

This Holy Week, we focus our attention on The Great Sin-Bearer, the Lord Jesus Christ. As we see Jesus wrestle with the hostility of a world opposed to him and the punishment due us which the Father inflicted on Him, we come to appreciate more our union by faith with Christ in all His work on our behalf. Let us make much of our Crucified Savior, the center of our faith.

Monday: Read John 12:12-16 and Zechariah 9:9-10 & 9:14-16

Veiled in Flesh

Our journey begins with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the first day of Holy Week. Who is this One riding on a donkey through the gate of the Holy City? As John 12:16 says, even His disciples did not really understand all this until after Jesus ascended back into the glory of heaven. Then, illuminated by the Holy Spirit sent from there, the Apostles put together the events of Jesus' life with one central fact: this King riding on a donkey was none other than the Promised Lord Almighty himself, who would not only come humbly riding on a donkey but also riding on the clouds to save his people (Zech. 9:9 & 9:16).

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that the Gospel begins with the "Godness" of Jesus Christ. He was not merely a sinless man, nor just God's messenger, nor even just God's Son. He was The Lord Almighty coming to earth. The Jews clearly understood this and therefore sought to kill Him for claiming to be God (John 10:33). What a privilege to have our eyes opened to Christ's Deity and to worship Him as God when others blindly sought to stone Him for this very claim.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
hail the incarnate Deity
pleased as man with men to dwell
Jesus our Emmanuel!

Charles Wesley

Tuesday: Read John 12:1-11

Refreshment in the Battle

We backtrack one day to Saturday, the day before Palm Sunday, to see Jesus at rest in the home of dear friends: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. Here we see Jesus renewed and refreshed before His great struggle with His foes in Jerusalem the following week. Though Judas harassed Jesus in this very house of love which Lazarus opened for him (John 12:4), this home in Bethany became Jesus' base where He would return for encouragement during the last week of His life (Mark 11:11-12 & 11:19-20). Surely Lazarus would have found his new lease on life most fulfilling, meeting the domestic needs of Jesus each day upon His return from Jerusalem! For Judas this home became an offense, but for Lazarus it became the scene of service, helping the Son of God prepare for His great self-offering and making Lazarus' return from death all the more significant!

Meditate and Pray: Do you have trusted Christian friends and families to whom you can retreat when exhausted by the demands and even hostilities of the world? Thank God and pray that your home church would become a place where weary servants of God find great refreshment in their labors. Most of all, thank Jesus that He is willing to make himself comfortable with us, and, along with His Father, to "come and make His home with us" (John 14:23).

Wednesday: Read John 12:20-23 & 12:32-33**Coming to Die**

What was Jesus' goal as He came to Jerusalem and declared that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23)? Verse 24 tells us: falling into the ground to die (on the Cross) as the beginning of a new harvest of salvation. He speaks explicitly about the Cross in verses 32-33. To die was Jesus' goal. Jesus did not come to Jerusalem to become king; He already was The King and didn't need to come down to earth to become one. He came to earth to be planted in the ground by death on the Cross. This explains why every time the crowds spoke about Jesus as the royal Christ (John 12:34) or tried in their zeal to make Him king (John 6:15) He hid Himself from them (John 12:36). But when it came time to present Himself for death, He openly met His captors in John 18:4-8. He was determined to lay down His life voluntarily, though "no one could take it from Him" (John 10:18), and all for the sake of His love for us.

Meditate and Pray: Do we love Jesus for the same reason His Father's heart was so full of affection for Him? "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life" (John 10:17). Do we make enough of the Cross as the center of our joy? May we enter more and more into the Cross-appreciating spirit of this hymn:

O Jesus, we adore thee, upon the cross, our King!
 We bow our hearts before thee, thy gracious name we sing.
 That name hath brought salvation, that name in life our stay,
 our peace, our consolation, when life shall fade away."

"Yet doth the world disdain thee, still passing by the cross;
 Lord, may our hearts retain thee; all else we count but loss.
 Ah, Lord, our sins arraigned thee, and nailed thee to the tree:
 our pride, our Lord, disdained thee; yet deign our hope to be."

Trinity Hymnal #255

Thursday: Read John 12:25-33**Overcoming Troubles**

Jesus lived with an unselfish disregard for His own comfort, postponing present joy in this world for the future joy of purchasing sinners by His blood. In the world's estimate, as John 12:25 says, He truly "hated" His life, being willing to suffer acutely now for the sake of eternal life later. We see this suffering begin even before the cross when Jesus says in John 12:27, "Now my heart is troubled..." This word, troubled, means agitation, disquiet or perplexity and three times describes Jesus' upset in the face of death: John 11:33, 12:27 and 13:21. B.B. Warfield says of this troubling of Jesus' soul that this word "always expresses the emotions which conflict with death stirred in Him."

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus that He faced death as the curse due us for sin with a painful, serious commitment. He viewed it as an enemy to be overcome. Praise God that though He was deeply troubled at His own upcoming encounter with death, He was even more compassionately concerned with what death meant for others. In John 11:33-35, Jesus was disturbed even to tears at the grief which Lazarus' death caused. In the same way, thank Jesus for His determination to die to destroy the hold which the fear of death has over us. Now we need not fear dying: it is safe for us because Jesus took so much trouble to die in our place! See also Hebrews 2:14-15.

Friday: Read John 12:37-46**Utterly Desolate**

This is a dark world in which men have always had a penchant for calling darkness light, and light darkness. Though Jesus came into the world as pure light (John 12:46), men in their blindness refuse to believe in Him (John 12:37) and so are given over by God to utter blindness and deafness (John 12:40). This is bad enough – to reject the light for yourself. Even worse, out of a desire that no one else should see the light of Christ which they have rejected, they criminalize Jesus, hanging Him on the Cross as a blasphemer and a traitor to God and country. How did Jesus bear with those who so unjustly sought to smother His light of truth and hope? He knew that even such cruel reproach was prophesied by God. As Psalm 69:20 puts it, “Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none.”

Meditate and Pray: Are you suffering the heartbreak of scorn and false accusation? Don’t be discouraged. Let us remember that Jesus went through such mistreatment *alone* so that you should never suffer alone again! Jesus became utterly desolate for your sake: “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?”

Lord, should fear and anguish roll darkly over my sinful soul,
thou, who once was thus bereft that thine own might ne’er be left,
teach me by that bitter cry in the gloom to know thee nigh.”

Trinity Hymnal # 250 verse 4