



HENDERSON HILLS
BAPTIST CHURCH



PASSION

WEEK AT HHBC



DEVOTIONAL

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Introduction

Easter is almost here. In just a few days Christians from all over the world will worship together as we celebrate the fact that Jesus has conquered sin and death by rising from the grave. Although we as Christians celebrate this truth every day, there is something special about Easter Sunday and the days that lead up to it.

Perhaps you have heard of Passion Week, or at least heard the phrase the passion of Jesus Christ. But what exactly does that mean? The word passion comes from a Latin word that simply means to suffer. Passion Week then is the week before Easter wherein we reflect on the final days of Jesus' earthly life and ministry, culminating with His suffering, death, and resurrection. Passion Week thus leads us to remember how God loves us so much that He gave His only Son as a sacrifice in our place.

So, in the following pages, we challenge you to prepare your heart and mind for the highest celebration in Christianity: Resurrection Day (Easter Sunday). Start by reading the daily Scripture passage and then read the devotional that follows. Let these events of Jesus' life during that week reorient your thoughts away from the secondary stories of this world toward the primary story of God – the rescue and restoration of His people. May God be praised and may your faith be strengthened.

Prayer

Most gracious heavenly Father, prepare my heart and mind this week as I remember how Jesus Christ suffered in my place, conquering sin and death. Amen.

Palm Sunday - March 24

Read John 12:1-19

This passage covers two back-to-back days (Saturday and Sunday). It includes two different scenes and two very distinct ways of responding to Jesus.

In Bethany, we encounter both Mary and Judas; and in Jerusalem we meet the crowds and the Pharisees. Though there is a great deal more that could be said, one thing is sure: we see Jesus more clearly and learn much about how we can and should respond to Him (vv. 1-8).

Taken together, Mary and the crowds exemplify humble gratitude and extravagant worship. On the other hand, Judas and the Pharisees display a hardness of heart, as well as a form of twisted self-interest and pride.

Judas wasn't exactly wrong in his assessment you know, and neither were the Pharisees. Mary's oil was a very expensive and precious commodity, and Jesus' fame and growing influence was certainly a threat to the prestige and political power of the Pharisees. Their responses were proud, covetous, and self-centered; but it cost them far more than they could have ever imagined – both in the short run, as well as in end.

To the contrary, Mary and the crowds rejoiced in God, humbled themselves, and celebrated Jesus. With the eyes of faith, they counted the cost and lavishly loved and surrendered to Him.

As today marks the beginning of Passion Week, which will it be for you? Will you only see what the cost might be, or will you humble yourself, celebrate Jesus, and discover new joy and life in Him?

Notes:

Monday, March 25

Read Matthew 21:12-19

There is a real link between these two stories, though it may not appear that way at first.

Looking beyond its leafy green exterior, Jesus had found Jerusalem's spiritual fruit to be missing. Like the fig tree that withered and died, the temple was demolished less than a generation later.

Aside from the fruit that was dearly lacking, the temple was also being overtly defiled, and Jesus was indignant. It was supposed to be "a house of prayer for all nations," where even foreigners and outsiders could be made joyful in God (Isaiah 56:7). And that was clearly not happening.

Jesus chased out the money changers and overturned their tables, clearing the way for needy worshipers to gather. Even the children sang His praise, and His enemies witnessed wonderful miracles.

Did you know that God cares a great deal about the genuineness of your faith? He is not at all interested in mere appearances.

Take time today to let the Lord search and examine you. Is the "fruit" of the Spirit present and growing in your life? It is neither figs nor mere religious activity

that God is looking for, but things like: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). All traits that are present where the Spirit of God is. All aspects of God’s character, that in Him are flawless and without limit.

But if fruit is lacking in your life, turn to the Lord! Not only for His forgiveness and help to change, but also because they so perfectly reflect His character. He is loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, and kind. He is good, faithful, gentle, and perfectly under control. This is the God who made and loves us. This is the God who makes Himself known.

We see this most clearly in the life of Jesus Christ, so thank Him today for how He loves and saves you. Thank Him today, that you can find joy in His presence, regardless of your background and however needy you might be.

Notes:

Tuesday, March 26

Read Matthew 22:34-40

Have you ever lost your bearings and used a compass to find your way? Do you ever wish you could have a spiritual compass, as you navigate the realities of faith and life? In this passage, we get just that: a spiritual compass for all of life.

Tuesday had rolled around, and Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem. The Pharisees and Sadducees were there to listen, but soon they were looking for ways to trap Him.

After several failed attempts, they asked about the greatest commandment in the Law of Moses, and Jesus' answer was crystal clear (quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18): "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Here is our compass for navigating faith and life. Here, also, is the key for understanding all else that God has ever commanded.

Love for God is our first and greatest priority while love for others comes in at a close second. Indeed, they in-

fluence each other and can often be hard to separate. The Pharisees and Sadducees may have claimed to love God, but their lack of love for others said far more than their actual words.

1 John 4:20 puts it bluntly, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." We are hardwired as relational beings, and this reflects the image of God in us. Loving God is then the best thing you can do for your neighbor, and loving your neighbor is often a practical way of showing love for God.

Jesus, of course, is the perfect example of this, as He laid down His life for us. Where we fall short, He did not, and He offers us even more than His perfect example. So, trust in Him and look to Him, and ask Him to help you to obey this Great Commandment.

Notes:

Wednesday, March 27

Read John 11:1-44

The great American theologian and pastor Jonathan Edwards once wrote: “Resolved, to think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.” Why would he say that? Well, it would seem that he was looking for ways to motivate himself to think meaningfully about life and eternity, and the realities of death tend to have a way of bringing both into sharp focus.

How about you? Have you ever thought or written such a thing in your own journal? For most of us the answer is an emphatic “no.” In fact, if we are honest, we typically try to forget about death for as long as it is possible.

Like it or not, you and I live in mortal bodies. We are all susceptible to injury, disease, and age; and death will finally overtake us. No human being can avoid it. That is just one of many reasons that the message of Easter is so urgent, relevant, and important.

In John 11, Lazarus was in the grave and the pain of death was on display. Though Jesus had declared that He was “the resurrection and the life” (v. 25), Mary and Martha had not entirely understood His meaning. Their faith was sincere, but limited, and we can certainly relate.

Revelation 21:4 reminds us what it will be like when Jesus finally comes again. The dead will be raised to life again and heaven and earth will be made new. Likewise, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” What encouraging and incredible news! Death will not have the have the final victory!

If you haven't already, read John 11:1-44 all the way through and behold the glory of God! Thank Him for His power over sin and death. Thank Him that you too can trust Him with your own frailty and mortality. Ask Him for help where your faith is weak and know that He is with you even in the darkest of circumstances.

Notes:

Thursday, March 28

Read John 13:1-17

This scene is both startling and incredible! Not only did Jesus know that He was about to die and rise again, but He knew even more than that. He knew “that the Father had given all things into His hands” (v. 3), and that He would soon ascend to a position of incredible glory and of indestructible power.

His Kingdom would come. His will would be done. All of creation would one day acknowledge Him. So, what would He do in that moment? The most surprising thing of all.

He got down on the floor and humbled Himself – washing His disciples’ smelly, dirty, unclean feet. He did the menial task of the lowliest servant.

This was a role that none of the disciples wanted. Indeed, it had not even entered their minds to do it themselves. That was a job for someone else to do! What kind of honor exists in that behavior?

But Jesus took the form of a servant, and He serves us still with great humility. In the end, we are called to do

the same, humbly leading others by serving them sacrificially.

It may not be toes and toenails that you clean, but there are endless ways of serving those around you. Just think of two or three things that no one likes to do and start there by doing them quietly. In so doing, your neighbor will be served, the Lord will be praised, and you will be changed in the process.

All of this was just a preview of how Jesus would serve them in the hours that followed, as He prayed in Gethsemane and laid down His life on the following day. Let the Savior wash you today from the defilements of sin and then celebrate His kindness and infinite mercy.

Notes:

Good Friday - March 29

Read Matthew 26:69-75

“Good Friday” we call it. What a scandalous name!

Jesus was tortured, crucified, and died. The light of the world went out.

Jesus was betrayed, falsely accused, unjustly tried, mocked, scorned, and beaten. He was spit upon, struck, lashed, and not given food or water. He was publicly stripped naked and had nails driven through His hands and feet, and He was hung on a cross to suffer for hours until He died in agony.

How could that be good? Peter may help us find the answer.

After boldly declaring his undying loyalty, Peter quickly left Jesus’ side. He publicly denied even knowing the Lord, cursing himself in the process (v. 74). But Jesus took Peter’s sin to the cross and He quickly restored him after His resurrection (John 21:15-17).

It is not that our sin is somehow less serious now, but that the righteous life and sacrificial death of Jesus is far more powerful than we tend to think. As the saying

often goes, “You are worse than you think you are, but far more loved and accepted than you can possibly imagine.”

In the words of the old song, “He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay, I needed someone to wash my sins away. And now I sing that brand new song, “Amazing Grace!” all day long, Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.” That is good news, to be sure. And that is why today is rightly called, “Good Friday.”

Thank Him, today, for His sacrifice and celebrate His amazing grace.

Notes:

Saturday, March 30

Read Luke 23:50-56

What happened on Saturday after Jesus was buried? Seemingly, there was nothing. His body was bound and laid in the grave, while the tomb was sealed and watched under Roman guard.

The death and burial of Jesus had stunned His disciples, and they were not thinking about a possible resurrection – though Jesus had prepared them for that on many different occasions: Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22, etc. Instead, they scattered, and their minds were filled with fear, doubt, and confusion.

Can you relate to how they felt? It can be hard to believe when your hopes and dreams seem to have vanished. They had hoped and prayed and believed in Jesus, but suddenly God seemed silent.

But the temporary silence of God is not the same thing as Him somehow being absent. Our feelings and circumstances often mislead us. Jesus was certainly dead in the grave, but that was not the end of the story.

Whether for us or Jesus' followers on that dark day, the perspective we need is to remember His faithful prom-

ises. In fact, listen to the way Jesus corrected some disciples not long after His resurrection: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26).

Let us then be encouraged in our faith, remembering that life conquers death and that light always overcomes the darkness. Tomorrow is Easter, so prepare your heart – there is definitely more to this story!

Notes:

Easter Sunday, March 31

Read Matthew 28:1-9

Happy Easter! Jesus Christ is risen!

What a day that Sunday would have been! Coming off the despair of Friday, and the terrible silence of Saturday, what followed was amazing. Once Jesus appeared to His disciples, their fear and doubts were quickly changed to joy, amazement, and worship. No wonder those early disciples transformed the world. His resurrection had changed everything!

Before ascending back to heaven, His final words told them what to do with the new hope and life they had been given: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (vv. 18-20).

As you celebrate this Easter Sunday, respond to Him with joy, thanksgiving, and worship. Likewise, heed the call to follow Jesus and to share this good news with the world.

Thank you for joining us on this Passion Week journey and remember: the story is not yet over. God is still at work in your life because Jesus is alive, and His Spirit is at work in every corner of the planet. Ask Him to thrill and change you with this good news. Then offer your life to help others also find salvation and hope in Him.

Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again!

Amen

Notes:



HENDERSON HILLS
BAPTIST CHURCH

Good Friday Experience

March 29 • 10 am - 7 pm
Childcare available for birth-2 years
between 3:45-5:30 pm

Easter Sunday

March 31 • 8, 9:30, or 11 am
Childcare available for birth-2 years