



HOLYWEEK

DEVOTIONAL
SOUL CITY CHURCH

PALMSUNDAY

PASSAGE

The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" -Matthew 21:9

PERSONAL REFLECTION

On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem for what would be the last week of his natural life. He knew that difficult days were ahead. He knew that soon he would be facing the cross. And yet there he was, in the middle of an impromptu praise party. Even though those gathered there worshiped him not for who He was...but who they wanted Him to be...they worshiped Him nonetheless.

This is our invitation this week Soul City. We are in difficult days. And we have more difficult days ahead. But in the middle of these troubling times, we are invited to put ourselves into a posture of praise.

Will you let this mystery break your praise, or will you let your praise breakthrough this mystery?

PRAYER

God, I praise you. From the middle of this mystery, I praise you. I praise you for who you are and all that you have done. I praise the Father, who created me. I praise the Son, who made a way for me. And I praise the Spirit, who guides me and guards me. God, help me remain in a posture of praise through the highs and lows that come...all week long.

Amen.

MONDAY

PASSAGE

"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves"

- Mark 11:15

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When Jesus stormed into the Temple, he wasn't just overturning tables, he was overturning expectations. The temple was the place where the presence of God resided. And traditionally, it was only a place for those who belonged to the "IN CROWD". And those who didn't make it on the "IN LIST" were piously and prejudiciously precluded from ever even taking part. But Jesus claimed that He was opening up access for all of God's people into all of God's presence.

Today, remember that the Kingdom of God has been opened up to everyone. Even in this season. Even to the people you might not think deserve it. Even to the people you might not like very much. Even to people you will never know. And be encouraged that through a transforming relationship with Jesus, God's presence has been opened up...even to you. Right here. Right now. Right as you are.

PRAYER

Jesus, I invite you to turn over any tables of prejudice in my life. Remind me that the riches of your Kingdom are open and available to all, even to those who I may consider "others". Thank you, Jesus that you have made your Kingdom available to "them"...and to me. Help me to become more aware of your presence this week even as I am sheltering at home.

Amen.

TUESDAY

PASSAGE

“Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.” -Mark 12:12

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus had a complicated relationship with the religious leaders of his day. Specifically, because they were often more concerned with getting the answer they wanted to hear, rather than hearing and believing what Jesus was actually saying.

We often do the same thing. We try to force Jesus into our timelines, demands, and agendas. By doing so, we can completely miss the life-giving truth He has to offer. The reality is, Jesus is so much more and so much bigger and so much better than we could ever imagine. His teachings and His ways, as challenging as they may be, are the truth that leads to transformation. This week can you open yourself up and lean into the transforming truth of Jesus, however challenging it might be?

PRAYER

Jesus, Forgive me for being more concerned with my preoccupations than I am with your presence. Speak your transforming truth to me and about me that I am unable or even unwilling to see. Help me to not only trust, but to rest in the reality of your authority. Help me come to you with all of who I am as you come to me with all of who you are.

Amen.

WEDNESDAY

PASSAGE

“Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?’ So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver.” -Matthew 26:14-15

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When Judas made a deal with the chief priests to sell out Jesus, he was making a deal with religion itself. A deal made out of fear, opportunism, and a desire to stay in control.

Jesus also made a deal. His deal was with God. His was a deal of sacrifice, selflessness, and surrendered love.

You are offered the same two paths every single day. You can take the constricting, self-serving deal of religion. Or you can take the offer of life with God through following Jesus. One of these deals leads to a slow death and the other leads to a full life. One binds you. The other frees you. One constricts. The other expands. The question for you today is - which one will you choose?

PRAYER

God, forgive me for the many ways that I have sold you and myself short by making a deal with religion. Forgive me for the times that I have been self-serving, short-sighted and fear-focussed. Jesus, you are greater than religion. You are the way, the truth, and the life. Open my eyes to see the gift that you are and give me the courage to accept that gift each day.

Amen.

THURSDAY

PASSAGE

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant” -Matthew 26:26-27

PERSONAL REFLECTION

One of the last things Jesus chose to do before his death, was sit down for a meal with his friends. This is far more profound than we may ever realize.

Jesus wants to commune with you. To be with you. He even instituted it into the way that we are to be with Him and with each other. He did this through the practice of communion. We take the bread and the cup as a symbol of taking in the body and blood of Jesus. Making his life, our life. His heart, our heart. We embody and imbibe Jesus. Think about that.

Even in a season of social distancing, Jesus desires to be close and intimate with you. He was willing to allow his body to be broken (just like the bread), and his blood to be poured out (just like the wine), to create a way for you to be close with God forever. What a gift. What lengths of love. What a beautiful way for him to say, “I am with you.”

PRAYER

Jesus, be close to me today. Walk with me. Sit with me. Laugh with me. Eat with me. Jesus, I want to live in relationship with you. Thank you for your body and your blood that made that possible. Help me to live so closely with you that your words would become my words, your heart my heart, and your life my life. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

PASSAGE

“Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

-Luke 23:42-43

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus was crucified alongside two criminals. One of them, rejecting Jesus, used his last breath to mock Jesus. The other recognizing Jesus as Savior asked, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”.

Jesus honored that second criminal's request. No questions asked. Just as he was.

Jesus' invitation to this man is the same invitation he extends to you. Jesus invites you to be with him, in his Kingdom...not only in Heaven one day, but for all the days until that day here on Earth. The minute you say YES to Jesus and recognize Him for all of who He is, that new life with Him begins. It doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, or the circumstances you're currently facing. You can have a new life with Jesus, right now. No questions asked. Just as you are...by recognizing Jesus... just as He is.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you. You gave your life so I could have life. You willingly and joyfully endured the cross. What you did, you did for me. Thank you. For the forgiveness and freedom that was purchased through your blood, thank you. For accepting me, loving me, and redeeming me just as I am, thank you. For continually transforming me, thank you.

Amen.

SATURDAY

PASSAGE

'Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.' -Luke 23:52-53

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When Jesus was crucified on the cross, he died. This was not a metaphorical death. This was a physical death...an actual death. And his body was taken and buried in a physical tomb. Sealed up and locked away. That silent Saturday was a dark, confusing and difficult day. All of his friends and follower's hopes and dreams died that day. Buried away in a borrowed tomb.

But that day would not last forever.

The tomb where they buried Jesus was located in a garden. And when something is buried in a garden, it doesn't stay in the ground for long. And neither did Jesus. The seed of salvation buried that day was about to break forth and bear fruit that would change history...and all of eternity.

Right now, as we face a season of darkness, difficulty and disorientation, may we find our hope in the reality of resurrection. May we bury our fears and failures with Jesus and live in the hope that a new day, a new life is both coming...and already here.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me, today, to endure the silence, the waiting, and the isolation. Help me through my dark nights of the soul. Help me through the valley of the shadow of death that seems to make up my daily commute. Help me not to run and hide from the challenges I face today. Help me to be still with you and to know that even in the face of death itself, you are still God. And that my hope comes in the morning.

Amen

EASTERSUNDAY

PASSAGE

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" - John 20:19

PERSONAL REFLECTION

On the first Easter, the disciples were not gathered at church. They were in their homes. Much like we are this Easter. Many of them were living in fear, in uncertainty and uneasiness. Like so many of us are this Easter.

But right in the middle of their living room, Jesus showed up in His resurrected form and spoke peace over them. His presence brings peace. Maybe that is precisely what you need this Easter. Our world can seem like it's spinning out of control. But in the face of anxiety, isolation, and even death, what you need most is to invite the conqueror of death into YOUR living room today. Into your life today. Into your heart and soul and mind today. And allow Him to announce His love, joy, and peace over all of who you are...right where you're at.

He is Risen. He is near. He is here.

PRAYER

Jesus, you are the conquer of death. And if you have conquered death, then with you, I am given the strength to conquer anything this life throws at me. I know this Easter looks so very different than I could have ever imagined. So help me see past these obstacles and into the opportunity to experience you in a new and fresh way today. Jesus, I invite you here right now. Bring your love. Bring your joy. Bring your peace.
Amen.