FROM DEATH TO LIFE: A JOURNEY THROUGH PASSION WEEK & THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

14-Day Home Liturgy



Every year around Easter, believers set aside a week to intentionally meditate on and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. This week is commonly known as Passion Week. It begins on Palm Sunday, the day that Jesus begins His journey to the cross, and ends on Resurrection Sunday.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most significant realities of our faith - so much so that Paul says, "...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). By His death, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin and set us free from its chains. And by His resurrection, He proved He is truly the Son of God who offers eternal life to all who trust in Him.

As we worship God together through this 14-day liturgy, we will be journeying through the Passion Week and the birth of the church in Acts chapters 1-2. Each day will include a Scripture reading, a short devotional, and a space for worship through prayer and song.

While this resource can be used at any time throughout the year, we encourage you to begin on Sunday, April 2nd, which is Palm Sunday. Whether you use this liturgy with others or during your personal quiet time, our prayer is that it will help cultivate a life of worship within your home.

Pastor Brandon Ramey

Tips for Using This Liturgy

Each day, you're encouraged to take time to worship through song along with this liturgy. Use this QR code to access a Spotify playlist with a selection of songs chosen by Pastor Brandon.



- Set aside a dedicated time that you will go through the liturgy each day (morning, during dinner, before bedtime, etc.).
- If your family lives at home with you, use this liturgy together.
- Dads and husbands, use this as an opportunity to grow in being the spiritual leader in your home.
- If you have small children at home, allow them to participate in reading some of the devotional or Scripture, or have them pick songs for the day.
- If you have a hard time figuring out what to pray after the devotional, think about how God is leading you to respond to the Scripture and devotional.
- Look up the lyrics online as you sing to help you engage in song.

Day 1: Triumphant Entry

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1–11

In Genesis 49, Jacob prophesied that the scepter will not depart from Judah until the one to whom it truly belongs comes. What does a scepter represent? A scepter is a staff held by a sovereign or a king as a symbol of authority. The one who holds the scepter is the one to whom the people bow and obey as king. We know that Jesus is the one from the line of Judah that has the right to the scepter. He is the King whose reign and kingdom will never end. On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered into Jerusalem during Passover fulfilling another messianic prophecy of Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This was His coronation in a sense. Jesus was publicly declaring, "the King is here." But not just any king.

Certain imagery comes to mind when you think of a king, and for the Jewish people, expectations were high as they acknowledged Jesus as their Messiah on Palm Sunday. But the praise of Jesus as their Messiah was short lived as they quickly realized that this was not the king they were expecting. Even though Jesus is the one who holds the scepter, they weren't willing to submit to this king because they thought their need was physical deliverance. They were expecting a king that would come as a lion to deliver them from earthly oppressive systems and rulers. But they had an unperceived need. They didn't realize that before Jesus would come as a lion, He was the king that came as a Lamb. The Lamb to be slaughtered to meet their true need, which was to be saved from the bondage of sin and the wrath of God. On Palm Sunday, which began His journey to the cross, Jesus declared that the Savior King is here!

Day 2: Clearing the Temple

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:11-19

The actions of Jesus could not present a more visible contrast than what we see transpire in the beginning days of the Passion Week. So what fuels the transformation of Jesus from compassionate healer (10:52) and praise receiver (11:9-10) to table flipper and merchant thrower? As if He knew we'd ask, Jesus answers our question preemptively: "This is my Father's house and my Father's house is supposed to be thriving as a place of prayer! He established this specific court for the personal prayers of men and women from all nations. But instead, you people are stealing my Father's glory by taking up all their space with your merchandise, robbing one another for profit, and leaving no room for the nations to encounter God."

The record of John 2:13-16 reveals that three years prior Jesus had already rebuked the temple authorities for allowing these unscrupulous swindlers to degrade the outside court of the temple—the one portion open to the Gentile nations—by treating it as a back-alley, street market. So when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem with the disciples just 24 hours before, He makes a deliberate point to come into the temple court to see its current condition. Has it been redeemed for prayer, or is it still rife with the pursuit of profit? What He saw drives him to once again come with an appropriate display of zeal for the protection of His Father's house and purposes. If Christ was so emphatically concerned over the use of the temple made of stones, how much more passion He must exude for the condition of his living temples. Paul reflects Christ's zealousness when admonishing the Corinthians: "Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and the Spirit of God lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). In other words, the redeemed of the Lord have been rebuilt for a purpose, and the land-Lord cares a great deal about how his handiwork functions. Jesus' clearing of the temple court in such dramatic fashion was meant to awaken the people to their self-centered approach to God. Our reading of it should lead us to examine ourself for the same.

Day 3: Mount of Olives

Scripture Reading: John 12:37-50; Isaiah 53; Isaiah 6:10

Much of biblical history crosses up and down this small but significant ridge known as the Mount of Olives. This ridge provides passage between Bethany and Jerusalem. It was from this place, on Tuesday of Jesus' last week, that He delivered some of His most important teachings during this last week of His earthly ministry. Recorded in all four of the gospels, these teachings have become known popularly as the Olivet Discourse. On this day, the religious officials make their last attempts to trap Jesus by His own words, questioning His authority. As before, they fail miserably and turn to more drastic measures, plotting to arrest and kill Jesus.

In His discourse, Jesus confronts and condemns the religious leaders who care more for their stature among men than their standing before God. He pronounces woes upon the leaders and describes them as a 'brood of vipers'. Jesus laments for Jerusalem and delivers some of His most memorable predictions and parables concerning His return. The disciples are interested in knowing what signs they should look for in the coming days, but much of what Jesus spoke was not fully understood, at least at this time. It would be weeks later before many of Jesus' followers even began to understand or put the pieces together. John, in his gospel, reflects back on this time, noting that many still did not believe despite the miracles they saw. Highlighting our personal responsibility, John then recounts the words of Isaiah: "lest they see with their eyes and understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them" (Isaiah 6:10). Our personal repentance brings healing from Jesus. To see or even acknowledge is not enough. Even some of the religious leaders of the day recognized that this Jesus was unlike any of the false messiah's which had come before. But they did not believe Jesus was the messiah to the point of turning, or repenting. John drills down to the ultimate point of what Jesus was saying on the Mount of Olives that day. By His authority, God gave Jesus what to say and what to speak. John describes this as a commandment. This 'commandment' is eternal life. The words that Jesus spoke, by the authority of God the Father, will be the judge of every man and woman.

Day 4: Plot to Kill Jesus

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:1-16

Whenever we read a good book or watch a good play or movie, the degree to which we enjoy it is usually based upon how smitten we were with the plot. It is the plot (i.e., the main story line) that keeps us intrigued and reading or watching as the story unfolds. While there is always a primary plot, there are typically several subplots in every literary drama as well. In fact, "as the plot thickens", it is the subplots that make the story compelling, but they can also sometimes cause us to miss the real plot. Such is the case with the plot to kill Jesus. In the passages in the gospels leading up to the crucifixion, there are several subplots that are referred to as the "plot to kill Jesus". There were plots by the chief priests and the Pharisees, by the high priest Caiaphas, and of course most notably the plot by Judas Iscariot. But let's not get enamored with these subplots as the real thing.

The real plot to kill Jesus and the ultimate storyline is found in Jesus' rebuke of the disciples after they rebuked Mary for pouring her costly offering of fragrant oil to anoint Jesus' body. When Jesus says to His disciples, "she has anointed my body in advance for burial" (Matthew 26:12), He was declaring that the plots of those to kill Him were merely subplots of a greater story. Indeed, the plans and schemes to have Jesus killed were at work in the hearts and minds of evil men, but the purpose of those subplots was to achieve an ultimate plot that had already been written by God to fulfill His story of redemption. Jesus' declaration was in fact a statement affirming what He had already declared in John 10:17-18: "I am laying down My life so I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own." Thus, the plot to kill Jesus is His own plot. It is because of His choosing to lay down His life, that He has raised it up and, in His resurrection, we too have been raised. And not only that, but praise be to God, we are now included in His story and get to play a part in this, the greatest plot in all of history!

Day 5: Last Supper

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:17-30

Jesus sent the disciples ahead to prepare the Passover meal. As they were eating together Jesus made a startling statement when He said that one of the twelve would betray Him. Judas was revealed to be the one, but what is many times overlooked is that all of the disciples wondered if they could possibly be the betrayer. It was almost like they had forgotten whose teaching they had been under for the past few years, and yet each feared they might be the one who would turn away from the Savior. Had it slipped Peter's mind that he had acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God? Was it merely empty words when Peter said "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). If Christians really understood what Jesus sacrificed, then there would be no consideration of walking away from Him. The Savior then provided a way for His children to remember consistently His sacrifice when He instituted the Lord's Supper. Now, every time we partake of the bread and juice our hearts rejoice at what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary for undeserving sinners. There are times that the Christian life might become just a routine, and we forget the price paid for our redemption. Grace is taken for granted, and service becomes boring instead of a blessing. We never want to forget that the bread represents the body of Jesus that was broken and bruised not for any crimes but for all of our sins against God. We never want to forget that every stripe He suffered brought us one step closer to a relationship with the Father that we could never attain ourselves. We never want to forget that every drop of blood that Jesus shed was because of His great love for us and because of His desire to free us from the bondage of sin. When we remember that grace becomes a more precious gift to us, and our service for Him becomes more joyful. This passage closes with the apostles singing a hymn. Singing is a sign of joy, and what a joy to know that this last Passover meal with the Lord was not the end of the story but a promise from Jesus that He would one day drink again with His disciples (and us) in His Father's kingdom.

Day 6: Good Friday

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:1-61

The name Good Friday appears to be a mistake or an oxymoron when reading through today's Scripture reading. Throughout Matthew 27, we see Jesus wrongfully delivered to Pilate, wrongfully convicted, betrayed by the crowd through the persuasion of chief priests and elders, sent to His crucifixion as they stripped His clothes, gave Him a crown of thorns, and mocked His name as the 'King of the Jews'.

After all of that turmoil, Jesus was crucified alongside two thieves, ridiculed while He was on the cross, mocked, tempted and ultimately died on the cross while feeling forsaken by His Father. So, what is so good about Good Friday? If any of that occurred to us, we would not be labeling our day as good; instead, we would call it dreadful!

But as we have seen throughout Scripture, God's plans are always good even when we don't see the 'good' in it. After Jesus yielded up his Spirit and died, verse 51 is the start of the answer to the question, "What is good about Good Friday?" The temple was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook, the rocks split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of believers were raised! These real-life events demonstrate the power of the cross and the death of Christ. The veil between the people and the Father was now taken down, and the power of the creator was shown in the earthquake and the raising of the dead. Who is this man who just died on the cross before these mockers and blasphemers? The quote from the centurion in verse 58 sums it up: "Truly this was the Son of God!" As the Son of God died on the cross on that dark and eerie night, He obeyed the Father and accomplished His Father's plan so that through His death we may live. Good Friday should be a reflection of the good plan of the Father and the lengths He took to demonstrate His great love toward His people.

Day 7: In the Tomb

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:62-66

Life might be easier if we could ignore the parts of Jesus' teachings that our culture finds offensive - unless the resurrection is a real event in history. If the resurrection is a real event in history, then Jesus is Lord; and if Jesus is Lord, then Judgment Day is sure (1 Co. 15:20-28). All the Bible's instructions become consequential, including the culturally offensive; therefore, to ignore Jesus' teachings wouldn't make life easier. After all, both Christians and skeptics agree: Life in hell is anything but easy.

So, you ask, "How do we know that the resurrection really took place in history?" Today's passage shows us that even the enemies of Jesus did not deny the empty tomb. It's one thing for Christians to proclaim the resurrection by pointing to an empty tomb; it's a whole different thing for Jesus' enemies to also acknowledge that the tomb was empty. Jesus' enemies did not deny the empty tomb; instead, they tried to explain it away (Matt. 28:1-15).

If even Jesus' enemies didn't deny the empty tomb and tried explaining it away, then we have good reason to believe that the resurrection really took place, making Jesus Lord of all and leading to the surety of Judgment Day against all disobedience. In light of this, will you explain the resurrection away like the priests and elders, or will you surrender your life to it and all its implications? If the resurrection is real, then Christianity is real; therefore, we can trust it. But also, if the resurrection is real, then Christianity is real; therefore, we need to take its instructions seriously. Let us pray to deepen our trust in God and repent of any areas of disobedience.

Day 8: Resurrection Sunday

Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:1–20

"If the resurrection of Christ really took place, then 'making a lasting difference' finally becomes possible." The reverse of this statement is also true. If the resurrection did *not* take place, then there's really no such thing as "making a lasting difference." With death, your good deeds would vanish forever like an expired Instagram story.

What if you've invented a technology that advances humanity to new heights and that continues to be used for generations after you, like Steve Jobs and his iPhone? That technology has not reduced the mourning of his family at his funeral or brought lasting happiness to mankind. And with the passing of each beneficiary of the iPhone, that technology ceases to make a difference in that individual's life.

But if the resurrection of Christ really took place, then death is overcome and life is guaranteed to go on, literally forever. What the Christian doctrine of the resurrection gives you is the power to finally make a lasting difference, the hope of which Jonathan Edwards so eloquently expressed, "Our bad things turn out for good. Our good things can never be lost. And the best things are yet to come."

Praise God for the hope that is made available to you with the resurrection of Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes so that you may see the beauty of the doctrine, and your mind so that you may understand the brilliance of the doctrine's inferences.

Day 9: Jesus, cont.

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:1-3

The disciples of Jesus were often confused. From Peter's confusion (Matthew 16:21-23) to that of the disciples (John 16:16-19) at the "Farewell Discourse," confusion is not an uncommon emotion. After the resurrection it had to only have been multiplied. Can't you hear them asking, "What now? Didn't he say 'It is finished' (John 19:30)?" Praise the Lord that the payment for our salvation is in fact finished. The debt has been paid, the wrath of God has been taken away and Satan is wounded to death. This, however, is only a part of the work of Jesus. He is alive! And He is not finished with His work and teaching.

Luke says, "I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (vs. 1). The story that Luke told in the gospel of Luke and now in Acts is only the beginning of what Jesus is doing. One of the first things that Jesus does after His resurrection is verify to His apostles that He is indeed not dead: "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" (vs. 3). Jesus verifies to them by His presence that He is triumphant over death. The apostles had proof that He was alive. In doing this He was preparing them for their ministry going forward by removing any doubt from their minds. But our Savior gave them even more. Jesus was showering them with grace upon grace as He spoke with them "about the kingdom of God" (vs. 3). His confused disciples needed even more teaching than Jesus gave them before his death. After all the teaching and discipling they needed additional work. How gracious is Jesus to them! And to us! He has left us the church and His word to overcome our confusion and remove any doubt that He is alive. Jesus continues His work to this day.

Day 10: The Wait

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:4-11

Waiting is fundamental to the Christian faith. Abraham waited years between God's promise and holding his son (Genesis 21:5). Israel waited in eager anticipation for the Messiah (Genesis 3:15). After the resurrection, the disciples were commanded to wait, yet again: "He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" (vs. 4). Can you imagine the apostle's response: "Wait? Jesus is alive! We need to tell everyone about this now! Why wait?" Jesus answers, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (vs. 8). As eager as they may have been, they did not understand that what Jesus wanted them to do required power that they did not have in themselves. They asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (vs. 6). They still had the idea in their minds that the return of Jesus was primarily to restore an earthly kingdom. Jesus reminds them that His focus extends far beyond the borders of any nation and their waiting served His eternal purposes. Lest they get discouraged they are left with a final promise, "as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (vs. 9). At this point Peter, James, and John may have turned to the other disciples and said, "We've seen this before! Do not worry, he will be back shortly!" (Luke 9:34-35). But they were disavowed of that notion by two angels, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (vs. 11).

More waiting? Indeed. This waiting however is under the watchful care of our Savior from His place of honor in heaven. He has been exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33), is interceding for us (Romans 8:34) and will return to redeem His own (Romans 6:5-10). This promise assures us in our waiting. In the meantime, with the power of the Holy Spirit we have much work to do. What are you waiting for?

Day 11: Mattias Chosen

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:12-26

The disciples of Jesus were just asked by an angel; "...why do you stand looking up into heaven?" (Acts 1:11). I can imagine they were all thinking the very same thing: "What do we do now?" In the text for today, we are able to get a glimpse into their focus over these first few days and how they began to fulfill the mission God had for them.

First, they engaged with one another. Talk about living life in community! If they were going to figure out what was next, it required it be a group effort of the body of Christ. How often do we isolate from the body of Christ when we have decisions to make?

While together, they prayed. They prayed a lot. In fact, their engaging in community was primarily prayer – not fellowship. They were seeking God's lead for their next steps. Do we invite those in our church community to pray with us about the decisions and uncertainties regarding our mission? Prayer led them to Scripture. Did they immediately replace Judas when confronted with Psalm 69:25? No, they spent more time in prayer about how they should apply the Bible to their situation.

God gave them peace about replacing Judas since their mission required twelve men to be witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. They disciples nominated two men to be the replacement and began to pray even more. I hope you are getting the point that *prayer is key*! Yes, we let Scripture lead us and yes we plan "who" we need to add to the team, but it is prayer that finally brings them to an answer.

Day 12: Pentecost

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-13

Historically, Pentecost was a time to thank God for the blessings of harvest. This Pentecost was unique because Christ was ushering it in under the influence of the Holy Spirit in new covenant power as prophesied in Jeremiah 31, fulfilled through Christ death, resurrection, and ascension.

The Holy Spirit is the main person in this passage. God is always omnipresent, but out of His sovereign will He manifests His presence in tangible ways to mankind. Pentecost was one of those times. People tangibly heard the Holy Spirit descend from heaven like a rushing wind, saw tongues of fire, were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to talk in other languages from many of the surrounding nations. They encountered the amazing, magnificent and gracious acts of God in tangible ways. Today, there are still powerful ways we can relate with the Holy Spirit in our lives. The New Testament time after time talks about the disciples being "filled with the Holy Spirit". We tend to live life out of our flesh instead of under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There are many examples in the Bible about people being filled with the Holy Spirit. For example, people full of the Holy Spirit spoke words of wisdom, prophesied, preached in power, acted in faith, matured in their lives, spoke words of blessing, overcame temptation, and glorified Christ.

There are five roles that the Holy Spirit wants to have in your life today. First, the Holy Spirit wants to illuminate and make clear the direction for your life. Second, the Holy Spirit wants to provide counsel and guidance for your circumstances. Third, the Holy Spirit wants to empower you for ministry. Fourth, the Holy Spirit wants to convict you of sin, providing freedom and forgiveness in Christ. Lastly, the Holy Spirit wants to transform your heart and life. Like at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit wants to bless you so that you might declare this blessing to others of all nations.

Day 13: Peter's Sermon

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:14-41

That day at Pentecost must have been confusing for all in Jerusalem. People from all over the known world gathered for a celebration when the Spirit moved. The disciples of Christ began to speak in languages they had not learned to people who needed to hear a message that they did not expect. What was this message? What was the purpose? To help explain what was going on, Peter turned to the prophet Joel.

Over 800 years earlier, Joel prophesied about a time coming when His Spirit will descend on mankind and His mighty new work will begin. This new work will include prophecies, visions, and dreams, all of which we have seen before in the pages of the Old Testament. So, what was new about this outpouring? It was falling on all flesh and declaring a means of salvation for all people. From the time that Abram was called by God and told that through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3b) until the time of Christ, His message would come through the nation of Israel. But now His Spirit is poured out on all flesh. Sons, daughters, young, old, and servants will prophesy and tell about the mighty works of God; the hidden plan is now revealed, a plan that offers His salvation to all and empowers all to be the blessing to the nations.

One of the blessings that we have gained through the finished work of Christ is that we, as the Church of Christ, are empowered through the Holy Spirit to be the blessing to the nations. Men, women, young, old, rich, and poor from every nation are united as one family to be the blessing. Yes, the resurrection of Christ reconciles us individually to God through faith and repentance, but it also unites us as a family of God and empowers all of us to proclaim His mighty works and be a blessing to the nations. How do we respond to Peter's message? First, trust in His finished work, repent, and be baptized. Second, go out and be a blessing to the nations; you are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so.

Day 14: Supernaturally Ordinary Disciples

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:42-47

Christ has risen, ascended into heaven, and has sent His Spirit into the church. What does it look like with the Spirit of Christ enters the church? We receive a snapshot of this at the end of Acts 2, and what we see is extraordinary—incredible devotion to the ministry of the word, prayer, fellowship, generosity, and outreach. When we read this brief description of the church following Pentecost, it's easy to consider this type of Christian devotion as an outlier—an exceptional display of Christian living. Luke, however, presents these characteristics, not as extreme Christianity, but ordinary Christianity. Indeed, extraordinary devotion is the ordinary mark of a disciple. They were devoted to Christ and His church above everything else, which was displayed in their stewardship of time and resources. And what is perhaps even more amazing is that this devotion was not burdensome to them. They didn't have to muster up the resolve to fellowship, give, and pray begrudgingly. No, this was the natural—or better, the supernatural fruit of the Spirit of Christ coming into their lives. They lived this way with "joyful and sincere hearts."

How does this description compare to your own life? If Luke were to follow you around for a month and then write a description of your life, what would he say you "devoted yourself to"? A resurrected life is marked by a devotion to God ("the apostles' teaching" and "prayer") and a devotion to God's people ("the fellowship," "breaking of bread," and generously meeting practical needs). As you pursue growth in these areas, remember, it is the product of a life lived in the Spirit. Extraordinary devotion does not emanate from the flesh. Walking in the Spirit requires confession and repentance from sin as well as time in His presence. As you pursue this type of a life of worship, the Spirit will produce devotion in your life that may appear to others as radical, but in reality, is ordinary Christianity. Do not keep a foot on both sides of the fence. Go all in for the kingdom of Christ. Don't hold back. Devote yourself entirely to Him. This indeed is true life as God intended it to be!

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