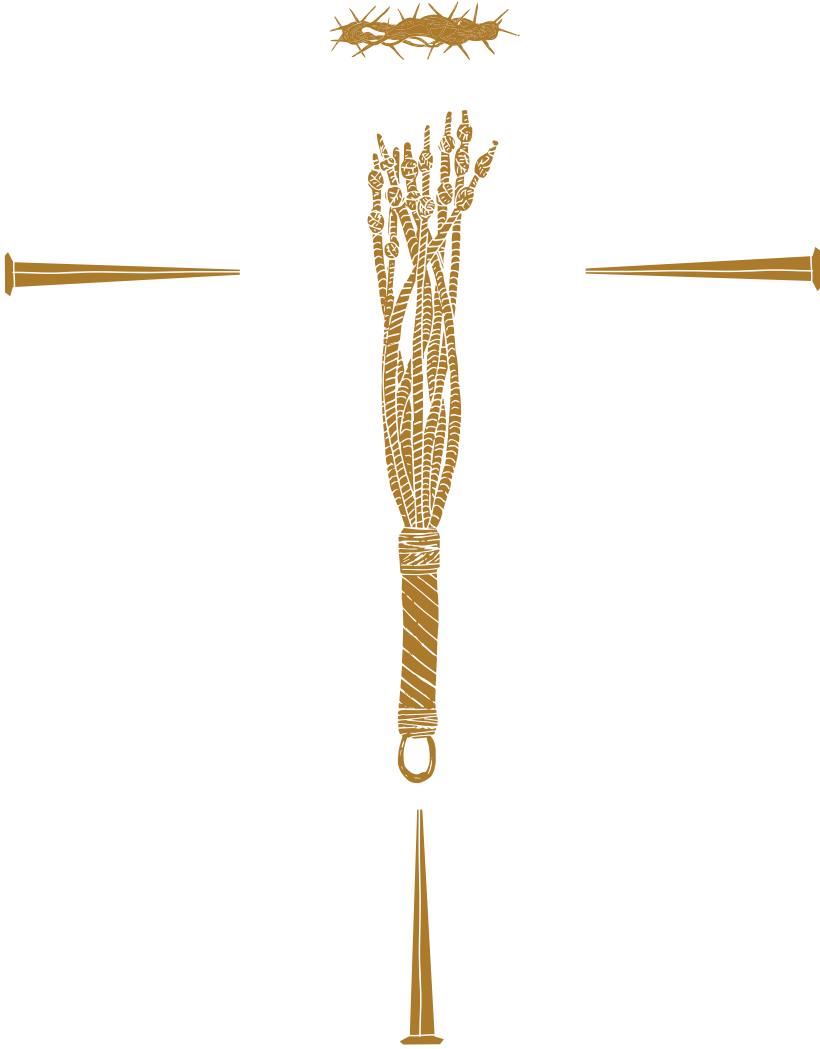


✠ FRONTLINE



A LENTEN JOURNEY

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Welcome to the Journey

We live inside of a big story. It started before we were born and will go on after our death. It is God's story in Jesus, and, because our memories are short, we inhabit rhythms that remind us of the story we are living in. We want to place ourselves in spaces to receive the love God is pouring into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. One of the most significant ways to inhabit God's story is to engage the Christian calendar. The Christian calendar leads us to engage the story of God throughout the year. It begins in Advent, a season of waiting and longing for God. It continues on to Christmas, remembering the God who has come to be with us through the Incarnation. Then comes the Easter season, where we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. These seasons might be familiar to some of us. However, the season of Lent is often foreign to us. We are familiar with the Easter season as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, but the season of Lent can be a little more unfamiliar. Lent is the season leading up to the celebration of Easter—it is rich for our souls, and it reminds our hearts of the goodness of God.

Lent helps assist the heart in preparing to remember the passion and cross of Jesus Christ. It's a season we take a purposeful journey to expose the things we've placed above God and the lesser loves of our hearts and find our only hope in Christ and his work on the cross and resurrection. Lent is a 40-day journey that follows Jesus' walk in the wilderness and his journey to the cross. During Lent, we purposefully allow ourselves to become vulnerable to the presence of God so that he may once again soften our hearts and open our eyes. The fruit of setting ourselves in this season can produce contrition, repentance, and consecration. During Lent, humbly turn away from the things that keep us from affectionate love for Jesus. We hope by joining together for this season, the Church experiences renewal, revival, and restoration to the glory of Jesus!

Lent moves us from the season of the birth of Jesus to the life of Jesus, and, ultimately, to the cross of Jesus. During the Lenten season, use this journal as a guided liturgy of Scripture, prayers, and meditations. A gospel-centered liturgy helps us to form our lives around Jesus. In Daniel 6:10, we see a man, who in spite of his circumstances, chooses to daily spend time meeting with God. "...He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God..." In the Psalms, we see David praying to God daily, asking God to help him keep the precepts of Scripture in his heart. As we spend our time encountering God, we find freedom, love, and salvation. In this journal, each week of Lent is broken down into a rhythm that contains moments to read, pray, meditate, and write. Use as much or a little of the included material as you need to make this a rich time of meeting with the Lord.

*To accompany this journal, Frontline Music has released an album, *The Cross*, as a soundtrack to the Lenten season. Each week, specific songs will be highlighted to help you engage in worship and prepare your hearts to receive from God.*

Definitions

Ash Wednesday | *The first day of Lent*

Ash Wednesday helps us begin the 40-day season of Lent with a day of confession and meditation on our frailty, sinfulness, and need for a savior. This is also a day of assurance and gratitude as we remember that Christ has conquered death and sin through his life, death, and resurrection. In this way, Ash Wednesday points us to the power and beauty of our union with Jesus and the daily dying and rising with Christ embodied in a life of repentance.

Lent | *40 days leading up to Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday*

The season of Lent is a 40-day journey beginning with Ash Wednesday and culminating with Easter Sunday. This season is marked by repentance, humility, fasting, and self-examination. We remember Jesus in the wilderness fasting, we reflect on our sin that led Jesus to the cross to die for us. These 40 days of Lent are an invitation to make our hearts ready through repentance as we anticipate Good Friday and Easter.

Palm Sunday | *The beginning of the last week of Jesus' life; the Sunday prior to Easter Sunday*

The first Sunday of Holy Week, Palm Sunday, is the church's reflection on the triumphal arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem. This event also marks the beginning of Holy Week, the church's observance of all the events leading up to Jesus' atoning death and victorious resurrection. The observance of Palm Sunday is meant to magnify the significance of Christ's atoning journey, as well as foster longing in the hearts of God's people for his kingly return.

Holy Week | *The final week of Jesus' earthly life*

From Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, the church observes the events of Holy Week. As God's people, we are bid to enter into the tension of that fateful week between the shouts of "Hosanna" (Mark 11:9) and "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:13), culminating in the victorious resurrection of the Son of God. Through this week, we are invited to behold Jesus' passion, know the weight of our sin, fixate on the peculiar beauty of the cross, and find hope in the ultimate defeat of death and restoration of all things.

Maundy Thursday | *Thursday before Good Friday*

Maundy Thursday is the day Christians reflect on Jesus' final interaction with his disciples before his death and resurrection. The church has historically reflected on 3 aspects: Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the new commandment that we should love one another. In remembering Jesus' meal with his disciples, the church looks forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-10).

Good Friday | *A day to remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus*

Good Friday is the day Christians mark the death of Jesus at the cross. This remembrance, usually somber in tone, allows the church to reflect on Jesus' atoning sacrifice (1 Cor. 2:2). The "goodness" refers to Christ securing the redemption of fallen humanity by his death. On Good Friday, the church is confronted with the horror of her sin, and the surprising beauty of the gospel's resolve in Jesus' death.

Easter | *The day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus*

Easter is a day of joy, celebration, and renewal for Christians. It is the most celebrated day of the church calendar. On Easter, we find all our hopes as Christians realized in the resurrection of Jesus. We celebrate the reality of being united with Christ in death and in resurrection (Rom 6:5).

Weekly Rhythm

In this Lenten journey, there are weekly readings to help engage your heart and mind as you move toward the cross and encounter Jesus. Each week will have a scripture for reflection, confession and assurance, prayer, and devotional reading. For Holy Week, there will be a devotional reading for each day of the week.

This liturgy is meant to help give shape to the Lenten season. Scripture will remind us to return to faithfulness, kindness, and knowing God. Prayers of confession and assurance will help us repent of sin, reflect on Jesus' sacrifice, and remember the goodness of God our Father. Devotional readings will help stir our hearts and imaginations toward the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We hope that as you set aside time daily to meet with God, you encounter him in all His glory and grace.

- *Frontline Liturgy Team*

The Daily Office

The daily office is an ancient liturgical practice that uses daily prayers to set a rhythm for the day. There are set moments, usually morning and evening, to engage in prayer. In this Lenten journey, there are weekly readings that will help engage your heart and mind as you move toward the cross and encounter Jesus. An example of how to use the guide throughout your day would be to carve out time to pray in the morning, mid-day, and evening time. Your times of prayer and meditation could include something like this:

Morning

Scripture Readings
Confession and Assurance

Mid-day

Prayer
Devotional Reading

Evening

Daily Examen

The Daily Examen

The Daily Examen is a great way to pray and to look for God's presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern His direction for us. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer.

Become aware of God's presence

Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

Review the day with gratitude

Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

Pay attention to your emotions

One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you to consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to them in some way.

Choose one feature of the day and pray from it

Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Look toward tomorrow

Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask Him for help and understanding. Pray for hope. 135 St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for His protection and help. Ask for His wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God.



Week One

Hosea 1:10

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."

Week One

Scripture Reading

Hosea 1:1-7

Confession

Father, you are an all-sufficient, passionate God,
Ever faithful, always loving, knowing me at my core.
You've loved and pursued my heart with a committed and covenantal love.

But I confess I do not honor or give thanks to You.
My heart is dark and hardened, and I exchange the truth about You for lies, worshipping the created in place of the creator, wasting Your gifts with irreverent and dishonorable living.

You called to me, and I ran.
You pursued me with love, and I hid my eyes.
You spoke truth, and I covered my ears.
Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You.
Have mercy on me and forgive me.

Assurance

In Christ, God has placed His love upon you and set you apart.
We are a people belonging to God so that we might proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Once we were not a people, but now we are God's people; once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy, and we are called children of the living God.

Prayer

We believe God speaks to His people. Prayer is not a one-way conversation; God will talk to us. The invitation from God is to quiet our minds and hearts to listen to what He might be saying. Take a few minutes and walk through this listening exercise.

Fixing your eyes on Jesus

Imagine Jesus sitting in front of you. The Scriptures are clear that He is "for us, not against us."
Confident in His love for you and like you would talk to a friend ... what would you say to Him?

Take at least 2 minutes and say those things to Him out loud.

Now, like you would with a friend...listen for what He has to say back to you.

Ash Wednesday Devotional Reading

“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job 42:5-6

There is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God. A man named Job was confronted with this reality. He was a righteous man who had heard about God. He heard about who God was and what God was like. But after a season of intense suffering, Job had an encounter with God and saw Him. The Lord spoke with him face to face in the midst of a storm. In that moment, his perspective of God changed. He saw God as He truly was. He was no longer a theory, but a reality. The Lord is a holy God to be feared and a loving Father to be embraced. When Job saw God clearly, his perspective of himself changed as well. Job saw the depths of his sin. He saw the idols, or false gods, that he upheld above God. In light of the holiness and perfection of God, Job saw how impure and unworthy he was. He echoed the cry Isaiah gave when he had a similar experience with God: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” After such an encounter, Job despised himself, repented, and covered himself in dust and ashes.

As we enter into a season called Lent, we seek the same heart. Lent is a forty-day journey of repentance where we seek to see God and ourselves rightly. We strive to meet with God and turn from those things we set above him. The season of Lent begins with a day called Ash Wednesday. During this day, many Christians around the world place ashes on their forehead as a symbol of repentance, just as Job covered himself with ashes. It is a recognition of our lowliness before the presence of a holy God. In other words, we acknowledge that we are filthy and in need of the cleansing only Jesus can bring. It is a public confession that we have idols and sins that we place above God, and we are turning from those things back to the living God. Regardless of whether you cover yourself in ashes or not, this is a day to humble yourself and set your heart on repentance. It is a day to echo the cry of Job, who despised his sin and impurity and repented in dust and ashes.

For your meditation:

Think through your relationship with God. Do you know about Him, or do you know Him? In what areas are you seeking repentance? List out specific sins that you are asking God to cleanse you from.



Week Two

Hosea 3:5

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

Week Two

Scripture Reading

Hosea 3:1-5

Confession

Father God, I have forgotten you.

You have offered to me your fatherly wisdom.

But I have claimed to be wise in my own eyes, and have chosen to be formed instead
By the popular opinions of the day.

You have offered to me your fatherly authority

But I have rebelled against you, living self-absorbed lives under my own rule and reign.

You have offered to me your fatherly affection and kindness

But I have chosen to make my home in this world and have run away from your presence.

Father, I return to you, for you are good.

I submit to you, for you are trustworthy.

I turn to you, for you are merciful.

Please, forgive me.

Assurance

Through the finished work of Jesus the Son of God, you are offered a way back home.

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who are his.

Though we are slow to learn, God is patient to teach us.

He is faithful and trustworthy in all things.

We can be sure that God, our Father, will finish the good work that he began in us.

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Spend time acknowledging and enjoying God as Father.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Petition God to push back darkness wherever it is found.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Ask God for your own needs and the needs of our church family.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Confess your sins to God and forgive anyone who has offended or wronged you.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Pray for God's protection over your own soul and the people of Frontline.

Devotional Reading

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

John 13:3-5

Now is the night. Betrayal is at hand. Jesus must drink the cup of suffering. If ever there was a time for Jesus to expect His friends to meet His needs, now is the moment. He has the right to be pampered and fed before he faces the sorrow. The leader gets up from his cushion and dresses for service. Humbly, He comes to each of His disciples. Jesus kneels before sinful men who will abandon Him. He kneels before Peter who will deny Him. He kneels before Judas who will sell Him. With each drop of water from the basin, the filth of human feet comes into contact with the hands of God. Mud, sweat, and animal dung are washed away. If ever His friends would be truly clean, the washing would be up to him. So, the Servant King, who will wash hearts in blood, is not afraid to wash feet in water.

“Teacher, you will never wash my feet.” This is too much for Peter. This act of humility is not what a leader does. Great men are served; they don’t wash feet. Peter is indignant. But why? Jesus’ breathtaking humility has broken into a heart enslaved by pride. This act is like a spotlight shining into a dirty cave. Jesus’ humble love is exposing Peter’s hopes for greatness and glory as not great or glorious at all. It’s not just sweat and mud being washed away. The Servant King is also washing away pride. He is so complete and secure in the Father’s love that His friends understanding or misunderstanding of Him has no power over Him. His secure servanthood exposes insecure hearts looking for meaning in power and control over others.

You and I are smeared with the filth of our streets. Pride clings to us, demanding a demonstration of control, power, or greatness to justify our existence. The more we look to our good deeds or productivity to tell us who we are, the more we sink into our muddy streets. We try to make ourselves secure in our comparisons with others. Then the Servant King comes to us. He is so secure in the Father’s love that He willingly stoops to meet us in our dirt. He washes us in His blood. He gives us a new identity in His finished work. He sends us so that we too can stoop to serve. This is what it means to be a Christian. We know where we come from and where we are going so we too can take on the clothes of a servant.

For your meditation:

You did nothing good or productive to get the Servant King to come to you. He stooped down to meet you. He laid aside His robes to find you and wash you. As you reflect on your Servant King’s love, where is insecurity and pride exposed in your heart? How are you trying to find your identity in control or power? How are you looking to your productivity to justify your life? Tell Jesus about it because he already knows it’s there, and He is stooping to wash you.



Week Three

Hosea 5:15

*I will return again to my place,
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,
and in their distress earnestly seek me.*

Week Three

Scripture Reading

Hosea 7:1-16

Confession

Father, I admit that I am more shaped by the world than by your desire for me.
I am a lover of self, pleasure, and money, rather than a lover of God.
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Jesus, I admit that in my pride and arrogance,
I live recklessly in rejection of your authority, often resulting in the abuse of others.
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Holy Spirit, I admit that I am ungrateful and heartless,
having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power to transform me and the world around me.
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Assurance

To all who are given the right to be called children of God,
by the blood of Jesus: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, Christ Jesus our Lord, and the Holy Spirit.
You are not saved because of your works, but because of God's own purpose and grace,
which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, now made known through the appearing of our
Savior.

He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, calling us children of God,
fully welcomed into the community of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Listening to God through the Word

Open your Bible to Psalm 16 (any Psalm will do). Read the chapter out loud twice and, as you're reading,
notice what words or phrases stand out to you. It may be that a unique thought, picture, or person comes to
mind.

Assume this is God speaking to you, and turn those "highlighted" words or thoughts or pictures into your own
prayers to God.

Devotional Reading | A Lesson From Creation

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

Isaiah 40:28–31

Nothing in all of creation continues in its own strength; all things eventually die without renewal. Look outside and consider a tree. When drought comes, the tree dies without water. Likewise, life withers away from an uprooted tree that is cut off from nutrients from the soil. Humanity is the same in relation to God. Just as a weakened body is strengthened by a healthy meal, the soul of a person is fueled by God.

Taking in God’s Word fuels our hearts. Gospel community gives us life. Corporate worship feeds our soul, or as pastor Charles Spurgeon said, “the soul-fattening table” of communion is life-giving to our hearts. As believers, we must wait upon God like a flower waits on rain. As lowly people dependent upon a great God, we must bloom in his light to grow and not close away in darkness. Without constant restoration from the Holy Spirit, we cannot hope to battle our own flesh, attacks from the enemy, or even hope to mature as disciples.

Every woman and man has no escape from weariness, growing faint, and exhaustion apart from the Gospel. The Son of God, who was eternally strong, became weak so those who trust in him may find strength. Some of Jesus’ last words on the cross were, “I thirst!” Remember those words today. Jesus knew thirst so those who trust in him may never be thirsty again. So often when we are tired, we search for rest in all the wrong places. True rest is not found in a place or time. True rest is found in the person and presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

For your meditation:

Where are you looking for ultimate rest that will not satisfy? A place, a hobby, a relationship? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you places you’re going that will never satisfy. Ask him to renew your strength in Christ.



Week Four

Hosea 9:10

*Like grapes in the wilderness,
I found Israel.*

*Like the first fruit on the fig tree
in its first season,
I saw your fathers.*

*But they came to Baal-peor
and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame,
and became detestable like the thing they loved.*

Week Four

Scripture Reading

Hosea 13:1-16

Confession

O Lord, I come to you in need, like a wayward child,
Confessing that I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.
I have wandered from your side and have ignored the call of your kindness that leads to repentance.

I thank you, Father, that I feel my need.
In your kindness, grant me forgiveness.

Assurance

In him, we have redemption and adoption as daughters and sons.
Not only has he saved us, but he has promised to not leave us as orphans,
And God is faithful and trustworthy to keep his promises.
In Christ, God bestows a Father's blessing on every returning wanderer.
Like a Father, he receives us as his children.

Prayer

Our Mission: Love God, Love People, and Push Back Darkness

Pray through the following Scriptures. As things come to mind in each of these categories, turn them into prayers to God.

Love God

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

Love People

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." (Romans 12:9-13)

Push Back Darkness

"... to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:18)

Devotional Reading | His Righteousness is Ours

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:20

When we see the standard of holiness that God lays on us, it is frightening. Even Jesus himself told us that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees to enter into heaven. The scribes and Pharisees were the religious elite of the day. These guys were pastors and spiritual leaders. They had Scripture memorized and followed it as best as they could. A normal person would see these men and say, “There is a righteous man. God is surely pleased with him.” But when Jesus comes on the scene, he blows all that up. He tells us that our righteousness must exceed that of those who had everything together. Find the most righteous man in your city, and your righteousness must exceed his, or you won’t be welcomed into heaven. This is terrifying because if we are honest with ourselves, we are not even close to being that righteous.

When Jesus came to earth, he didn’t sweep sin under the rug. He held the same standard his Father did. Only the righteous will enter into heaven, and none of us is righteous. But Jesus came to save us. Jesus is the only one who ever lived a completely righteous life. He is the only one whose righteousness exceeded every other man’s righteousness. He faithfully and perfectly followed God. And today, Jesus is offering that righteousness to us. We don’t have to earn it. We don’t have to do it ourselves. We simply receive it. When we look to Jesus, his righteousness becomes ours. Truly, all those who trust in Christ have a righteousness that far exceeds those of the scribes and Pharisees. Our righteousness is perfect and unblemished because it is not our own. It is Christ’s, and he has freely and willingly given it to us.

For your meditation:

In what ways do you fall short of God’s standard of holiness? Do you feel righteous enough to earn God’s love? Are you resting in your righteousness, or in Christ’s righteousness? What does it mean to say that Christ is our righteousness?



Week Five

Hosea 6:1-3

*Come, let us return to the Lord;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.*

*After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.*

*Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth.*

Week Five

Scripture Reading

Matthew 4:18-25

Confession

Jesus, your yoke is easy, and your burden is light.
Yet I put myself under a weight I was never meant to bear.
You clothe me and feed me, but I often don't trust that you will provide.
In my pride, I try to satisfy and carry my needs apart from you.

You tell me to seek first your Kingdom.
But I allow myself to be preoccupied and crushed by the cares of this world.
You promise to never give me a stone if I ask you for bread, yet I have been formed more by my own anxieties than by your promises.
Help me to cast my cares on you, knowing that you care for me
When my hands are empty, you will make my heart fully satisfied in you.

Assurance

Your Father in heaven knows what you need before you ask.
He gives from the overflow of his inexhaustible mercy.
He is eager to supply your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Jesus has made his Father your Father through his finished work and gives you the gift of his Holy Spirit so that you may rest in him.
Do not be anxious like the world, for we are sons and daughters of a good Father.
He is for you and not against you, and he withholds no good thing from those who ask of him.
So ask, and it will be given to you, seek, and you will find.

Prayer

ACTS

Pray through Scriptures of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication

Adoration: Psalms 145-150

Confession: Psalm 51, Nehemiah 9

Thanksgiving: Psalm 136

Supplication: 1 Kings 8

Devotional Reading | Mightier than I

“John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Mark 1:4-8

John the Baptist was a spectacle to see. John roamed the wilderness fashioned in his own camel hair attire held together by a tattered leather strip of cord. As the world consumed choice foods for enjoyment, John preferred a diet consisting of fresh locusts and organic honey. As the city clamored for new sights and sounds, John lived to please God. John was a rebel to many and a revolutionary to others. Some mimicked John while others mocked John. No matter what you thought about John, the entire city of Jerusalem traversed the wilderness just to see him. They were not prepared for what they experienced.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’”. Awaiting the travelers was no superhero with a cape flapping in the wind, no silver-tongued orator proclaiming new methods to maximize your potential. Awaiting was a voice, a voice saying, “Get ready because someone is coming worth your emulation”. John says there is someone coming mightier than I who will do more than wash your external filth with water but will cleanse your internal sin and corruption by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit! Man can only provide man-sized solutions to God-sized problems. But God, and God alone, has the ability to cure the sin virus beyond man’s reach with a Holy Ghost inoculation. Prepare the way.

For your meditation:

Where are you hoping for man to provide what only God can?



Week Six

Hosea 10:12

*Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the Lord,
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

Week Six

Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:16-24

Confession

God, you are light, and in you, there is no darkness at all.
I confess I have broken fellowship with you.
I confess I have sinned and deceived myself.
I confess I've broken fellowship with my brothers and sisters.
Father forgive me.

Assurance

This is the good news for those who place their life and trust in Jesus
If you confess your sins,
He is faithful!
He is just!
He will forgive those sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness!

Prayer

Prayer Through Acts 2

Acts 2:42-43

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

Pray for:

- Devotion to word of God
- Devotion to each other
- Breaking of bread together
- Awe and expectation to fill our souls
- Miracles

Acts 2:44-45

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

Pray for:

- Unity
- Leadership
- Ministry teams
- The needy among us

Acts 2:44-45

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.”

Pray for:

- Grateful people
- God’s work in and through the church
- Generous church
- Increase of Jesus’ ministry
- Persons of peace in the city

Devotional Reading | In Christ Alone

“Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. But to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.” Romans 4:4–5

There are two different ways that people approach God. We can either come to God as an employee or as a beggar. When we come as an employee, we work hard for God. As long as we do what we are told, God will give us our check at the end of the day. As an employee, as long as we don't quit or get fired, we still get paid for our work. The biggest problem with this is that none of us have ever lived up to our job description. If we got what we earned, we would get the pink slip and not a paycheck. We have earned punishment for failing to live a righteous life. The truth is that there is only one man who ever lived rightly as God would have him. He did not sin or turn from God. He did not place other things above God. He followed the Lord in every way that was commanded. He never hated or lusted. He never lied or stole. He didn't falter one time. Truly, he was the only righteous man who has ever lived since the beginning of creation. His name is Jesus. When Jesus died, he substituted his life for ours. He lived his perfect life in our place.

Because of Jesus, there is another way to approach God. We can come to him as a beggar. We don't come bringing our works, but we come empty-handed. Our hope is not based on how righteous we are but how righteous Jesus is. God wants all of us to come to him as ungodly beggars rather than righteous employees. When we approach him empty-handed, trusting only in his goodness and grace to save us, the righteous life of Christ is counted as if we had done it. He credits it to our accounts. God looks at us as if we had performed everything just as he said. We must lay aside trying to work to earn God's love. Instead, we must stop working and trust in the God who gives us righteousness by faith alone. In Christ, we can rest assured that God will never leave us or forsake us because of our sin.

For your meditation:

Do you approach God as an employee or as a beggar? Are you working so that God will love you, or are you working because God has already given you his love? How does it look to rest in Christ for righteousness? Think through specific situations and how you would have responded differently if you had meditated on this truth.



Week Seven

Holy Week

Hosea 12:6

*So you, by the help of your God, return,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for your God.*

Week Seven

Scripture Reading

Luke 22:1-23

Confession

Father in Heaven,
You are the great I Am, the beginning and the end.
You are not dependent on me.
You are all-sufficient and limitless in all ways, offering me an abundance of life.
I cannot exist apart from you.
I am limited and dependent.
I need breath, food, water, shelter, relationships, and wholeness that only you provide.
I confess that I have sinned against you by acting independently of you.
In my pride, I have put myself in your place as the all-sufficient God.
I have withheld my dependencies and attempted to meet all of my needs by my own designs.
Father, forgive me.

Assurance

This is the good news:
In Christ, divine power has been given to you in all things for life and godliness.
He has given you his precious and great promises through the knowledge of Christ,
who called you to his own glory and excellence,
so that through those promises you may share in the divine nature of Christ.
He has rescued you from the dominion of darkness
and brought you into the Kingdom of his Son,
by whom you have received redemption and adoption!

He is just!
He will forgive those sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness!

Prayer

Concentric Circles

Pray for yourself

“... casting all your anxieties on the Lord because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

Pray for your family

“One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.”
(Psalm 145:4)

Pray for Frontline community groups

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

Pray for Frontline and churches in your city

“... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints ...” (Ephesians 6:18)

Pray for your city

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7)

Pray for our nation and the nations

“... if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Palm Sunday Devotional Reading | A Triumphal Entry

Read Mark 11:1-11

The phrase “triumphal entry” evokes images of a grand entrance—like doors bursting open and fireworks shooting off. That’s the sort of entrance you get for the performing artist at a Super Bowl halftime show. Or perhaps the motorcade processional fit for the President of the United States. A more antiquated image would be a victorious warrior returning from battle on a war horse and sharing the spoils of the enemy back in his homeland.

Those images are the exact opposite of what we get with Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. His entry is titled as triumphant. Yet, as we read of it through our modern and Western lens, it seems like anything but triumphant. What is so triumphant about this? The entrance was triumphant because it was visible, because of what it declared, and because of what it meant.

First, this entrance was triumphant because it was visible. The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem was at the start of the largest festival on the Jewish calendar: the Passover. It was also his first public appearance since raising his friend, Lazarus, from the dead (John 11). The crowds gathered as people flocked to see him. Jesus was most certainly making a statement arriving in the way he did.

This entrance was also triumphant because of what it declared. The palm branches were waving; a sign of Israeli freedom. The people were shouting a cry of blessing; a sign of the Messiah’s arrival and salvation (Mark 11:8-10, Psalm. 118:25-26). The Son of Man was riding in on a donkey colt; a sign of God’s appointed King over his people (Zechariah 9:9-10).

By welcoming Jesus this way, the people were saying, “He is the promised Messiah! He’s the one we’ve been waiting for! Our King has come to deliver us!” By Jesus entering this way, he was saying, “You are right! I am the one! I am the King! Salvation and peace are here!”

Finally, this entrance was triumphant because of what it meant. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, he arrived for judgment. That’s what verse 11 is all about. A prophetic and judgmental surveillance of the temple that was supposed to be a house of prayer for the nations, but had been turned into a den of thieves.

He came bringing judgment against the sins of Israel and the nations. Yet, he also came to take that judgment upon himself. His entrance was bringing salvation and peace, but not the way they imagined. It wasn’t political peace, but peace with God. It wasn’t deliverance from Rome, but deliverance from sin. He didn’t come on a war horse or with a sword. Rather, he came as the one who would be trampled, the one who would be pierced.

When he entered the city, the crowd anticipated a coronation, but Jesus knew it would mean crucifixion. They wanted him to rule through conquest. He would indeed rule, but it would be through death and rising. This entrance was unmistakably triumphant, just not in the way we tend to think. But, isn’t that just like Jesus? He is the King we need, but he doesn’t always seem to us as the King we want.

Holy Monday Devotional Reading | Holy Monday

Read Mark 11:12-19

The Scriptures tell us: Be angry and do not sin. And yet, today's meditation rests inside of a seemingly momentary burst of anger from Jesus when Jesus curses the fig tree.

Jesus is not simply hungry here (for starters, the Son of Man has food that we know nothing about). The cursing of the fig tree serves as the voice of holy anger against all that has been unraveled and shattered by the curse, and it is an invitation to join Jesus in lamentation over our sin-wrecked world. The turning of the tables and the temple expulsion stand as a righteous response by the Son, embodying the very heart of the Father for his wayward children.

It can be difficult to see the cursing of the fig tree outside of our own lens of our own human, and often misdirected, frustration. But Jesus stands not as one who is slightly offended, but as the God of the universe confronting a wayward people. This wayward people had rejected God's own presence, blessing, and wisdom over centuries. And what he confronts is no small slight. Yet in this act of prophetic action, he is not merely giving us an interesting story. He is both teaching us how to lament the brokenness of our world, and inviting us to cultivate holy anger in the face of sin and rebellion, both within and without.

May God form in us a deep, holy frustration with our own sin, and its effects in our neighborhoods, families, and all the places and spheres we inhabit. As we journey through Holy Week, the events of the life of Christ highlight more and more the need for redemption, salvation, payment for sin, restoration, and a reckoning and reversal of the sinfulness that still resides within us and the world. Let us then offer up prayers for his Kingdom to come.

Holy Tuesday Devotional Reading | Holy Tuesday

Read Mark 11:20 - 13:37

The leaders had finally had enough. Jesus had just come into town a couple days ago, and he was already causing all sorts of problems. They had to put an end to this, quickly. So they sent in the heavy hitters—the chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees. Every faction, conservative and liberal, religious and irreligious, all the powerful and mighty joined forces to “expose” Jesus. Enemies united together to take him down, to make him slip up, even just once. They aggressively questioned his authority in front of the crowds of people. They deceptively sought to embroil him in bitter political divisions. They offered up outlandish and convoluted philosophical puzzles that no one could answer. Anything to make themselves look superior in the people’s eyes.

But they tragically underestimated the wisdom of Jesus. He withstood it all, answering them wisely and thoughtfully. He turned the tables, making them look foolish and winning over the crowds. The more they questioned him, the more people were confronted by his response. And, as the barrage came to an end, Mark simply records, “And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.”

They had misjudged Jesus. This Jesus, whom they had the audacity to confront, is actually the embodiment of wisdom itself. In the temple, which should have been a place for truth, the teachers used all their collective wisdom to deceive, manipulate, and pervert the truth. The wisdom of God was standing in front of them, but they couldn’t hear it. They plugged their ears. They were more concerned with winning praise than with receiving truth from God incarnate.

But not all of them. For one scribe, it was different. As he stood there, ready to take down Jesus, the wisdom of God pierced his heart. It seems as if, at least for the moment, he hears Jesus for the first time. He asks him, “What is the most important commandment?” Jesus essentially responded, “Love God and love others.” Then this scribe does something astounding. He humbles himself and waves the white flag: “You are right, teacher.” His fellow scribes had to have been furious. How dare he support this man and work against them!

But this is what Jesus did all the time. He loved his enemies and invited them to himself. This scribe came to fight, but he left with these words of Jesus ringing in his ears: “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”

This is what Jesus does—he comes to bring a Kingdom of wisdom, and he offers it even to those who revile him. He doesn’t lash out in revenge. He doesn’t even ignore his accusers. But he invites them to hear his words and enter into his Kingdom, if they have ears to listen.

Holy (Spy) Wednesday Devotional Reading | Holy Wednesday

Read Mark 14:1-11

People regularly went nuts around Jesus. That's really the best way to describe it. They made radical choices to surrender everything to this Man. Young men left jobs and families to follow him, a woman awkwardly busted up a dinner party to clean Jesus' feet with her tears, and a criminal tax collector paid back four times what he had stolen because of Jesus' words.

And there are plenty more stories like this. No wonder the gospel spread.

And then there's this woman. On the Wednesday of Holy Week, she is sacrificing a family treasure—worth a year's salary—to honor Jesus. Unrestrained worship. And while people made fun of her (the text indicates they were literally “yelling” at her) for seemingly throwing away her family's livelihood, Jesus commends her. He even makes a point about the timing of her radical generosity. Jesus says her gift mattered even more than giving to the poor. With Jesus' public commendation of her, the jealous Judas betrays Jesus. The first domino falls, eventually leading to Jesus' arrest, trial, and death.

We've likely heard this story. Why is it here? There could be a myriad of reasons Mark includes this story, but consider this possibility: the next several hours were going to be an unimaginable barrage on Jesus' senses. He would hear false accusations, insults, a friend's denial, and the agonizing sound of a nail through his own bone. He would see the horrors of unleashed evil, from corrupt Jewish leaders to Roman soldiers bent on torture. He would taste his own dry mouth and bitter vinegar. His sense of touch would be assailed with excruciating pain from head to toe.

But is it possible that Jesus would still have been able to smell the scent of this woman's sacrifice as he took his final breath? Could he have been strengthened as he faced the fires of trial, the agony of torture, and the weight of bearing the wrath of God by the aroma of one woman's worship? When he strained to inhale through the asphyxiation of crucifixion, did the sweetness of her worship perhaps come to mind? When he breathed his last, could he smell the perfume that was for his burial?

We don't know. Perhaps one day we will. But one thing we do know for sure: the “scent” of her worship still reverberates in our day. Even today, we can smell it.

May we grow to ever and always extravagantly worship the King just like this woman.

Maundy Thursday Devotional Reading | Maundy Thursday

Read Mark 14:12-72

For a Jew, today is one of the best days of the year—the first day of the feast. Like Christmas, New Year’s, and Thanksgiving all wrapped up in one joyous party. Friends and family. Dancing. The best food and wine. Life is good.

For Jesus, today is one of his worst days—the beginning of the end. The goodness of an intimate meal with close friends is quickly displaced by the shock of what’s to come. He stumbles into a garden literally called the “olive press” and, like that olive, the life of the Son of God is slowly squeezed out.

It’s too much.

He can’t even stand.

It’s so bad he is bleeding through his own sweat.

And his friends are worthless at this point, sleepily unaware of what’s coming.

And from a man who regularly says shocking things, his brutal honesty is again breathtaking: “Remove this cup from me ...”

Jesus asks for another way.

Consider that. Jesus is strong. He is not afraid of suffering or pain or even death. Yet he seems completely overwhelmed by the thought of taking the full wrath of God for our sins. Martyrs die every day for noble causes. That’s not what this would be. No man, no God, has ever before drunk the full cup of the anger of God for the insurrection of his enemies. He is asking his Father if redemption can come some other way.

Your circumstances may seem too much. You may feel barely able to stand. Your friends may be no consolation in the pain; in fact, they may even be the source of it. But you have a Friend, a Savior, one who knows how that feels, and who did not sin.

Sometime after his shocking plea to his Father—maybe seconds or minutes—is next recorded words are, “Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

“Yet not what I will.” These are words coming from a choice to lay down every desire for comfort, fulfillment, and self-protection.

“Yet not what I will.” These words come from a willingness to live for Someone else’s glory.

“Yet not what I will.” These are words to his Father saying, “Though you slay me, yet will I trust you.”

There is only one God who knows what the deepest pains of life and full surrender feel like. And he knows your name.

Good Friday Devotional Reading | Good Friday

Read Mark 15

The words of Mark 15 are among the most difficult to read in the entire Bible. The details of what it ultimately meant for Jesus to be the suffering savior that the prophet Isaiah had written about more than 600 years before had finally come to pass. The pre-determined plan of the Father to rescue the world was carried out in a way that was gruesome to watch, read, and think about today.

The physical suffering our savior endured was something known to kill people well before they ever made it to the cross. If the physical torture didn't kill them, they would die by asphyxiation on a cross.

The emotional pain Jesus endured points us to the truth that we will never face a greater denial or abandonment than he bore for us that day. After the ones closest to him—the ones who said they'd never leave—turned their backs, he was stripped bare and mocked by men, women, and children. He was mocked by those he created and was giving his life for.

Worst of all, certainly, was the spiritual suffering of Christ for us. The second person of the Godhead, the one who said that he is one with the Father, experienced being forsaken by God so we never would.

The cross and these sufferings of Christ on our behalf are certainly the focus, but if we're able to make it to the end of this difficult passage, we're rewarded with unbelievable news. It's the best news the Bible has offered us since Genesis 3 when God promised that he would bring us back from sin that separated us from him. Look back at the details of verses in 37-39:

“And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’”

There was a curtain in the temple, and it had one job: separate the unholy from the holy. Though the whole earth belongs to God, the temple was his dwelling place. Though all the peoples of the earth were his, the Jews were his chosen people. Though all the descendants of Abraham were his, the priests were the ones who could be made ceremonially clean to come into his presence. Though all days belong to him, there was one day set apart to enter his presence.

In an instant, two powerful things happened at once: Jesus gave up his life, and the curtain separating the people from God was torn in two. We are now welcome in. And did you notice the first person to enjoy coming into the presence of God by faith in Jesus? It wasn't a priest covered in incense but a centurion soldier sprinkled in blood from standing below Christ on the cross. Even he was welcomed in. Even us.

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