

2020

LENN

DEVOTIONS



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Why Lent? A Participation in the Life of Christ

There are many ways we can mark our calendars. We might observe fiscal years, school years, sports seasons, or the holidays on the “Hallmark” calendar. What do we suppose about marking time in a different way? What if there was a Christian year? We celebrate Christmas and Easter already, and these are both seasons of the Christian year. We recently observed Advent as a time of preparation before the birth of Christ at Christmas. Likewise, we can observe a time of preparation before Easter. Easter is a remembrance of the resurrection, but Christ also had to prepare for his work on Calvary—particularly in the week leading up to his death.

Our goal as Christians is to follow Jesus well, and one way we can do this is through time. God marked time as holy when he established Sabbath in the creation account (Gen. 2:2-3). This allows for all of creation to set their clocks by a holy rhythm. With this understanding, we can look at the Christian year broken down into seasons that rise and fall into one another. Like a roller coaster, there will be moments of joy and excitement, but not without the building anticipation before the drop.

The season of Lent is a 40 day period (excluding Sunday’s, because every Sunday is a “little Easter”) it’s a time of building anticipation for the resurrection, and for sober reflection on the sacrifice of Christ. It is a time to prepare, and engage in disciplines and exercises that help us walk closer with Christ so that we might participate in the life of Christ. The Christian year can be one way that we can participate with Christ so that we might find our lives in His and His in us.

Week One - “A Time to Prepare”

For many of us, observing Lent in the Christian year will be a new experience. For others who have come to our congregation from a mainline denomination, this journey will be familiar to you. I hope you will join Mason Ballard and Don Seevers in this journey as we strive to strengthen our faith through Scripture, prayer, focus and self-denial.

We begin with **Ash Wednesday, February 26, 2020**. Many churches hold special Ash Wednesday services as they burn the palms from the previous year’s Palm Sunday and place the ashes on the forehead of the worshiper in the shape of a cross. We are reminded in Genesis 3:19b, “from dust you are and to dust you will return.” This is a stark reminder of our sinfulness, our mortality and the need to depend on our Savior. The ashes are often worn throughout the day to demonstrate to others our need to take account of our sin and need to repent of it. Ash Wednesday also serves as a beginning of self-denial. Many people choose to fast on Ash Wednesday and most choose to fast from some foods during the entire season of Lent. Others choose to give up something else of importance to them. Suggestions may include giving up social media, not drinking alcohol, or anything that would take our focus away from Christ and His suffering. It is a time of sacrifice that should be replaced by reading Scripture and observing more time in prayer. After all, Christ gave His all for us!



Thursday, February 27: Matthew 16:24-27 will serve as today's text. A hymn that we sing will focus our thoughts and prayers:

*"Take up thy cross and follow Me," I heard my Master say;
"I gave My life to ransom thee, surrender your all today."*

Friday, February 28: As we think of following Christ and we observe His journey to the cross, we continue with the third stanza and refrain from the same hymn noted above:

*It may be through the shadows dim, or o'er the stormy sea,
I take the cross and follow Him, wherever He leadeth me.
Where He leads I'll go, wherever He leads I'll go,
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so, where He leads I'll go.*

Please note ways in which you need to follow Christ.

Week Two - “40 Days”

Numbers can be important for marking time. They can also work symbolically to convey great meaning. In scripture, it is often the case that numbers function in both these ways. The number forty is one we might be familiar with. It is commonly associated with the flood in the story of Noah. Forty is also the number of years that Israel had to wander in the wilderness before entering the promised land. It is common to understand forty as being a period of great testing or purification.

Jesus also endured his own experience with the number forty. Forty was the number of days he spent in the desert near the beginning of his ministry (Matt. 4:1-11). During this period, Jesus fasted and prayed. He was tempted, and quoted scripture as a defense against Satan. Though this was not a time of purification for Jesus, this forty-day desert experience was a time of testing. And in this, Jesus was able to step into the story of ancient Israel (Numbers 14:20-23). Israel’s wandering in the desert was redeemed in the shared experience of the Savior. All the anguish and death, and discomfort, and waiting during that time, is not only redeemed by Jesus, but is also taken up by Him. This is the very nature of Christ (Isaiah 53:4; 1 Peter 5:7). Jesus is able, in his humanity to experience our pain and temptation, but in his divinity, he is able to cleanse our sin and wipe away every tear from our eyes.

This is the occasion in the life of Christ that we are privileged to step into during the forty-day season of Lent. We are able to assimilate our experience with Christ’s experience on Earth. Even as David, in the spirit, writes the words that Christ would exclaim in pain on the cross, we too, by faith, and the power of the Holy Spirit, cast our cares on Christ:

“My God, my God why have you
forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,
So far from my cries of anguish?” -Psalm 22:1

During Lent we get to intentionally lean into the depths of the pain of humanity, recognizing that this world is not the way it’s meant to be. But we also face the cathartic truth of knowing that everything will be put right by Christ’s work of salvation in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-8).

Monday, March 2:

Read Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33; 14:1-9, 17-24

Tuesday, March 3:

A Responsive reading from “Celebrating Grace Hymnal”
(Repurposed for today’s meditation):

GOD’S REVELATION:

The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights

Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights

Elijah got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

**Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan;
and he was with the wild beasts;
and the angels waited on him.**

(Gen. 7:12, Exod. 24:18, 1 Kings 19:8, Mark 1:13)

OUR RESPONSE:

Lord God,

Who cleansed the earth through forty days of floods,
**and gave Your guiding law
through forty days of worship,**

Who revived Elijah through forty days of pilgrimage,
**and sent Your Son to fight our foe
through forty days of fasting;**

grant us grace to enter

the flood, the fire, the desert,

**the penitence and the journey,
the emptiness and the fasting,**

that leads us to Gethsemane,

and the dark scene of Golgotha,

**and leave us at the empty tomb,
to see Your risen Son.**

In the name of the Father,

And the son,

And of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday, March 4:

Read Luke 4:1-13

Thursday, March 5:

Read Psalm 22

Friday, March 6:

In remembrance of Christ's experience in the desert, try one of the following disciplines as a time of prayer with God:

- Take a walk for an hour in the park
- Sit in silence for 5-10 minutes
- If you normally have music on in the car, try turning it off completely.
- Say "no" to something that you would normally automatically say
- Say "yes" to
- If you normally use a dishwasher, clean the dishes by hand
- Organize a room or area in your house or at work.
- Throw away some clutter

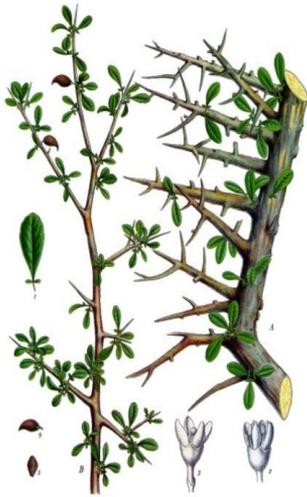
Or

- Think of your own

Week Three - “Ashes and Myrrh”

Monday, March 9:

These two items may not seem to “fit together” but as noted in Week # 1, we are reminded that we came from dust and will return to it. When we die, our bodies eventually will turn to dust. Those who are planning to be cremated at death understand that process will occur quickly. I don’t mean to sound crass, but ashes are a reminder of our own mortality.



And what about myrrh? Is this a gift you would give to a newborn baby? Most likely not as the parents would be offended. The word myrrh is mentioned in the Bible at least two times. The most familiar time to us is when it is listed as one of the three gifts brought to the young child, Jesus, by the Magi. It has a variety of uses and can actually be ingested when mixed with other ingredients. I find it interesting that one source of myrrh is the tree pictured that also has thorns. As the skin of the tree is punctured, the myrrh resin is secreted to help heal the bark.

It has been thought that the gift of myrrh was a foretelling of Christ’s death as myrrh is used in embalming when the body is wrapped in spices and strips of cloth.

Let us consider these Scriptures, prayers and songs as we meditate on the suffering of Christ this week:

Tuesday, March 10: *We Three Kings* - Stanza 4

*Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone cold tomb.*

Wednesday, March 11: Mark 15:21-24

Thursday, March 12:

Mortal versus Immortal - I Cor. 15:50-57

Friday, March 13: Spend some time today asking God to help you continue in your time of self-denial. Rely on Him for strength. Note your thoughts:

Week Four - “Baptismal Reflections: Our Life in His, His Life in Us”

Recently, in a reading on worship, I came across the phrase, “baptismal life.” I had seen this phrase before in reference to how we should occupy ourselves in our goal of living into Christlikeness, but for one reason or another, it struck me differently this time. In order to reflect fully on this phrase, we need to look to Christ in his experience here on earth. More specifically, it will be helpful to reflect on his baptism. (Matt. 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22)

Aside from the first three Gospels, there is one more baptismal account that might be helpful. It’s not a baptismal account, but rather a testimony *about* the baptismal account of Christ. In John 1:32, John the Baptist says about Jesus, “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and *remain* on him” (emphasis added).

Many times throughout scripture, we notice that the Spirit of God comes upon a person, but He also leaves as much as he comes—perhaps indicating that in a fallen world, the Spirit of God could not permanently dwell with humanity (Jud. 16:20, 1 Sam. 16:14). The distinction in John 1:32 is that Christ makes everything different. While we are fallible, finite, and sinful, Christ is perfect, infinite, and holy. In his full divinity, he unlocks the door for the Spirit of God to remain on his humanity. This is no small matter! It is in Christ’s baptism that he is confirmed as the Son of God, and it is into his baptism that we are baptized. We have died and risen with Christ in our baptismal participation into his life! (Rom. 6:2-3; 8) Therefore, we have been crucified **WITH** Christ and it is no longer us who live, but Christ who lives within us! (Gal 2:20). Humanity takes on a new capacity for God’s Spirit because of Christ’s life’s-work. We now can live as those who are redeemed by Christ—and in knowing that God’s Spirit takes up residence in his believers, we live into a mission of constant love, obedience, and renewal, wherein God looks upon us, and sees not our inadequacies, but His own Son as our covering! This is the baptismal life. We have taken off the old, and put on Christ so that our sins are remembered no more, and instead, we participate daily into the death and resurrection of Christ.

Monday, March 16:

The Mystery of Faith is an ancient phrase that believers have clung to as a truth regarding our faith. It can be helpful to us as it is both a reminder of Christ, and quite possibly the shortest possible way to retell the Gospel:

Remember these words today

The Mystery of Faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Tuesday, March 17:

Read: Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11

Wednesday, March 18:

Read: Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34

Thursday, March 19:

“Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me” by CityAlight

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer

There is no more for heaven now to give

He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom

My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus

For my life is wholly bound to His

Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine!

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken

For by my side, the Savior He will stay

I labor on in weakness and rejoicing

For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me

Through the deepest valley He will lead

Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome!

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave
To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released, I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!

Friday, March 20:

Friday is the sixth day of the week. This is the day that humanity was formed from the dust. In Genesis 2:7, it says that God breathed life into the man. It says, "Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." The Hebrew word for "breath" used here is also the same word for "wind," but also for "spirit." It is in this account that we see that humanity has been fitted with the capacity for the Spirit of God to dwell in us. It is by the fall that this is lost, only to be reclaimed and unlocked again in Christ, and in our entry into Christ's church in our baptism we too reclaim this.

Remember Friday as the day we were created to be Spirit-filled beings. Remember also that Friday is the day that Jesus died so that we would be remade through the power of the resurrection to be filled yet again with His Spirit.

Week Five - “Taking Inventory”

March 23 - March 27:

I know that there are several families in our church that own their own store or business, and on a routine basis, usually monthly, they have to “do inventory.” Is this fun for them? Most likely, not. But it is a necessary activity as the business owner needs to assess what products they have in stock, and how often that stock is turned over. A business owner doesn’t want to be stuck with a lot of outdated inventory, and for those in the meat, staples or restaurant business, it can be very costly and dangerous if the product’s freshness date has expired. Also, a business owner needs to assess how much it costs to store a particular product and how that cost affects the bottom line...profit and loss. Yes, taking inventory may not be exciting work but it is very important to do on a routine basis.

We are now into our fifth week of Lent and hopefully we are taking inventory of our own lives as we walk this journey of faith together. Has anything changed in our walk with Christ? Or, are we the same person that we were back in late February? Most of us find it very difficult to take a look at our own lives and to be honest with ourselves. Most of us know what we need to change but do we have the commitment to make those changes? Please remember, this Lenten journey is a private one between you and God. He already knows our needs, but we also know that it is important for us to share those needs with God for our benefit. We can strengthen our relationship with God by taking a spiritual inventory. Sharing those needs with God through prayer is a way of taking inventory.

Have you replaced the things you decided to give up during Lent with more time in prayer? Have you spent more time in the Word? Have you thought about God’s plan for you? It is the hope that by replacing what we are giving up or denying ourselves, we will make long-term changes in our walk with Christ. How will you and I be different through this spiritual exercise? I understand that taking inventory can be very uncomfortable. It is however, very necessary to ensure a healthy walk with Christ.

Will you take some time to take inventory in your own life?
Writing items down will help us to remember and help us to focus
on changes we need to make.

Week Six - “Triumphal Entry: A King of Peace”

We began this devotional by talking about fasting, and the many ways that we can focus on the Lord’s work and mission in the world by giving something up, or abstaining from something. This might be something that needs to be brought under control, or maybe pruned from our lives completely. But what if we looked at giving from a different perspective? What is it that we might need to give to Christ instead of give up?

Leading into Holy Week, we look toward participating with Christ by enacting and remembering the week leading to His death. One central part of the story is the Triumphal Entry. Jesus chooses to ride down the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem on a donkey. The donkey was a symbol of peace. It sent a message that all has been put right in a kingdom. Kings ride horses into battle, but they ride donkeys when peace has been established. This is the implication in the book of Judges. When there is a good judge who creates peace, their sons are depicted as riding on donkeys (when they are crummy judges the text notes otherwise).

Jesus tells his disciples to go ahead to a village to acquire a donkey. He says that if they are asked about what they are doing, to say, “The Lord needs it.” Now the text doesn’t seem to indicate that the owner had any quarrels with letting the donkey go for the Lord’s purposes. We’ve all seen the police movies where cars get commandeered because of “official police business.” The owner was able to give what he had for the purpose of glorifying Jesus. For this reason, it is important to ask ourselves what it is that the Lord requires of us. Micah 6:8 offers a good way of discovering this:

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God?”

How can we, like those faithful to Christ in the Triumphal entry, laying their garments before him, lay our very lives before Christ? How do we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

Monday, March 30:

Read Luke 19:28-44

Tuesday, March 31:

Read Zechariah 9:9

Wednesday, April 1:

Read Psalm 24

Thursday, April 2: – Reflect

“*The Life Of Christ*” Stanza 2 by Mason Ballard

“See Him there striding on the colt

The One who comes in the name of the Lord

Ride on King, Ride on in majesty!

Each step will shake the gates of Hell; secure my victory!”

Friday, April 3:

Read Micah 6:8

Week Seven - “HOLY WEEK”

Something happens in the scriptures when the authors want to get the message out that something is really important. The story slows down.

Way down.

As if to say, “hold up, we need to get this part right!” the biblical authors will generally stretch out time. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) all detail the three years of Christ’s ministry. It presents Christ’s actions, service, miracles, healings, teachings, sayings, and parables. The Gospel writers tend to cram that three years into an average span of 15 chapters. So, one might expect the details of one full year to encompass about 5 chapters. However, what we find is that the week called Holy Week (from just after the Triumphal Entry to Resurrection Day) is allotted an average of 6.8 chapters by the Gospel writers.

These writers have been hard at work up to this point in crafting the narrative in such a way that it accurately depicts all the events of Jesus’ life. It’s a narrative laden with foreshadowing of his purpose to die as the sacrifice necessary to cleanse us, and rise as the Lord of life, who triumphs over the grave.

And now as we turn to Holy Week in the text, the Gospel writers take a deep breath. Then they let it out. Another deeper, then they sigh out the story of the most poignant week they spent with their friend. These keen story tellers are now speaking with a very soft voice, in hopes that, as the audience leans forward, they might just fall right into the story.

Monday, April 6: Cleansing or Clearing the Temple

In the Synoptic Gospels, the cleansing or clearing of the temple in Jerusalem takes place immediately after the Triumphal Entry. In John, a record of the temple cleansing occurs earlier in His ministry. Some theologians believe that there were actually two different events recorded where Jesus demonstrated His authority in this way. Regardless, all 4 Gospel accounts tell the story of Jesus dealing with sin in the Temple.

In the contemporary Church, some Christians interpret this scene as prohibiting selling anything in a church building, such as bake sales, cookbooks, CDs, etc., but I think they miss the point: Jesus was angry at the Pharisees and their hypocritical behavior. If you read the accounts carefully, it would appear that they were selling these items for personal profit. The term robbers is used in 3 of the 4 accounts. It appears that they were cheating those who were buying and abusing the purpose of the Temple designed for true worship of God. Regardless of what you interpret this story to be, the main point is that Jesus will not tolerate the purpose of His Church being exploited!

And what about us? Are there things in our lives that need to be cleansed or cleared out? Of course, there are! As we have been reading Scripture, praying, and focusing on the suffering of Christ over these last weeks, we need to pray for our hearts to be cleansed of attitudes and behaviors that separate us from our relationship with Him.

Several years ago, the Worship Choir sang a song titled, *Jesus, Clear the Temple* by Pepper Choplin. This anthem was rather unusual, but this powerful text reminds of us of what we need to do in our own lives. Before we are too critical of the Pharisees, we need to take a look into our own hearts. Please see the text on the next page.

Jesus, Clear the Temple

Pepper Choplin

*Jesus clear the temple,
Come and make it clean and bare.
Purge the needless clutter,
Make this place a house of prayer.
Cast out all distractions
That would take our eyes from You.
Jesus clear the temple,
Make our worship true.*

*Jesus clear the temple,
Chase away our prayerless pride.
Strip away the pretenses,
Places where our sin can hide.
Scour every corner
Where temptation draws us in.
Jesus clear the temple
Make us clean again.*

*Drive out self ambition,
Cast out the petty things,
Break down the divisions
And the conflict that they bring.
Overturn the tables
Of our selfishness and greed.
Break our hearts to minister
To those in need.*

*Jesus clear the temple,
Let Your Spirit fill this place.
Immerse us in Your power,
Transform us by Your wondrous grace.
Let this place be sacred
Where your healing may be found.
Jesus clear the temple,
Make this holy ground.*

Tuesday, April 7: The Fig Tree

One of the episodes occurring on Tuesday of Holy Week that we find in the Gospels is the cursing of the fig tree (Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-25). I would encourage you to compare these two texts before continuing in this reading. Jesus is walking along a path early that Tuesday morning, and spots a fig tree. We are told that Jesus is hungry, yet the leafy fig tree yields no fruit. It is interesting here that one text notes that it was not yet the season for figs. If this was the case, why would Jesus expect to find a fig? Wouldn't the one who created the seasons know not to expect a fig out of season? What is more, why would he then curse the fruitless tree while it is not its time?

The trouble with this event is that the tree already had leaves. Given the time of the festival of Passover, we know that it would be early spring. The leaves present on this tree would indicate from far off that it was an "early bloomer," and should have already sprouted fruit. And while it looked good from afar, when closer, Jesus saw that the truth of the tree was far from good.

A hungry, fig-craving Christ saw the leaves. The leaves are the tree's way of saying "open for business." But as Jesus arrives at the tree, he knows that the tree is not being entirely honest. The tree says one thing and does another.

How often in our lives do our leaves implicate us in a story of righteousness, but our fruit is rotten (or not present at all)? From far off, do we give the impression of healthiness—of fruit-bearing—only to realize that when Jesus comes around, we have nothing to offer? Jesus is often depicted as one who feeds, but in this story, it is Jesus who is the one who is hungry. What can we possibly offer to Jesus? Can we really feed him? Consider the following passage:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

-Matthew 25: 31-46

Wednesday, April 8: Preparing for Passover

As Holy Week progresses, it seems like so much is happening so quickly. The Wednesday before Passover was probably busy with activities, such as shopping for the right foods, preparing the meal, setting up the table, etc. Perhaps we can relate as we know that life can happen at a frenetic pace as it seems we are running around all over town getting things ready for the traditions we celebrate in our families. For instance, how often do we hear people talk about how busy they are getting ready for Christmas. We have to find the perfect gifts for those we love. We take the little children to visit Santa. We have to make arrangements as to where we will celebrate. Add to the busy schedule all the concerts at school and church. Many of us “crash” after the busy holiday season that starts with Thanksgiving and ends with New Year’s Day. Many of us are so worn out that we also become ill. Preparing for the Easter season can also be a busy time for you. Does the Easter Bunny visit with baskets of goodies? Are we racing around getting ready for the Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday services. Are we having the family over for dinner?

Perhaps it was just as crazy for the Jews in preparing for Passover! I can imagine Jesus watching all the fuss being made as He was focusing on following God’s plan for Him. He knew what the Last Supper meant as he dined with His disciples.

Judas was busy preparing too. He was preparing to betray His Lord!

Maybe, just maybe, they needed to find some time to rest and reflect on the events ahead of them. As difficult as it may seem, we need to do that too. We have all seen the commercials for Ghirardelli chocolates where the woman returns home and falls onto the bed to relax after a hectic day and enjoy that one piece of chocolate. Resting is also an important of preparation. We rest to focus on what is ahead.

Thursday, April 9: Anamnesis: Memory and Hope

Sometimes the Thursday of Holy Week is referred to as “Maundy Thursday.” “Maundy” is from the Latin “*Mandatum*,” meaning “mandate.” This is the day that we remember the events surrounding the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples (Matt. 26:17-30, Mark 14: 12-26, Luke 22: 7-38, John 13—John gives more of an account of the different conversations around the table).

It is in the celebration of Passover (the festival that remembers and celebrates God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt in Exodus) that Christ establishes a new covenant. This is a meal, much like in Exodus 24:11, where a covenant is ratified in eating and drinking with God. Jesus builds on the richness of Passover to create a meal of new meaning. This is now the meal that his followers will engage in to enact the memory of salvation.

There is a word used in the original Greek text called *anamnesis*. This word means “to remember”. But this is no mere cerebral activity. It’s not like simply remembering dates and figures. Anamnesis is an active remembrance. We participate in the “acted symbol” of communion in order to, by faith, remember the saving work of Christ, making the potency of the once-for-all events of the past, active in our present moment. This is the underlying concept behind anamnesis. In fact, anamnesis is the antithesis to amnesia!

In our reception of the communion meal, we, as Robert E. Webber would say, “take the alpha and omega into our hands” (“The Divine Embrace,” - Webber). By tasting and ingesting the symbols of our faith, we become contemporary with the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ! This is the new mandate: that we wouldn’t just remember that which has happened, but that we would also strive on, in assurance in the hope of the resurrection.

Friday, April 10:
The End of Our Journey...The Fulfillment of His

Where does one begin to write briefly about Good Friday? And why do we refer to this horrible, difficult day as good? Well, as Paul Harvey would say, “and now...the rest of the story.” That’s right, because we know the purpose of Christ’s suffering and death, we know that “good” came from that dreadful day. Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, we know He paid the price for our sins and we can have a personal relationship with the Father & Son and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. That is good news. Very good news!

But, we do need to consider the events of that day. Trial. Scourging. Crucifixion. Death. Burial. These words bring so many powerful emotions to us and we can look at the Scriptural accounts to see how these events affected those who witnessed and participated in them.

Matthew records these events in chapters 26 & 27. Mark’s account is written in chapter 15. Luke shares his perspective in chapters 22 & 23. John tells his version in chapters 18 & 19. I encourage you to take some time today and read all 4 gospel stories of Jesus’ sacrifice for us. Then take some time to reflect on how much Christ loved you that He followed in obedience to His Father’s plan. Even though we have read these accounts and heard the story of God’s love for us so many times, it is still hard to comprehend.

As we near the end of our journey through the season of Lent, we hope you will join us tonight as we offer a unique opportunity for worship through the Tenebrae Service at 7:00 PM.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

Saturday, April 11: Christ Observes Sabbath Rest

Sunday has always been known as the first day of the week. In the ancient church, It was also referred to as “the eighth day”. And while this might please Beatles fans, it should be noted that there is great theological meaning packed into this expression. The first day of the week is known as the day of Creation (Gen. 1:1-5). However, in the kingdom of God, wherein all things are made new in Christ, it is the first day of new creation (Col. 1:19-20). Christians felt the need to come up with a way of representing this already-not-yet way of viewing the kingdom of God, thus the concept of the eighth day was born. The idea here is that somehow, the eighth day and first day complimentarily overlap. This creates a beautiful symmetry between the first Creation and the “Re-Creation” brought about in Christ.

Having said that, it would be easy to say that nothing happened with respect to Jesus on Saturday in the story of Holy Week, but this would be misleading. Saturday has always been the seventh day of the week. This is the Sabbath, the day appointed by God in the creation account as holy. God also reminds his people to keep this day holy. No one can read the book of Exodus, or perhaps any of the other books of the Pentateuch without noticing the command of keeping the Sabbath.

What does Christ do then on this Sabbath? The text tells us plainly—He rested. In fulfilling his purpose and obedience to God, Christ observes all the commands of God, even Sabbath keeping—even in death! Why? In the creation account in Genesis, God rests from his labor on the seventh day. It says this:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” - Genesis 2:1-3

Jesus too, is able to rest from his work on the cross. He was buried, and now he would rest, awaiting his rising from the dead. And in his rising, he would establish newness for all creation.

“God Rested” by Andrew Peterson

So they took His body down
The man who said He was the resurrection and the life
Was lifeless on the ground
The sky was red as blood along the blade of night
As the sabbath fell they shrouded Him in linen
They dressed Him like a wound
The rich man and the women
They laid Him in the tomb

Six days shall you labor
The seventh is the Lord's
In six He made the earth and all the heavens
But He rested on the seventh
God rested
He said that it was finished
And the seventh day, He blessed it
God rested

So they laid their hopes away
They buried all their dreams about the kingdom He proclaimed
And they sealed them in the grave
As a holy silence fell on all Jerusalem
But the Pharisees were restless
Pilate had no peace
And Peter's heart was reckless
Mary couldn't sleep
But God rested

Six days shall you labor
The seventh is the Lord's
In six He made the earth and all the heavens
But He rested on the seventh
God rested
He worked till it was finished
And the seventh day, He blessed it

He said that it was good
And the seventh day, He blessed it
God rested

The sun went down
The sabbath faded
The holy day was done and all creation waited

