



Following Jesus Through the First Holy Week

HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

LAFAYETTE BIBLE CHURCH

DAY 1 — SATURDAY

The Sabbath before Palm Sunday

Read: John 12:1–11

Holy Week begins not in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, but in a quiet home in the village of Bethany. John tells us that Jesus arrived there six days before the Passover.

Bethany was a small village located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, just about two miles from the holy city. Pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover festival often passed nearby on the road that crested the ridge and descended toward the temple. During festival weeks the population of Jerusalem would swell with hundreds of thousands of visitors, so villages like Bethany became natural places for travelers to stay. For Jesus, however, Bethany had become something more than a convenient stop along the road. It was the home of his dear friends – Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Not long before this, Jesus had stood outside a tomb in this same village and called Lazarus back from the dead (John 11:1-44). Because of that miracle Jesus' fame had spread throughout the region, but it had also hardened the resolve of the religious leaders to have him killed. By the time this dinner takes place a week before Jesus' death, the shadow of the cross has already fallen across his story.

The meal prepared for Jesus appears to be a Sabbath meal shared just after sundown on Friday. Since according to Jewish reckoning the day begins at sundown, the settling of darkness over Bethany and the lighting of the lamps in the house would've marked the beginning of Saturday.

Families like this one, along with their guests of honor, would gather around a table, recite their prayers together, and share the bread and wine that marked that sacred moment. On this particular Sabbath evening, though, in this particular Jewish house, Jesus participated not just as an honored guest, but as the one in whose honor this meal meant to honor God was given.

Reflection:

During this meal given in Jesus' honor, Martha serves, Lazarus reclines with Jesus at the table, and Mary demonstrates her wholehearted devotion with the extravagant offering of an expensive jar of perfume.

How can you similarly honor Jesus' this week for all he has done on your behalf?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are worthy of far more than we often give you. Teach us to love you with open hands and generous hearts. As we walk through this Holy Week, help us see your inexpressible worth and respond with lives poured out in wholehearted devotion to you. Amen.

— *He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed!* —

DAY 2 — PALM SUNDAY

Read: John 12:12-19; see also Matthew 21:1–11,
Luke 19:28–44

After the Sabbath had passed, the quiet of Bethany gives way to the clamor of the Jerusalem crowds. Word spreads quickly among the pilgrims gathered for the Passover: Jesus is coming.

Passover was the most important pilgrimage festival on the Jewish calendar. People traveled from all over Judea and far beyond to come and celebrate in Jerusalem the Lord's deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt. By the time Jesus arrives, the city is already overflowing. The normal excitement, though, has only intensified as the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead has begun to spread. And many people are wondering whether Jesus might just be their long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world.

When the crowd hears that Jesus is approaching the city, they rush out to meet him. Many bring palm branches as a symbol of their national hope; others spread their cloaks along the road before him, creating a kind of king's corridor. And as the crowd hails his arrival, they shout words drawn from Psalm 118: *"Hosanna!" literally "Save us!"; "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*

For Jesus, though, he enters the city in a way that's rather unexpected. Instead of riding in on a war horse like some king who comes to conquer, he enters in fulfillment of an ancient prophecy riding on a young donkey – a demonstration that he came not to wage war through violence, but to secure peace through his sacrifice.

And yet the crowds did not yet understand the kind of Savior Jesus came to be. Almost all that day celebrated his arrival as a king of their own making, hailing him on their own terms. Reflecting on Holy Week, though, this side of his crucifixion and resurrection, we're invited to do better – to welcome Jesus not only as the king that we want, but as the king he truly is.

Reflection:

In what ways might you be tempted to shape Jesus into the kind of king you want him to be, rather than receiving him as the king he truly is?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the true King who came in humility and peace. Help us to welcome you not only with our words, but with our lives. Teach us to trust your ways, even when they are different from what we expect. And help us to follow you faithfully as we sacrifice our lives for you as a reflection of your sacrifice for us. Amen.

DAY 3 — HOLY MONDAY

Read: John 2:13–22

John places the event early in Jesus' ministry but it illuminates the meaning of Holy Week; see also Matthew 21:12–17, Mark 11:12–19, Luke 19:45–48

After the joyful celebration of the previous day, Monday of Holy Week takes on a different tone. Jesus and his disciples leave Bethany in the morning and begin the short walk over the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem. The road descends into the Kidron Valley and then climbs again toward the temple courts. This was a familiar path for pilgrims traveling to the city during the Passover festival, and Jesus likely walked it many times during that week.

Along the way Jesus notices a fig tree in the distance. It is covered with leaves, which normally suggests that it should also bear fruit. But when he approaches it, there's no fruit to be found. And in response, Jesus pronounces a judgment on the tree: "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."

At first this moment can seem strange, even troubling. Why would Jesus curse a tree simply because it has no fruit? The meaning, however, becomes clearer in what happens next.

When Jesus enters the temple courts, he finds a marketplace filled with money changers and merchants, what had become a normal part of the Passover season. Pilgrims traveling long distances needed certain sacrifices, and foreign currency had to be exchanged into the coinage accepted by the temple.

Yet what had begun as a practical necessity had turned into something darker. This place that was meant to represent God's presence among his people had become crowded with commerce and exploitation. What should have been a place of prayer for the nations had instead become, in Jesus' words, "a den of robbers."

So, Jesus drives out the merchants and overturns the tables of the money changers. And in doing so, Jesus says that just like the fig tree this form of religion still appeared to have life but in fact was fruitless. And yet the story of Holy Week reminds us that Jesus did not come merely to condemn empty religion – he came to replace it with something better.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus hinted at this when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John explains that Jesus was speaking about his own body so that through his death and resurrection, Jesus himself would become the true meeting place between God and humanity.

Reflection:

Are there places in your life where your relationship with God is defined more by appearances than by a genuine love for and devotion to God?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you desire more than just outward religion. Search our lives and remove anything that keeps us from loving you as we ought. Help us to bear the fruit of genuine faith in your son, Jesus, and that honors you and welcomes others into your presence. Amen.

DAY 4 — HOLY TUESDAY

Read: John 12:20–36

By Tuesday of Holy Week, the tension surrounding Jesus has reached a new level.

For several days he has been teaching openly in Jerusalem, challenging the religious leaders and drawing large crowds. The excitement that greeted him when he entered the city on Sunday has not faded, but underneath it a conflict has been growing. Many are drawn to him, while others are already deciding that he must be stopped.

On Tuesday, a small but significant request reaches Jesus. John tells us that some Greeks – Gentile worshipers who have come for the Passover festival – ask one of the twelve disciples named Philip, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” These men were likely God-fearers, people from the wider Greek-speaking world who believed in Israel’s God and had come to worship during the feast. Their request may seem simple, but it signals something profound: the nations are beginning to seek the Jewish Savior.

Jesus’ response, though, is intriguing. While for his whole ministry in John’s Gospel he has said, “My hour has not yet come,” now he says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” But the glory Jesus speaks of is not what the crowds expect. He explains it with an image from the natural world: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” A seed must be buried before it can grow. What looks like loss becomes the very path to life. Jesus is speaking about his own death.

The arrival of these Gentile seekers hints that the mission of God is about to extend beyond Israel to the whole world. But that mission will only be accomplished through the cross. The path to glory will run through suffering.

Jesus then applies this same principle to anyone who would follow him: “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” In other words, the pattern of Jesus’ life becomes the pattern of discipleship. True life is not found in clinging tightly to our own comfort, control, or security. It is found in surrender – trusting God enough to place our lives in his hands. For us, this moment invites reflection.

It is possible to admire Jesus, to listen to his teaching, even to feel drawn toward him, yet still hesitate to entrust our lives fully to him. Fear of others’ opinions, attachment to our own plans, or simple spiritual inertia can keep us from fully reflecting Jesus’ light and life in our own. Jesus’ words on this Tuesday of Holy Week call us to something deeper. They invite us to trust that the path of surrender is not the path to loss, but the path to life. Just as a seed buried in the ground eventually produces a harvest, lives entrusted to Christ will bear fruit far beyond what we can imagine.

Reflection:

What might it look like to surrender your life more fully to Christ today?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you showed us that true life comes through surrender. Give us the courage to trust you with every part of our lives in reflection of that. Help us walk in your light and bear the fruit that comes from following you faithfully. Amen.

— *He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed!* —

DAY 5 — SPY WEDNESDAY

Read: Matthew 26:14-16

By Wednesday of Holy Week, the pace of the story slows on the surface, even as the tension beneath it continues to grow.

The Gospels record many public moments from the previous days – Jesus teaching in the temple courts, confronting the religious leaders, and speaking to his disciples about the coming judgment and the hope of his return. But Wednesday itself is quieter. The crowds fade from view, and the focus shifts behind the scenes to a decision that will set the final events of the week in motion. In the Gospel accounts, one of Jesus’ own disciples slips away to meet with the religious authorities. His name is Judas.

The chief priests and scribes have already determined that Jesus must die. His growing influence among the crowds and his challenges to their authority have made him too dangerous to ignore. But there is a problem. Arresting him openly during the Passover festival might disrupt the city of Jerusalem filled with the pilgrims who admire him. Judas provides the solution. He approaches the leaders and asks a chilling question: “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” They agree to pay him thirty pieces of silver, and he begins looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus when the crowds are not present.

The betrayal of Jesus by one of his own followers is one of the most painful elements of the Passion story. Judas had walked with Jesus for years. He had listened to his teaching, witnessed his miracles, and shared life alongside the other disciples. Yet somewhere along the way, his heart turned. The Gospels do not dwell extensively on Judas’ motives, but they give us hints. Earlier in the Gospel stories we learned that he had been helping himself to the group’s money bag.

John tells us that while others were drawn to Jesus in love and devotion, Judas’ heart was slowly being captured by something else. What makes the moment so tragic, though, is how ordinary it begins. Judas does not betray Jesus in a sudden burst of hatred. Instead, it seems to grow out of smaller compromises – decisions that gradually pulled his heart away from the One he had once followed. At the same time, none of this takes Jesus by surprise.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus speaks openly about what is coming. The betrayal, the arrest, the trial, and the cross are not accidents of history. They are part of the mission he came to fulfill. Even in the darkness of this moment, God’s purposes are quietly moving forward. Still, Wednesday invites us to pause and reflect on the condition of our own hearts. Most followers of Jesus will never face the kind of moment Judas faced. Yet the small choices of the heart are familiar to all of us. Each day we decide whether our loyalty to Christ will remain steady or slowly give way to other loves – the love of comfort, approval, success, or control. And before the story rushes toward the upper room and the cross, we are given time to examine ourselves honestly before the Lord.

Reflection:

Are there subtle compromises or competing loyalties that are quietly pulling you away from wholehearted devotion to Jesus?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you know our hearts better than we know them ourselves. Guard us from the slow drift that leads away from faithfulness. Renew our love for you and help us follow you with sincerity and steadfast devotion. Amen.

— *He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed!* —

DAY 6 — MAUNDY THURSDAY

Read: John 13:1–17

By Thursday evening of Holy Week, the time Jesus has been pointing toward throughout his ministry has finally arrived.

Passover is beginning in Jerusalem, and the city is filled with pilgrims remembering the night when God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. Families gather in homes throughout the city to share a Passover meal, retelling the story of the lamb, the blood on the doorposts, and the Lord’s saving power.

Jesus gathers with his disciples for a meal as well. But before the meal fully unfolds, Jesus does something unexpected. John tells us that during supper Jesus rises, removes his outer garment, and wraps a towel around his waist. Then he pours water into a basin and begins to wash the disciples’ feet. To modern readers this might sound like a simple act of kindness. But in the first-century world, foot washing was the work of the lowest servant in the household. People traveled dusty roads in open sandals, and their feet would be covered with dirt by the time they arrived at a home. Washing those feet was considered a humble and even humiliating task. And yet here is Jesus – the one they call Teacher and Lord – kneeling before them.

When Jesus comes to Peter, he immediately protests. “Lord, do you wash my feet?” The idea is absurd. In Peter’s mind, the roles ought to be reversed. Jesus should be served, not stooping to perform the work of a servant. But Jesus gently insists. “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”

Peter responds in his characteristic enthusiasm: “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Yet Jesus explains that the washing is not about physical cleanliness. It is a symbol of something deeper. This act points to the cross. In a matter of hours, Jesus will give his life to cleanse his people from sin. The washing of the disciples’ feet becomes a living picture of the kind of Savior he is – a Savior who stoops low in order to make his people clean. When he finishes, Jesus asks them an important question: “Do you understand what I have done to you?” He reminds them that they rightly call him Teacher and Lord. Yet if their Lord has humbled himself to serve them, they must be willing to serve one another as well. The kingdom Jesus brings does not operate according to the usual patterns of power and status. In his kingdom, greatness is measured by humility and love.

Later that evening Jesus will speak a new commandment to his disciples: that they love one another just as he has loved them. The word “*commandment*” is where the name Maundy Thursday comes from, drawn from the Latin word *mandatum*, meaning “command.” But the command is not merely spoken – it is demonstrated. Before Jesus goes to the cross, he shows his followers exactly what love looks like. It kneels. It serves. It gives itself for the good of others.

Reflection:

Where might Jesus be inviting you to reflect this same humble, self-giving love toward someone this week?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you showed us the depth of your love by humbling yourself to serve. Cleanse our hearts and teach us to love others as you have loved us. Give us the humility to serve willingly and the grace to reflect your love in our daily lives. Amen.

— He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed! —

DAY 7 — GOOD FRIDAY

Read: John 18:28–19:30

By Friday morning, the quiet tension that has been building all week finally erupts into action.

After being arrested during the night, Jesus is taken from one hearing to another – first before the Jewish authorities and then to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The religious leaders accuse him of claiming to be a king, a charge meant to alarm the Roman authorities who ruled over Jerusalem and the surrounding region on behalf of Caesar. Pilate questions Jesus directly: “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answers in a way that reveals both truth and mystery. Yes, he is a king – but his kingdom is “not of this world.” It does not advance by force or violence, and it does not resemble the political power structures Pilate is accustomed to managing. Pilate quickly realizes that Jesus poses no real threat to Rome. In fact, he declares more than once that he finds no guilt in him. Yet the pressure from the crowd and the religious leaders grows stronger. And fearing unrest during the crowded Passover festival, Pilate ultimately gives in and hands Jesus over to be crucified.

Roman crucifixion was designed to be both brutal and public. Victims were forced to carry the cross-beam to their execution site outside the city walls. There they were nailed or bound to their crosses and left to die slowly while passersby looked on. Above Jesus’ head, though, Pilate orders a sign to be placed that reads, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” And despite protests to change it Pilate refuses. However, the irony is what was meant as mockery becomes a declaration of truth.

Throughout the scene, John highlights small details that remind us that these events are unfolding according to God’s purposes. Soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ clothing, fulfilling Scripture. Even the timing carries meaning: Jesus is crucified during Passover, the very season when Israel remembers the lamb whose blood marked the deliverance of God’s people. Near the end of the day, Jesus speaks a single word that captures the meaning of all that unfolded: “It is finished.” This does not mean that his life has simply come to an end. The word carries the sense of a task completed, a mission accomplished. The work the Father gave him to do – the work of bearing the weight of sin and opening the way for reconciliation with God – has been fulfilled. So, Jesus bows his head and gives up his spirit.

From a human perspective, the cross appears as a moment of defeat. The one who healed the sick, welcomed the outcast, and proclaimed the kingdom of God now hangs lifeless on a Roman cross. But John wants us to see something deeper. The King who entered the city in humility on Palm Sunday now reigns from a cross on Good Friday. And it calls us to pause and remember the cost of our redemption, that the Lamb of God gave his life so that others like us might live. Jesus did not suffer and die because events spun out of control. He chose this path out of love – for the world, and for each of us. And because his work is finished, forgiveness and new life are now freely offered to all who trust in him.

Reflection:

What does the Jesus’ cross mean to you personally?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the love you showed on the cross. You willingly gave your life so that we might be forgiven and restored to God. Help us never lose sight of the cost of our salvation, and teach us to live each day in grateful response to your sacrifice. Amen.

— He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed! —

DAY 8 — SILENT SATURDAY

Read: John 19:38–42

After the sorrow of Friday, Saturday arrives in silence.

Just prior to the setting of the sun, Jesus' body is taken down from the cross and entrusted to two unexpected followers. The first is Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Jewish council who had quietly become a disciple of Jesus. The second is Nicodemus, the Pharisee who once came under the cloak of darkness seeking to understand Jesus' teaching. Until this moment, both men had kept their loyalty to Jesus largely hidden. Fear of their fellow religious authorities had kept them cautious and private in their faith. Yet now, when others scatter, these two followers step forward publicly. Joseph asks Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body. Nicodemus brings a large mixture of spices – about seventy-five pounds' worth – for the burial. Together they wrap Jesus' body in linen cloths according to Jewish burial customs.

John tells us that near the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in that garden a new tomb where no one had yet been laid. Because the Sabbath was approaching and time was short, they place Jesus there – the one who had spoken life into the world, now laid lifeless in a tomb. For the disciples, this day must have felt like the end of everything. The one they had followed and put their faith in was defeated. The kingdom they longed for vanishing with him. What remained was confusion and unanswered questions.

Holy Saturday is the quietest day of Holy Week. No miracles are recorded. No crowds gather. No teaching is given. The story simply pauses. Yet even in the silence, God still works. From the perspective of those living through that day, it must have seemed like nothing was happening. But the stillness of Saturday is not in fact the stillness of defeat. It is the stillness before the new creation begins. The body of Jesus rests in a garden tomb – an image that quietly echoes the garden where the story of humanity first began. Soon, that same garden will become the setting where resurrection life will break into the world.

For us, Holy Saturday speaks to the moments in life when God seems silent. There are seasons when prayers feel unanswered, when hopes appear buried, and when we struggle to see how God could possibly be working through the circumstances before us. Like the disciples on that first Holy Saturday, we find ourselves waiting in the space between promise and fulfillment. And it reminds us that, while God's work is not always visible, he sometimes is moving most in ways we cannot see. The story of Holy Week does not end with the tomb. But before the joy of resurrection arrives, we are invited to sit quietly in the stillness of this day and remember that even when hope seems hidden, God's purposes are still unfolding.

Reflection:

Is there an area of your life where you are currently waiting and struggling to see what God is doing?

Prayer:

Lord, in seasons when you seem silent, help us trust that you are still at work. Strengthen our faith in the waiting and remind us that your purposes are never defeated. Teach us to rest in your promises as we look forward to the hope of new life in Christ. Amen.

— *He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed!* —

DAY 9 — RESURRECTION SUNDAY

Read: John 20:1–18

Early on Sunday morning, while it is still dark, Mary Magdalene and a few other female disciples make their way to the tomb.

The city of Jerusalem is quiet after the Sabbath. For many the grief and confusion of the previous days still hang in the air. Like the other followers of Jesus, Mary watched the terrible events of Friday unfold. Now she comes to the tomb simply to mourn and to honor the one she loved. But when she arrives, she sees something unexpected. The stone has been rolled away. Alarmed, she runs to tell Simon Peter and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. The two men race to the tomb. John arrives first and looks inside, seeing the facecloth lying there. Peter soon follows and enters the tomb, finding the burial cloths carefully folded. Other than that, the tomb is empty. John tells us that when the other disciple enters and sees these things, "he believed." Yet even then the disciples are still trying to understand what happened. The idea that Jesus would rise from the dead was not even comprehensible.

After they leave, Mary remains outside the tomb, weeping. And through her tears she looks inside and sees two angels sitting where Jesus' body had lain. They ask her why she is crying. "They have taken away my Lord," she says, "and I do not know where they have laid him." Then she turns and sees someone standing nearby. At first, she assumes he is the gardener. But when he speaks her name – "Mary" – everything changes. In that moment she recognizes him. Jesus is alive. The risen Christ stands before her, and Mary becomes the first witness to the resurrection. Jesus sends her with a message to the disciples: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." With those words the long silence of the tomb is broken. Death has not had the final word. The crucified one now lives again.

John's Gospel is filled with moments where Jesus calls people by name – sheep who hear their shepherd's voice, friends he invites into deeper faith. Here, in the garden outside the tomb, Mary hears his voice again and realizes everything has changed. The cross was not the end of the story. The resurrection confirms that Jesus truly is the Son of God, that his sacrifice for sin has been accepted, and that the power of death has been broken. Because he lives, all who trust in him share in the promise of new life. And fittingly, the first resurrection appearance takes place in a garden. Just as humanity's story began in a garden long ago, the new creation begins in a garden as well. And what seemed like the darkest week in human history becomes the moment when hope breaks into the world.

Yet for those who follow Christ today, Resurrection Sunday is not only the celebration of something that happened long ago. It is the foundation of our faith and the assurance of our future. The risen Jesus still calls people by name. He still brings life where there was once only death. And he still invites us to carry the good news of his victory into the world.

Reflection:

How does the reality of Jesus' resurrection shape the way you live today?

Prayer:

Risen Lord, we praise you for the victory of the resurrection. Thank you that death is not the end and that new life is found in you. Fill our hearts with the joy and hope of Easter and help us share the good news that Christ is risen – that he is risen indeed! Amen.

— *He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed!* —



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MARCH 28TH : **EASTER EGG HUNT & WALK THROUGH**

MARCH 29TH : **PALM SUNDAY**

9:30 AM Worship Service
11:00 AM Sunday School

APRIL 2ND : **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

7:00 PM Communion Service

APRIL 3RD : **GOOD FRIDAY**

7:00 AM Men's Fellowship Breakfast
7:00 PM Tenebrae Service

APRIL 5TH : **EASTER SUNDAY**

6:30 AM Sunrise Service (Pavilion)
7:30 AM Easter Breakfast
9:30 AM Triumphant Resurrection Service
11:00 AM Sunday School for all ages