

Daily Family or Personal Devotional

LECTIONARY SCRIPTURE:

For This Holy Week each day I have written some devotional thoughts about each of our lectionary passages and a question or two for either your quiet time or to have an extended devotion time with your family. This is an Easter like no other, but our circumstances do not change the victory over death that Jesus accomplished for us on that first Sunday.

Easter Sunday: Christ Lives

Monday: John 12:1-11

Jesus and his disciples are eating with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha after raising Lazarus from the dead, and Mary anoints Jesus' feet with oil. Judas has an issue with this elaborate expression of love, but John writing his story lets us know that Judas was not actually concerned with the poor because he would likely have kept a portion of what the oil could have been sold for for himself. In one moment, you have elaborate selflessness in Mary, and brazen selfishness in Judas both appearing to have deep devotion to Jesus. That both were in Jesus' company should give us pause in this worship season to examine our heart motives for why we do what we do for Jesus. Jesus' answer gives us another thing to reflect on during this season. He tells Judas that what Mary did she did in preparation for his burial. Jesus was already looking ahead to what was to happen and his comment asks us an important question, what are we doing to prepare ourselves for Easter?

For Discussion:

Reflect on why you do what you do for Jesus. Is there anything you do for selfish reasons? Is there something you can do to demonstrate how much you love Jesus in the next few days or weeks?

What are you doing during Holy Week to prepare your heart and mind to celebrate Easter?

Tuesday: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Dry bones. This passage contains an incredible metaphor of death being returned to life. What is interesting is how. First, it is God who brings life to the bones. He literally breathes life into them. The passage is filled with words like breathe and breath and speak, and wind, and it should remind of you how God created in the first chapter of Genesis speaking life into existence and breathing life into Adam. Only this story is one of death to life. God says the bones are the people of Israel, for today, the people of Israel are the people of God. He promises to breathe life into his people again, and that his people will return again. I don't know about you, but I hear this passage very differently as we face this very difficult season and the promise of breath and new life is a promise of hope for the people of God. He will bring life and he will bring us home.

For Discussion:

This passage has personal as well as corporate implications. Personally, what area of your life needs the fresh wind of the spirit and the breath of God? Another way to ask is how goes it with your soul?

How does this picture of dry, dusty, bones being given life and flesh bring hope in our current circumstances?

How does this passage sound different in the face of our current health crisis than when you have heard it before?

Wednesday: John 13:21-38

Jesus is having his final meal with his followers and closest friends. One of whom he tells to go betray him, and to another he predicts that he will betray him. When I read this story my heart always goes to what must have been going through the mind of Christ. Knowing surely what lay ahead and knowing that his closest around him would fail him had to be a terrible feeling. When I have faced challenges like going to surgery, knowing that it is necessary, my stomach still fills with a painful dread, mixed with helplessness and inevitability. I cannot imagine what Christ might have felt knowing what he faced. And yet he went forward. He tells us why he was able to go forward in verses 34-35. Even though he is giving them commissioning instructions for when he is gone, he is also giving us a window into why he could endure the cross for us. Love. Love others as he loved us. Demonstrate our love for Christ so that the world will know to whom we belong.

For Discussion:

Describe a time when demonstrating love to someone has been particularly difficult. How were you able to love them anyway?

How does the way that we love others show the world to whom we belong?

Maundy Thursday: Mark 14:12-26; Don't forget to celebrate a Love Feast with your family (See below)

Mark's account of the last supper gives us some of the blessed words of communion. With those words Jesus institutes the new covenant between God and his people. A covenant sealed in the blood of the Lamb of God. He gives us a way to grace. He gives us a picture of the sacrifice he would endure for us, and he gives us a message of hope in the form of a promise. In verse 25, he promises that we will once again eat and drink with our savior in the Kingdom of God. During our time apart, we are missing the opportunity for communion together especially on this Maundy Thursday. As you read this account of the Last Supper may your heart long for eating and drinking again with him in his Kingdom.

For Discussion:

The Lord's supper is not just a final meal together. It is far more. Make a list of the different significant events that happened on that special night. (Ex. Jesus' command to go and love others)

Describe a particular time when you participated in the Lord's supper that had a particular spiritual significance.

Friday: John 18-19

This is the account of all that Jesus endured on the night which he was betrayed, and the first thing I notice is his power even as he goes along with his arrest. The authorities sent to arrest him fall back when he simply utters the words, "I am he". He is falsely accused, mocked, beaten, betrayed, and eventually crucified, yet he endured it when he didn't have to. This idea is punctuated in verse 11, when Jesus tells Pilate, "you have no power over me unless it was given to you from above." Jesus had the power to stop what happened...and he did not. Just saying "I am" pushed back the crowd, yet he endured it all for us. The other thing that stands out is that John repeatedly points out how these events fulfilled prophecy. Nothing happened apart from the intentional plan of the triune God to pay the penalty for our sins and love us by laying down his life for us as payment for our sins.

For Discussion:

The passion story is often so familiar to us we skip through it. Read through the story again carefully if you need to. What stood out to you that you haven't noticed before? What events were different than you remember? What do you think God is trying to communicate through this reading.

What are your thoughts and emotions as you prayerfully contemplate what Christ endured for you? How does careful contemplation of what Christ endured shape your spiritual life tomorrow? in the weeks to come?

Saturday: John 21:1-14

What I love about this story is Peter's reactions throughout. He is out of sorts even though Jesus has appeared to the disciples a few times, Peter goes back to what he knows best in the face of the uncertainty that has come from Jesus being crucified and buried. While he may know that he is resurrected, Peter still seems unsure of what else to do, so he goes fishing. From here the story has some familiar rhythms. The events are very similar to when Jesus calls Peter to be a disciple in Luke 5. It is this turn of events that opens Peter's eyes to see that it is Jesus who has caused the fish to over flow, and his reaction is to jump in the water and get to Jesus as quickly as possible. In the following verses, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him three times walking back his betrayal. This story sings of new beginnings and second chances. Events that marked the beginning of Peter's relationship with Jesus, mark the beginning of a new call. Peter is forgiven and given a new purpose and an end to uncertainty.

For Discussion:

Have events in your life ever left you not knowing exactly what to do and wishing that God would tell you what the next step is? Perhaps you are experiencing anxiety from the uncertainty we are facing in the face of this epidemic. What was your response in those moments? What did you do?

What new call may God be opening your eyes to in middle of this new rhythm of life we find ourselves in? As we experience stay at home orders, and social distancing, and financial anxiety, everything we know has been stripped away. We find ourselves forced to whole new ways of thinking and living. What is God revealing to you during this time?

Sunday: Matthew 21:1-11

Worship with us online: <https://youtu.be/513lC7-g2zg> Take some additional time to reflect on the sermon and discuss the message with your family or spend time in personal reflection.

WESLEYAN LOVE FEAST for Maundy Thursday

The Love Feast is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry. Although its origins in the early church are closely interconnected with the origins of the Lord's Supper, the two services should not be confused with each other.

The Love Feast has often been held on occasions when the celebration of the Lord's Supper would be inappropriate or when the Lord's Supper is unavailable.

Testimonies and praise are the focal point in most Love Feasts. Testimonies may include personal witness to what God has been doing in one's life or in the lives of others. Praise may be shared by song or spoken exclamations. Prayer is vital to a Love Feast. A fixed form of prayer may be used, especially something like the Lord's Prayer or spontaneous prayer requests and prayers may come from the people. Scripture is also important. There may be scripture readings, and an informal time of reflection on the text.

Most Love Feasts include the sharing of food. It is customary not to use communion bread, wine, or grape juice because to do so might confuse the Love Feast with the Lord's Supper. The bread may be a loaf of ordinary bread, crackers, rolls, or a

sweet bread. Crackers, rolls, or slices of bread may be passed in a basket. The beverage has usually been water, but other beverages such as lemonade, tea, or coffee have been used. The food is served quietly without interrupting the service and is consumed during the time of sharing testimonies and prayers.

Liturgy Suggested for your Love Feast on Maundy Thursday

OPENING HYMN Amazing Grace

PRAYER TO OPEN

Father of earth and heaven,
Thy hungry children feed,
Thy grace be to our spirits given,
That true immortal bread.
Grant us and all our race
In Jesus Christ to prove
The sweetness of thy pardoning grace,
The manna of thy love.
Amen

SCRIPTURE John 13.1-20 .

PERSONAL WITNESS TO THE SCRIPTURE

One or more persons may answer the question: What does this reading tell us about God? How is our meal tonight like the meal in the text?

PASSING OF THE BREAD AND WATER

The bread is passed from person to person. The food and drink is consumed as people share testimonies.

TESTIMONIES

One or more persons may answer the question: Where have you seen God at work in the last week? Or How goes it with your soul?

Prayer requests can be shared and followed with an informal time of prayer.

Conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

CLOSING HYMN Amazing Grace (or any other hymn)

Don't forget to take a picture with your family around the table when you are done and share it with the hash tag #mywheelerchurch