



easter

AT EVANGEL

PASSION WEEK | A JOURNEY WITH JESUS

Dear Evangel family,

We are looking forward to a great time of worship together this Easter as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. I pray that this devotion booklet will be a blessing to you as it chronicles the last week of Jesus' life leading up to the Cross and then to the powerful resurrection.

As you read through the scriptures each day, may the Holy Spirit awaken your heart to what it might have been like to walk with Jesus. Imagine hearing the shouts of "Hosanna!" as He entered Jerusalem, "hanging on every word" as He taught with such great authority, and sitting around the table as He proclaimed, "Do this in remembrance of me." What would it have been like to actually see the crucifixion and feel the utter agony of that dreadful day? How hopeless His followers must have been on that Sabbath, and, yet the next morning they would be delivered to the heights of joy upon meeting Jesus outside the empty tomb. Wow! What a week! May the Lord bless you as you take this journey with Jesus.

Pastor Paul & Pam Thomas

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

*“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” **Zechariah 9:9***

Upon entering Jerusalem, the people welcomed Jesus with palm branches and shouts of “Hosanna!” which means, “one who saves.” He came as a gentle servant, but what the people wanted was a forceful King. They had their own agenda for Jesus, but His resolve was in following His Father’s agenda. They believed Jesus came to rescue them from their earthly, Roman oppressors, not realizing that His true purpose was to free them for eternity. Jesus was heart broken because His own did not recognize Him and he wept over the city... for He knew they would reject Him.

The Gospel of Mark gives us the detail that Jesus went to the Temple after entering the city and saw what was going on before He left for Bethany. This gives us insight into His actions the next morning (when He entered the Temple), since He had time to dwell on what He had seen the day before.

How would Jesus look over our city, our church, our homes and our lives? Today, as you pray, reflect on how you’re welcoming Jesus into your everyday world. Are you calling for a conqueror or are you wholly surrendered to the King of kings? Your challenge today is to recognize who Jesus is and GIVE HIM EVERYTHING!

His Journey Today:

Matthew 21:1-11 | Zechariah 9:9 | Mark 11:1-11 | Luke 19:28-44 | John 12:12-19

Jesus Teaches on Faith & Prayer

| *“for My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Isaiah 56:7b*

We find Jesus, on the day following what we have come to know as His triumphal entry, reentering the city after spending the night in the town of Bethany. That morning Jesus approached a fig tree and discovered that it had bore no fruit. As Jesus cursed this fig tree it immediately withered. The disciples looked on in amazement. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked. Jesus took this opportunity to teach about the importance of faith in prayer. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as, “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Faith does not base its hope on visible circumstances, but on spiritual reality and God’s promises. Jesus tells the disciples and us that if we will have faith and not doubt then anything is possible. “You can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.” Prayer plus faith positions us for the impossible. Jesus and the disciples left the fig tree and headed toward the temple.

Having visited the temple the day before, Jesus witnessed how the people had overrun a place meant for worship and prayer with self interest, greed and immorality. In the temple at that time, vendors had set up their tables and crowded their animals in what was known as the outer court or the court of the Gentiles. This was the only place

for those who were not Jewish to gather for worship and prayer. Not only were the vendors taking advantage of others, but what was probably more infuriating to Jesus is that the Gentiles were being hindered from worshipping the one true God! Jesus began to overturn the tables and drive the vendors out of the temple. He then quoted Isaiah, saying, “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.” The Gospel of Mark quotes Isaiah more fully as he adds that God’s house will be a “House of prayer for all nations.” Not only should our churches be places of authentic worship and prayer, where people of every race and nationality are welcome, but we, as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, should be a house of prayer as well.

When we pray, do we exercise faith and truly believe that the Lord will answer? If Jesus entered the court of our heart would He find a place of self interest, greed and immorality or would He find a place set aside for worship and prayer? Today, as you pray, ask the Lord to increase your faith. Pray boldly and believe God to accomplish the impossible! If you have found that your life is too busy and overcrowded then ask the Lord to help you “clear the court” so you can be the house of prayer that He desires.

His Journey Today:

Matthew 21:18-22 | Mark 11:12-18, 20-25 | Isaiah 56:7

Jesus Teaches in the Temple

*“Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while He was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him.” **Matthew 21:33***

Jesus knew that the religious leaders were missing the boat on who He was, and after they had questioned his authority, He sat in the temple telling them parables to drive His point home. Some of these include “The Parable of the Two Sons,” “The Parable of the Tenants,” “The Parable of the Wedding Banquet” and “Whose Son is the Christ?” Their efforts to trick Him were fruitless as He gave them teachings on “Paying Taxes to Caesar,” “Marriage and the Resurrection” and “The Greatest Commandment.”

As He was teaching, He looked up and saw rich people bringing their offerings, and with them, a widow giving two small copper coins. At this, Jesus taught them that she had given more out of her poverty than anyone else out of their wealth. Later that evening, as Jesus was reclining at the table of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him and broke an expensive alabaster jar of perfume worth more than a year’s wages, pouring its contents on His head. Those watching were indignant that something of such great value had been seemingly wasted, but Jesus rebuked them, saying, “She has done a beautiful thing to me.”

Most of the teachings and interactions recorded from this day center around the idea that those who arrogantly think they are closest to God may actually be the furthest away, while the unlikely “sinners” may humbly draw close.

What would Jesus have to say about your expression of worship today? As you pray, ask God to give you a grateful, passionate heart that praises Him extravagantly. Holding nothing back, worship Jesus with everything you are. Break the alabaster jar of your schedule and offer Him your most precious commodity... your time.

His Journey Today:

Matthew 21-26:16 | Mark 11:27-14:11 | Luke 20-21 | John 12:1-11

WEDNESDAY

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There is no direct reference to this day in the scriptures, however many scholars believe that this is the day Judas agreed to betray Jesus.

*"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over." **Mark 14:10-11***

Judas, even though he was one of Jesus' disciples, agreed to betray Him for money. Matthew's account underscores the fact that greed was the primary motivation behind this betrayal. Luke reveals that Judas was under the influence of Satan as he made his sordid deal with the Chief Priests and their accomplices.

These revelations remind us just how easy it is to be lured away by the enemy as he tempts us with the things of this world. As the old Hymn says, we are "prone to wander" and "prone to leave the God we love." Our initial response is to think, "Not me Lord. I will always be faithful to you." However, we are faced with the reality that C.H. Spurgeon captured so well when he said, "Many a soul has sold Jesus out for a less price than Judas received." We would do well to heed the Apostle Paul's warning, **"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."** I Corinthians 10:12-13

Today, pray for strength and courage to stand firm against the temptations of the enemy. Ask God for discernment to see His way of deliverance. Focus today on being faithful to the one who is completely faithful to you!

His Journey Today:

Matthew 26:14-16 | Mark 14:10-11 | Luke 22:3-6

Jesus Celebrates the Passover with His Disciples

*“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” **Luke 22:19-20***

Luke records that Jesus was very eager to eat this last Passover meal with the disciples, and He had good reason, for this would be a Passover meal like no other. The words He spoke that night are still reverberating 2000 years later, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Prior to this night, for 1500 years, the Jews had eaten this Passover meal in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-30). Jesus was revealing that He is the true Passover Lamb who had come to deliver them for ETERNITY. Now and forevermore this meal would be celebrated in remembrance of HIM!

The scriptures reveal to us a very torturous night for Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Matthew records His anguish as He spoke with His disciples, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” He exhorted them, “stay here and keep watch with me,” but this night would be a night of betrayal. As the disciples grew weary and began to fall asleep, Jesus “fell with His face to the ground and prayed, ‘my Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.’” This was the cup of God’s wrath, the punishment for the sins of all mankind.

Jesus’ heart was in anguish as He sweat drops of blood, for He knew that drinking this cup would bring separation between He and His Father for the first time in eternity. Jesus triumphed through this epic struggle with a determined decision in the garden, “NOT my will, but Your will be done.” This determination would carry Him through a long and torturous night as He willfully surrendered to the hands of His merciless captors.

Let’s take to heart the words of Jesus, “Not my will, but Your will be done.” What are you struggling with today? Are you willing to fight the battle through prayer, ultimately yielding your will to His?

His Journey Today:

Matthew 26:17-75 | Mark 14:12-72 | Luke 22:7-65 | John 13:18:27

The Crucifixion of Jesus

| *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"* **Matthew 27:46**

Thursday night in the garden has passed. Jesus has been betrayed by Judas with a kiss, rejected by beloved Peter three times, spat on, beaten and called a blasphemer by the people He intended to save. But what lay ahead would be the most difficult to endure. As Jesus stood next to a murderer named Barabbas, Pilate asked the people, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" It mattered not what the people said because the Father's perfect plan of redemption was unfolding and Jesus willingly set His gaze on the cross.

By God's design, the people cried out and demanded the release of a murderer instead of the sinless Son of God. For fear of the people, Pilate released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be tortured and crucified. People often didn't even survive a Roman flogging as they were strapped to a post while guards took turns lashing them with whips made of leather, metal scrap and bone. In all four gospels we see the vivid detail of the pain and suffering Jesus endured as He carried His cross to the place called Golgotha, which means The Place of the Skull. There Jesus' flesh was pierced with cruel nails as He was fastened upon a tree that He Himself had breathed into existence as the Creator.

Even as insults were cast upon Him, the gospel of Luke records the compassionate words of Jesus as He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." He now faced the pinnacle of His agony as the sin of the world and the wrath of God was poured out on our sinless Savior, causing the Father to forsake Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 records that, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus had never known what it meant to be separated from the Father. In this moment as the Father turned from the Son, Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Moments later Jesus breathed His last breath. The prophet Isaiah tells us, "The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief," because this one sacrifice would ensure the salvation of all who would call upon the name of the Lord! The gospel writers all attest that Pilate allowed Joseph of Arimathea to take the body of Jesus, which he then prepared for burial and placed in a tomb.

Today, let us pray that our hearts are always filled with deep gratitude when we think of the cross and our Savior; when we remember that the sinless Man was forsaken so that sinful man could be accepted. Let us never view the cross as common or take for granted what Jesus accomplished for us that day.

His Journey Today:

Matthew 27:1-66 | Mark 15:1-47 | Luke 23:1-56 | John 18:28 - 19:42

The Disciples Mourn on the Sabbath

*“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” **John 16:22***

Not much is recorded about this day in the gospels besides the fact that the disciples rested in obedience to the commandment, for it was the Sabbath. The Jews observed the Sabbath on Saturday, and they were prohibited from working at all on that day. Though we observe the Sabbath on Sunday, and we are not under the strict Jewish restrictions, we still obey the commandment, “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.” This particular Sabbath would have been extraordinarily bleak, as they were mourning the loss of the one whom they had believed was their Savior and King. Imagine the depth of grief and confusion that Jesus’ followers and family must have felt.

The hope they once had now lay in a tomb where they could not go, for they were held captive by the law and could not travel on the Sabbath day. There was no escaping the weight of this day, no relief from the sorrow they were destined to endure. They did not understand that Jesus’ death was the means to their salvation and that through His resurrection, God would deliver them from the depths of their despair. Though Jesus had already revealed His approaching death and resurrection, the disciples were so overwhelmed by the pain of the moment that they were unable to see God’s great plan for their salvation.

Are you experiencing grief today? Are you feeling the weight of fear... confusion... sorrow? As you take time to rest in His presence, pray and be reminded of His promise to deliver you from your sorrow. “Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning” Psalm 30:5

His Journey Today:

Luke 23:56

The Resurrection of JESUS

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; HE HAS RISEN!”

Luke 24:5-6

Picture the women arriving at the tomb early in the morning intending to anoint the body of Jesus, only to hear the declaration of the angels, “HE HAS RISEN!” The stone had been rolled away, the tomb was empty and they saw the place where Jesus had laid. He later revealed himself to His disciples and many others, restoring their hope. The empty tomb represents to us that DEATH HAS BEEN DEFEATED! Jesus, being the firstfruits of the resurrection, (1 Corinthians 15) overcame death, hell and the grave. Therefore, we fear death no longer and confidently declare, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

Today, as we focus on the empty tomb, let’s celebrate our eternal life in Christ and remember what that means for us. Jesus overcame death, hell and the grave and SO SHALL WE! Take time to meditate on the scriptures today and pray. Thank Him that you no longer have to fear death, but eagerly await His return.

His Journey Today:

Luke 23:56 | Mark 16:1-13 | Luke 24:1-43 | John 20:1-25 | 1 Corinthians 15