divine plan saves us all.

Dear Father, forgive our evil schemes. Thank You for fulfilling Your plan to ransom us from sin. In Jesus’ name. Amen.