



HOLY WEEK

*2021 Eight Day
Devotional*





HOLY WEEK

Bay Life Church
1017 Kingsway Road, Brandon, FL
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INTRODUCTION

There are two Christian holidays in the year that our culture stops to take note of: Christmas and Easter. On these rare occasions, society seems to recognize what Christians have believed from the beginning, even if only for a moment, before returning to presents and egg hunts. Still, even with all of the ways that culture downplays the theological significance of these holidays, churches see a spike in attendance.

It's as if the world still remembers, albeit faintly, "Something important is being remembered on this day."

Christians agree, it's not just something important we celebrate, these days mark the most critical events in all of human history. At Christmas, we reflect on the shocking fact that God became man, and at Easter we remember this particular man died in our place, and for our sakes. It's because of the significance of each of these truths that Christians don't confine our celebrations to just one day. Christmas is preceded by four weeks of Advent as if to say, "One day is not enough to unpack how important this is." In the same way, nobody gets to Easter Sunday without passing through "Holy Week."

WHAT IS HOLY WEEK?

Holy Week is a phrase used to describe the seven days leading up to Easter Sunday. The events of this particular week in the life of Jesus, His final week, take up almost half of the gospels. Every single moment of this week was important to the men who wrote our Bibles. Because the Scripture spent so much time telling us about the events of these seven days, Christians in the 3rd century began to set aside the week leading up to Easter to reflect and remember. This is what we are doing as a church by entering into this season. The hope is, in some small way, celebrating Holy Week will make these events more real to us. Those who have made this journey before can attest to its power. Amy Jill Levine, a Jewish scholar, writes about the power of Holy Week:

"This story, the Passion narrative, works on me. The literature is just that powerful. How do I know that it is that powerful? I know because even though I am not a Christian, I can recognize it's power. I can feel it move me, every time I read it, in all four gospels in which it appears."

She goes on to say, "If I, as a Jew, can see so much profound teaching in these pages, surely my Christian friends can find even more."

Ultimately, that is what we are after, more.

We hope this devotional will help you and your family to see this week, not as a series of disconnected events, but as part of the unified fabric of redemption. Palm Sunday is not distinct from Good Friday, or Easter Sunday, these events are deeply connected to each other.

Our goal is also to remember that these things actually happened in history, and they were costly. It is far too easy to hear the stories of Christ's final days and forget about the human price paid for our salvation. Real people lived through these events, and they did not have the benefit of hindsight. Nobody, but the Lord, could have known the same crowd that crowned Jesus king on Palm Sunday would chant, "Crucify Him" by Good Friday. Jesus' closest friends lived through these events in real time. They experienced the full darkness of Holy Saturday without knowing that the tomb would be empty on Easter Sunday. These men and women understood well the price of redemption, and the awful cost of reconciling sinners to God, they saw it with their own eyes as Jesus breathed his last.

Perhaps this sounds negative and somber; in some sense that's true, but ultimately Holy Week is not a bleak time. It asks us to stare into the ugliness of sin and death, but only so we can feel the power and the joy of forgiveness and resurrection. To put it bluntly, there is nothing holy about this week if it does not end in Resurrection Sunday.

On Sunday, having walked through this process, we think you'll find that Easter becomes an even more joyous celebration. In this season, we invite you to see the horror and evil of sin, in order to be reminded again that evil is not stronger than Jesus. The message of Holy Week is that the powers of sin and death and even Hell itself could not conquer Christ. The apostles understood that victory as Christ emerged from the tomb, and it transformed them completely. Death lost its power over the early church, because they saw with their own eyes that Christ had defeated it once and for all.

May God grant us eyes to see, and grateful hearts as we begin this journey together as a church, and may we join our voices with Christians the world over on Resurrection Sunday as we declare: Christ is risen indeed, Hallelujah!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The goal of this devotional is to empower you to obey one of the most frequent commands of Scripture, “Remember!” Again and again, God calls His people to remember what He has done for them so they can face the days ahead. Each day, you will find Scripture to read, a short devotional, questions for reflection, suggested prayers, and more. There is no right or wrong time of day to do this, but we encourage you to commit to the same routine throughout this week: set aside your phones, turn off the distractions, and open your Bibles together.

If you're a family with younger children, we are providing a separate devotional book for families to help you break down some of these big concepts. This will help you teach your kids to begin to understand the importance of what Jesus did for them. There are illustrations and songs to sing so your children can start to grasp the significance of these events. This should be something in which the whole family participates, with devices and distractions put away. We want our children to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus are important enough to command our full attention.

We pray that God blesses you as you walk through Holy Week, remembering the cost of redemption. We invite you to join us at our Good Friday and Easter Sunday services as we remember the death and resurrection of our king, Jesus.

PRAISE AND PLAYLISTS

If you'd like to incorporate worship into this process, you can take a look at our YouTube, Spotify and iTunes playlists where we've compiled songs that capture the themes of this week.

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these playlists.



Sunday

The Triumphal Entry



Triumphal Entry | Artist: Angela Spegal



Sunday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

John 12:12-19, Zechariah 9:9

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

During the Passover season, Jerusalem was a city filled to the breaking point. Scholars estimate the population of the region during this festival swelled from 50,000 to 120,000. Even the capitol of King David was ill-equipped to deal with all of the visitors. Often, people filled the hillsides and lived in tents on the outskirts of town because there wasn't enough room for everyone to be in the city limits at the same time. It's into this scene that Jesus rode on a donkey, at the beginning of His final week.

The crowds had been following Jesus from Bethany. Many of them gathered to hail this prophet from Nazareth as the, "Son of David" and the rightful king of Israel. In part, it was because Jesus had intentionally crafted this moment to mirror the enthronement of King Solomon in 1 Kings 1. The symbolism was unmistakable: a man from the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, riding into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on a donkey. For those who knew their Old Testaments, it could only mean one thing: this was a king coming for His kingdom. Of course, "Palm Sunday" gets its name because the crowds didn't just meet Jesus along the road, they pulled the palm branches from the trees in the surrounding area and waved them as He passed by.

The significance of such a practice is often lost on us, so, in these situations, historical context is critical. Palm branches were to Israel what the bald eagle is to Americans: a symbol of our country and an image that conjured patriotic thoughts of freedom. In the past, when

Israel had overthrown their oppressors, they often printed new currency and stamped the coins with palm branches, just like our quarters have eagles on them. The palm branches say something about what the crowds expected Jesus to do as He rode into Jerusalem: overthrow Rome and set Himself up as the true king. Palm Sunday shows us a people who think Jesus is the sort of king that will bring political revolution. Jesus, however, is not the sort of ruler they expect. He didn't arrive on a horse or in a chariot as was customary for kings entering into battle. Instead, Christ appears on a donkey, to fulfill the words of Zechariah.

In short, Jesus defies their expectations and turns things upside down.

Maybe you've experienced something like this in your own heart: you want Jesus on your terms, you've been waving your palm branches. It's time to lay them down, stop making demands of Christ, and receive Jesus on His terms.

Although the crowds are confused about Jesus' mission, they kept chanting a phrase, "Hosanna!" In ancient Hebrew, it roughly translates to, "save us now." The irony is this is precisely why Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem. The crowds think salvation means freedom from Rome, but Jesus' mission is much more significant, and his enemy far more powerful than Caesar. The King entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, but His kingdom was not of this world. He has come to answer His people's plea, "save us now," but this will be a salvation infinitely more glorious and far more costly than driving out the Romans. The crowds on Palm Sunday somehow managed to understand exactly who Jesus was, and in equal fashion, completely misunderstand Him as well. It's not that they've expected too much of Him, but too little.

The carpenter from Nazareth is not just the king of Israel, but the whole cosmos.

The Son of David will not just free His people from bondage to Rome, but the corruption of sin and the tyranny of death itself.

He is not the sort of king we expected, but He is the sort of king we need.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) What characteristics come to mind when you think of a king? How is Jesus similar and dissimilar from those?
- 2.) Are there any, “Palm branches” you need to lay down in your walk with Christ?
- 3.) What does it mean to accept Jesus on His terms?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

Lord, forgive us for our shortsightedness. We often come to You with palm branches in hand. We often desire from You things that fall far short of Your plan for us.

As we draw near to You this week, transform our minds and change our hearts. Teach us to accept You as our king on Your terms. Thank you for being the God who saves, and Who does not give us everything we want, but is always willing to give us what we need. Amen

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

Palm Sunday- The Triumphal Entry

- *Again I Say Rejoice*- Israel Houghton
- *Who is Like the Lord*- Highlands Worship
- *Bless Your Name*- Mission House



Monday

The Lord In His Temple





Monday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

Matthew 21:12-17, Isaiah 56:6-7

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

Today, there are little more than ruins where the Jewish temple once stood. The only portion that remains intact is the western segment of the outer wall that encircled the Temple Mount. However, things were remarkably different in the days of Jesus.

The temple was an overwhelming spectacle to behold. Surrounding the structure itself was a complex the size of 12 soccer fields stretched end-to-end; it was complete with markets, guards, and a Passover crowd that had traveled from far and wide to see Judaism's most holy site. Jesus entered the scene and what he observed in His Father's house stoked a fiercely righteous anger. He fashioned a makeshift whip, and began to throw over the tables as He drove the sellers away from the outer court. What we find in this story is not the Jesus we see portrayed in *Precious Moments* greeting cards or paintings of a quiet man in pastel robes; instead, we watch the Lord of all creation exhibiting the full range of righteous anger. But what is He up to? What is it about this event that makes it so crucial that every gospel writer mentions it?

Because of the size of the temple district, Jesus could never have shut the whole thing down on his own. It's possible that many on the other side of the complex didn't even notice a commotion. So the intention was not to bring the work of a temple to a halt. It seems the goal was to make a statement. A symbolic action to send a clear message.

To our benefit, Jesus doesn't leave us to decipher His actions on our own. As He drove out the money changers, He reminded them of what the Scriptures said: *The house of God will be a house of prayer for the nations.* Jesus was paraphrasing Isaiah 56:6-7, and a bit of history will help us make sense of why. The location where Jesus overturned the tables was known as the, "Court of the Gentiles." This was the section of the temple set aside so that non-Jewish people could come to pray and to worship the God of Israel. At the time, it was the closest they were allowed to be to the one true God.

What did Jesus find there? Instead of gentiles worshiping God, He found "a den of robbers." There was commerce and trade, and money changing, but no space for prayer or praise. It's not that there was anything wrong with buying and selling, but this was not the place for it. When people came to worship, there was no room for them; they encountered a flea market instead of an area of transcendence.

This is what made Jesus angry: Israel had not taken seriously Her mission to bless the nations. The space prepared for the non-Jewish world to encounter the Lord of all the earth was a storage closet and a marketplace, not a house of prayer. God's people stood in the way of others encountering Him, and Jesus was outraged.

It's interesting to note that in driving out the traders and merchants, Jesus was also fulfilling the promise of Zechariah 14:

on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the Lord." And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.

Zechariah sees a day where there will no longer be those who sell and trade in the house of the Lord because the glory of God will so fill the earth that He will be worshiped in every single home, not just the Temple Mount. As Jesus drives out the money changers, He is signaling such a day has finally come. The mission of Jesus was (and is) to fill the earth with the glory of God. The temple in Jerusalem had not been a house of prayer for the nations, and so Christ came to gather all people around the temple of his body.

All of this invites us to reflect on our own lives. Where have we stood in the way of others encountering Christ? How have we failed to take our marching orders seriously as the church, to make disciples of all nations? God's mission has always been to reclaim every tribe and tongue from the tyranny of sin, Satan, and idolatry. The way He has chose to do that is

by selecting a particular people to serve as his ambassadors to the wider world. This happened first in the nation of Israel, and now the Church. Israel failed in that vocation, and the incarnate Son would not stand for it any longer. Nor will He stand for it now, He is still in the business of overturning tables until the knowledge of the glory of God covers the earth as far as the east is from the west.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) How does Jesus' anger at the temple compare to the way He has been depicted in pop culture?
- 2.) What are some of the ways the church stands in the way of others encountering Christ?
- 3.) Are there any areas of your life where Jesus might be interested in, "turning over tables?"

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

Lord, please cleanse the temple of my heart. I have allowed it to become cluttered and unwelcoming, filled with sin, fear, and doubt. Make my heart a worthy dwelling place for Your Holy Spirit. Reveal to me the ways I have been an unnecessary stumbling block for those seeking to know You. Turn my gaze outward to the world, and give me a desire to see others know You, obey You, and glorify You. Amen

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

Monday- The Lord in His Temple

- *Psalm 51 (Wisdom in the Secret Heart)*- Shane and Shane
- *God be Merciful To Me (Psalm 51)*- Keith and Kristyn Getty
- *This is Your House*- New Vision Worship



Tuesday

David's Lord





Tuesday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

Luke 20:1-47

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

In his book, “Questioning Evangelism,” Randy Newman points out that Jesus asks more questions than He answers. Jesus seems to teach people precisely by asking them questions rather than giving things away all at once.

After causing an uproar the previous day, Jesus returns to the temple, where the religious authorities immediately confronted Him. As is so often the case, they tried to trap Him with questions, the first of which relates to the commotion Jesus caused on Monday, “By what authority are you doing these things?” Behind that question is a deeper one, “What gives you the right to make a mess of our temple and our customs?” Jesus answered that question with another,

“Was the baptism of John from Heaven or from man?”

With that, the Pharisees were trapped. If they acknowledged that John’s message was divine, then they have answered their question about where Jesus’ authority comes from: He was the messiah. But if they dismissed John as a misguided zealot, well...the crowds wouldn’t stand for that. So they concluded with a shrug and declined to comment. Jesus, in turn, refused to answer them directly, but in the parables that follow, He indicts the religious elite and further explains who He is and what He’s come to do. Nestled in between his parables in Luke’s gospel, Jesus answers their question. But He answers by asking rather than making

pronouncements.

The crowds had hailed Jesus as the son of David, and that much was true. However, David had spoken of the messiah in Psalm 110, and He had referred to this shadowy figure as his Lord. So who is the Messiah? David's son, or David's Lord? The answer from Scripture seems to be both, and if He is David's Lord, then Jesus of Nazareth has every right to come to the temple and overthrow the customs in place. The world, and all that fills it, belongs to Him.

Jesus confronted the Pharisees and Sadducees with the same question He levies at each and every one of us: Who do you say I am?

Nothing could be more important than how we answer that. Is this prophet from Nazareth both the son of David and also his Lord? The gospel authors don't leave any room for doubt about that. And if that is true, then everything in our lives must be re-oriented around this man. He also has the right to drive out the habits, customs, and practices in our lives that do not bring Him honor.

By this point in the week, the dire nature of the situation would have been more apparent to the apostles. Christ had already attracted the attention of the Romans with his triumphal entry from the Mount of Olives. Now, through his actions at the temple, He had provoked the disdain of the Jewish religious establishment. All of Jerusalem had become a powder keg and Jesus appeared to be the spark that would set it off. Passover could only end in one of two ways: with Jesus being crowned as king or killed as a rebel.

It appeared that these were the only options, but God delights in subverting our either/or dichotomy. The apostles could never have imagined that Christ would experience both at the same time.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) What are some of the ways that culture answers Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?"
- 2.) Are there any ways that your answer to Jesus' question have been more influenced by culture than by Scripture?
- 3.) What does it mean for Jesus to be our Lord?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

Jesus, we confess that often we have called You Lord, but failed to live as though that were true. Break through our hearts of stone. Teach us obedience. Holy Spirit, keep us from being those who only honor Christ with our lips. Day by day, we ask you to teach us to set apart Jesus as Lord, and walk in the way of obedience. Amen

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

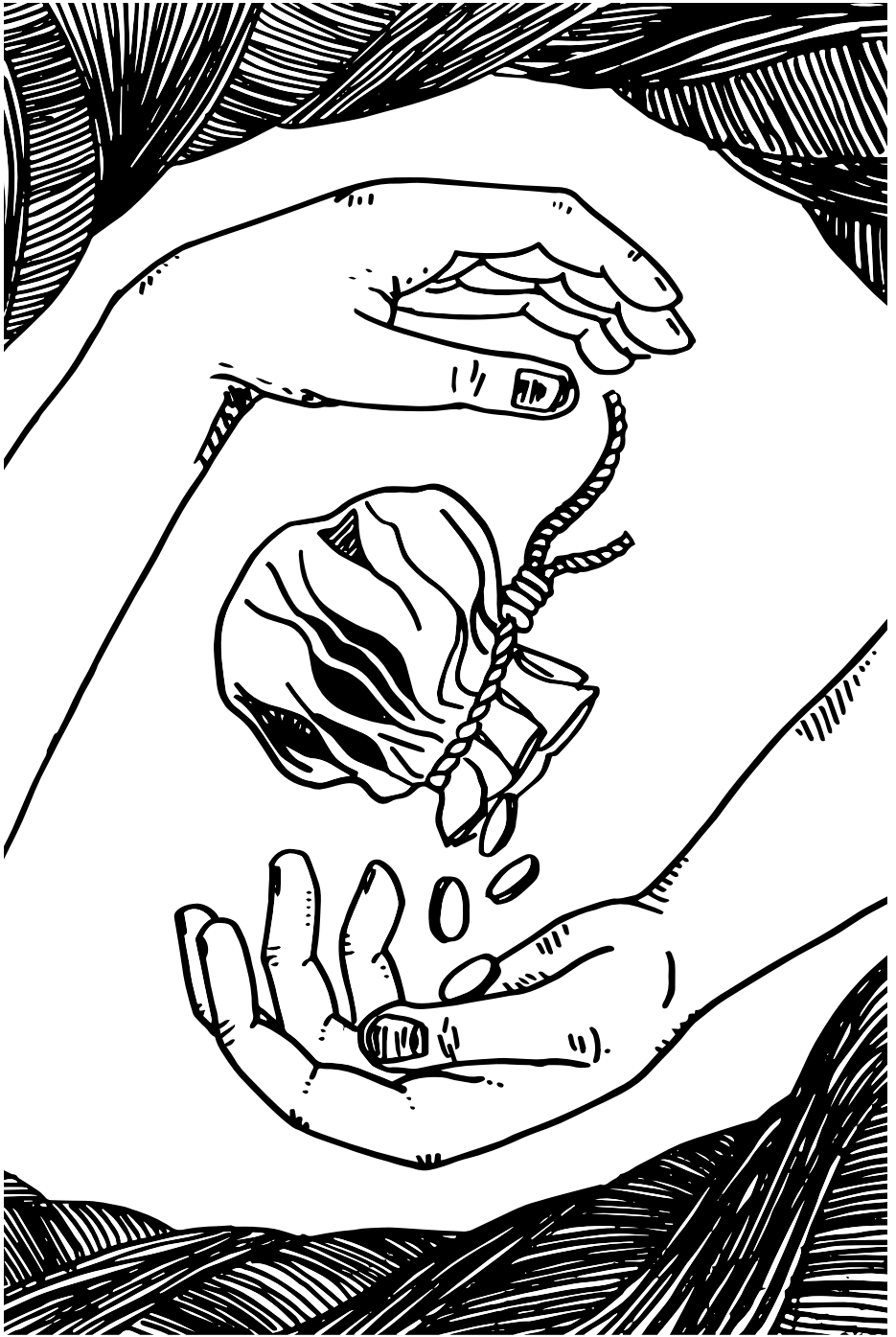
Tuesday- David's Lord

- *Lord of Lords*- Hillsong Worship
- *All I Have is Christ*- Sovereign Grace Music



Wednesday

The Son of Man Is Betrayed



The Son of Man Betrayed | Artist: Angela Spegal



Wednesday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

Luke 22:1-6

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

According to Luke's gospel, Jesus continued to teach the crowds the next day following his confrontation with Israel's religious leaders. Behind the scenes, however, the situation had become dire. The high priest and religious elites had decided Jesus must die. He posed too high a risk and was little more than another misguided leader in a long line of false messiahs. Though the apostles didn't put the pieces together until later, there was someone among them willing to facilitate this: Judas Iscariot.

The apostle John looks back on his relationship with Judas in his gospel. After Jesus was anointed with expensive perfume at Bethany, Judas expressed outrage because the money could have been given to the poor instead. In hindsight, John reflects on Judas' character, "he said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief." It will be Judas' love of money that leads him into the chambers of the high priest on Wednesday evening, where he agreed to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. These actions resonate with many of the Old Testament texts.

Jesus was not the first innocent man in Scripture betrayed for silver.

It happened to Joseph, all the way back in the book of Genesis.

In their jealousy and anger, his brothers sold him into the tyranny of Egypt, with the full expectation that he would die. But in God's providence, it was precisely the betrayal of Joseph that brought about the salvation of God's people. So it is with Judas; it is through his betrayal

of Christ that Jesus brings redemption for His people.

What man means for evil, God means for good.

But there's another player involved in the drama unfolding. Luke offers unique insight into the plan at work behind the plot Judas and the high priest establish. It is Luke that tells us, "Satan entered into Judas" as the money changed hands. This might raise all sorts of questions about free will, and Judas' part of the broader story. While these are good and right topics of conversation, it is most important to acknowledge a fundamental truth illuminated here; the betrayal of Jesus is a satanic action. Christ's betrayal is not an ordinary instance of political cunning; it is an act of demonic evil. Yet, somehow it is also part of the plan of God before the foundations of the world:

What Satan means for evil, God means for good.

Perhaps this is why Peter Kreeft can refer to the cross as, "Judo." This was an event in which "the enemy's own power is used to defeat him."

Easy, though it may be, for us to look upon Judas with disgust, his story is our own. When we shake our heads at Judas, we condemn ourselves. Because we all, like Judas, have participated in the demonic treason of betraying Christ. With each act of sin, we hold out our hands to receive 30 pieces of silver and turn our backs on the Lord of creation. To consider the betrayal of Judas is to be confronted with the true evil and horror of sin. But it is also an invitation to see the power and sovereignty of God.

Because what we have meant for evil, God will use for good.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) Are there any areas in your own life where you have seen God use evil for good?
- 2.) How does the cross assure us that God works, "All things together for the good of those who love Him"?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

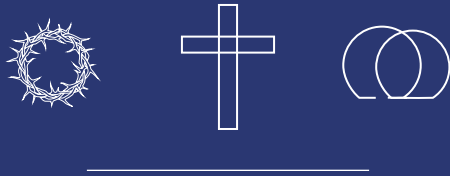
Father, we often read the story of Judas with disdain, failing to realize that we are every bit as guilty as he is. Forgive us for turning our back on Christ, and settling for sins that cannot satisfy. Thank you, Lord, that in your mercy you take what is evil and use it for good. Holy Spirit, where we are ashamed, remind us that Christ is faithful even when we are faithless. Amen

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

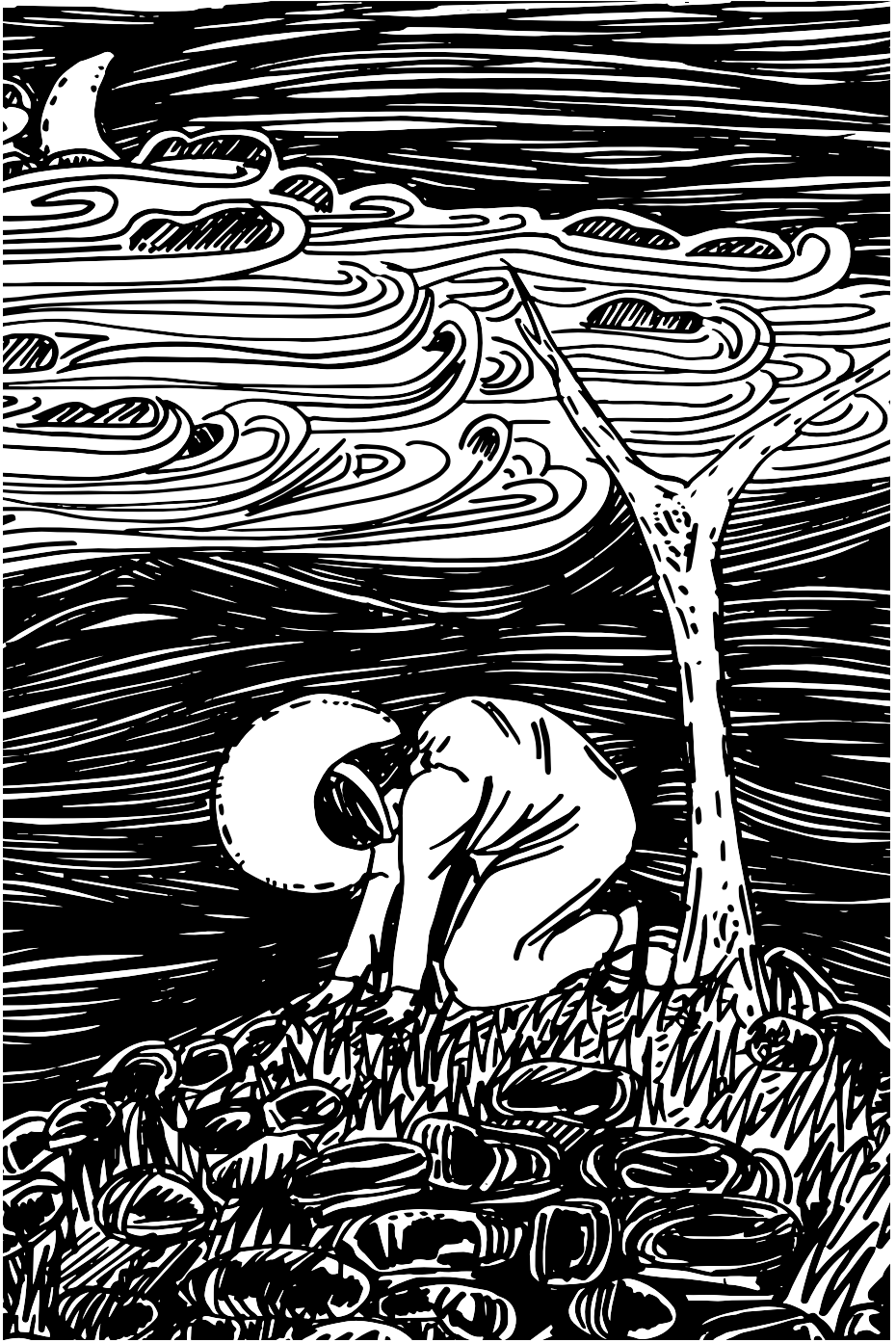
Wednesday- The Son of Man Is Betrayed

- *Kyrie Eleison (A Song of Confession)*- Vineyard Worship
- *His Mercy is More*- Matt Papa and Matt Boswell



Thursday

Agony In The Garden



Agony in the Garden | Artist: Angela Spegal



Thursday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

Matthew 26:17-46

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

As Thursday dawned, Jesus sent several of his disciples into the city to begin preparations for the Passover meal. The orders were explicit; follow a man carrying a jar of water, to an upper room, where they would celebrate the ancient Jewish custom.

A man carrying a jar of water was easy enough to find, even in the crowded streets of Jerusalem. This was an uncommon cultural practice and would have stood out to the disciples. This has led many scholars to believe that Jesus had worked out an arrangement with their Passover host previously.

Looming in the back of their minds, however, was something Jesus had said to them before they began their day...

“My time is at hand.”

Throughout his ministry, Jesus had continually anticipated this hour. Often, He refused to speak or act in specific ways because his time had not yet come, but now things had changed. This was the appointed time where his purpose and mission would be revealed with clarity. The disciples likely expected revolutionary talk to dominate this Passover meal. They anticipated a political kingdom. Perhaps, this is why Luke tells us they spent a portion of their final meal with Jesus squabbling over who would occupy positions of authority. It is John who informs us that Jesus showed the disciples what power would look like in the kingdom,

as He washed their feet.

Far from discussing a political revolution, Jesus threw his twelve disciples into turmoil when He announced, "One of you is going to betray me." Immediately, a murmur spread through the group. Was this another parable? How did He know this, and who could it be? At long last, Jesus was speaking plainly. You can imagine Judas' anxiety as He asked Jesus, "Is it I, Lord?"

"You have said so," was his lord's reply, and with that, Judas fled into the night. Our darkest secrets are never truly hidden in Christ's presence. Judas' agreement with the priests did not occur without Jesus' awareness.

As the meal drew to a close, Jesus led his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane; a place that the disciples had often gathered with Jesus to pray. The garden was on a mountain east of Jerusalem. This mountain had a long and storied history. During the reign of King Solomon, it was dedicated to the Canaanite god, Moloch, a deity worshiped through child sacrifice. The Old Testament often warned against Israel casting their children into the ritual fires of Moloch, but Solomon had ignored this command. Idols always make demands of us that are cruel.

Beneath the ground where Jesus stood were the bones of the sons and daughters of Israel who had been murdered in the service of idols, with Solomon leading the charge. With time running short, Jesus left the disciples behind and asked them to pray, as He entered the heart of Gethsemane alone to plead with his Father. Overcome by grief, He collapsed on the ground.

"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; never the less, not as I will but as you will."

But the only response was silence.

"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

Still nothing.

The Father's silence speaks a profound word to us. Jesus stands on the hill where another son of David once sacrificed the children of Israel to a false god. But now, with his time at hand, in the silence of the Father, and the agony of the son, the one true God speaks clearly: I do not ask for your sons, as the idols do, but I have offered my own in your place.

Once Jesus made his way back to the disciples, He found them asleep once again, oblivious to his agony. The apostles were no different than we so often are, completely unaware of the profound price paid on our behalf. After waking them, He issued a final warning; Judas had returned with a detachment of temple guards, the betrayer was at hand, and the eternal Son prepared Himself to be cast into the fire.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) What are some of the contemporary idols in our culture?
- 2.) Are there any idols in your life which have made cruel demands?
- 3.) How does the work of Jesus set us free from these idols?
- 4.) Even what Judas does in secret is not a secret to Christ. What are areas of sin that you need to address and bring before the Lord?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

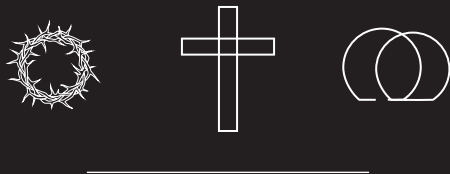
Father, we thank you that you always Hear us. It is because of your Son's faithfulness that we can call on You, and claim you as our Father. Impress upon us the cost of salvation, that in order to redeem us, slaves to sin, You sent Your Son, Christ, thank You that You were obedient to the will of Your Father, even until the end. Rid us of our idols, and the false beliefs that hold us captive. Holy Spirit, we ask that You would give us the strength to say with Jesus, "Thy will be done." Amen.

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

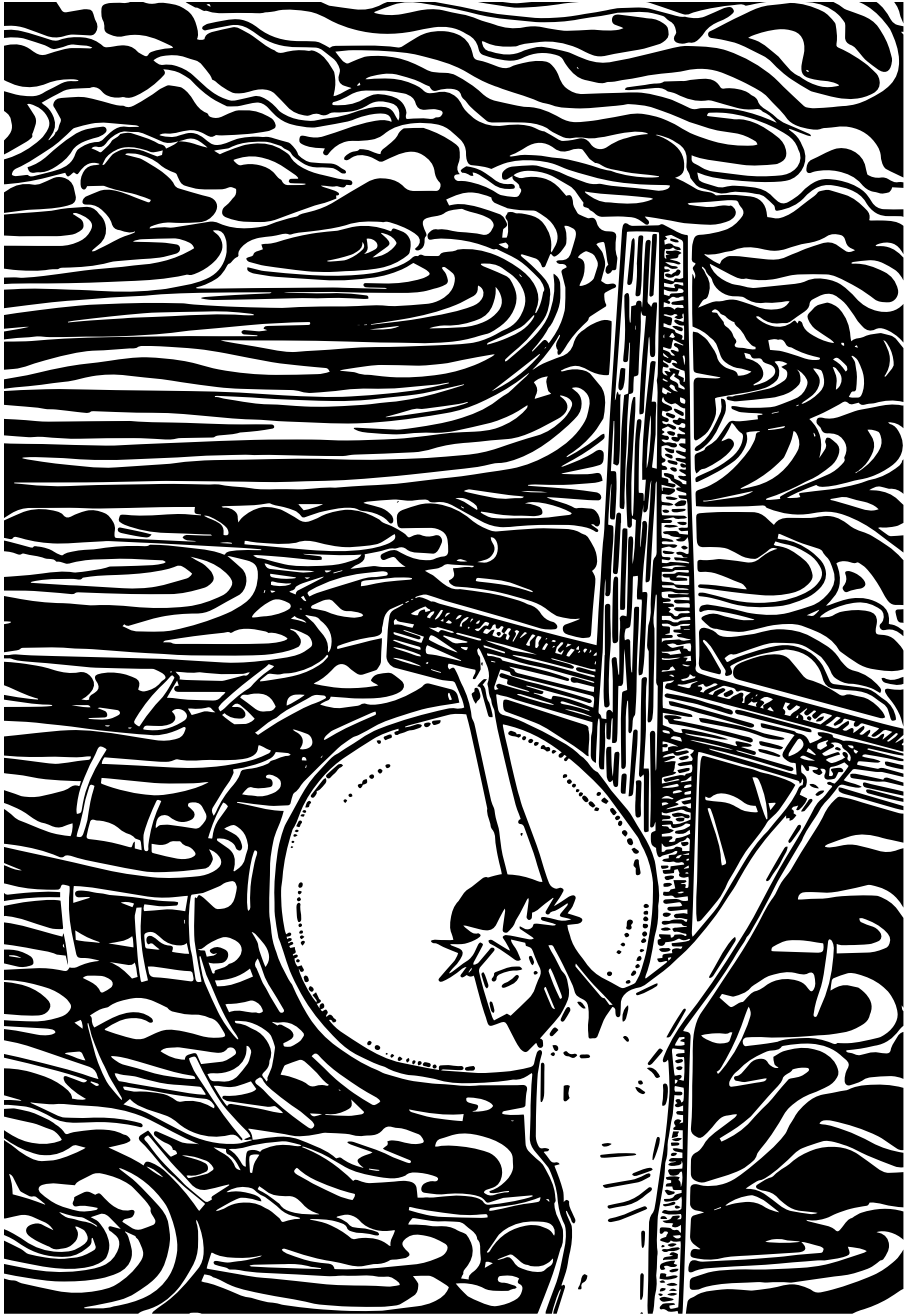
Thursday- Agony in the Garden

- *Carried to the Table*- Leeland
- *Your Will Be Done*- CityAlight



Friday

The Crucified King



The Crucified King | Artist: Angela Spegal



Friday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

John 19:1-30

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

“I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the one Nietzsche ridiculed as, “God on the cross.” - John Scott

The betrayal and arrest of Jesus took place sometime between the evening of Maundy Thursday and the early morning hours of what we now call, “Good Friday.” Judas, like Adam before Him, betrayed his God in a garden. But Jesus was not a victim of circumstance or political cunning. This much is apparent from the moment He gazed into the eyes of Judas and says softly, “Friend, do what you’ve come to do.” It is clearer still when He rebukes Peter for drawing his sword to fight back, and warns Him that what is about to take place is necessary to fulfill the Scriptures.

With that, the disciples fled, and Jesus was left alone with his captors.

What follows after that is complicated. Jesus was led to the house of the high priest and formally charged under Jewish law for blasphemy. Because Rome alone possessed the power to render the death penalty, they led Him to Pilate’s home. Pilate was unwilling to convict and placed the burden on Herod. Herod, in turn, had no interest in anything other than seeing Jesus perform miracles, and sent Him back to Pilate.

The Gospel of John chooses not to focus on this legal game of hot potato, and instead focuses specifically on Jesus’ interaction with Pontius Pilate.

History shows us Pilate was a ruthless man, eager to shed blood if it maintained Rome's power. This makes his caution towards Jesus all the more striking; even this calloused legionnaire could not help but be taken aback by the figure standing before Him. There is a sense of insecurity in his voice as He tries to communicate his political power, to intimidate his prisoner into speaking, begging, or pleading for his life:

“You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”

Jesus' response is stark, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.”

Far too often Jesus has been depicted as the victim, dragged to the cross by the powers that be.

The gospels will not let us entertain such a fantasy.

At no point, from the garden of Gethsemane onward, does Jesus ever lose control of the situation. Despite Pontius Pilate's frail attempt at clinging to a semblance of earthly authority, Jesus' response makes it clear, “I am here because I chose to be, not because you have any authority over me.” Christ's life does not even rest in the hands of the crowds that chanted, “Crucify Him.” No one takes His life from Him; Christ lays it down of His own accord. Once Pilate reached his decision, Jesus was led outside of the city of Jerusalem to a hill called Golgotha where He was crucified. In Roman society, crucifixion was a death reserved for rebels and insurrectionists. The goal of the cross was to show those who looked on that the victim was subhuman. In Jewish theology, death on a tree was a sign of God's curse. Somehow, in the mysterious providence of God, Jesus' death absorbs the meaning of crucifixion in each of these cultures.

Marred beyond recognition, Christ is treated as less than human, because sin is dehumanizing.

Hanging on the tree, He absorbs the divine curse of mortality on behalf of transgressors.

As He gave up his spirit, He died a rebel's death in the place of those who have rebelled against God.

Many have tried to capture the meaning of the cross, but when we are honest, we must admit that all of our words fail to explain how profound this event is. We are not reduced to silence, quite the opposite. We will never be able to say enough. All of the words, in all of the books, in all

of the world, could never capture the power, the horror, the beauty, and the glory of the cross. On Golgotha, God satisfies His own wrath against sinners, shatters the power of Satan, fulfills the mission of Israel, blesses the nations, accomplishes salvation, and destroys death itself. Even then, there is far more to say. But perhaps it's best to end with this:

On this day, the source of all goodness bore the consequence for all evil, the standard of all beauty was disfigured beyond recognition, and the Author of all life gave Himself over to the grave.

By 3pm on Friday afternoon, the man celebrated as king on Palm Sunday now crowned with thorns, lowered his head, and Jesus of Nazareth breathed his last.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) How would you answer the question, "Why did Jesus have to die?"
- 2.) How does John show that Jesus is in control of the situation, even as He dies?
- 3.) In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul made it his mission to know nothing except Christ crucified, why is the cross central to the gospel?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

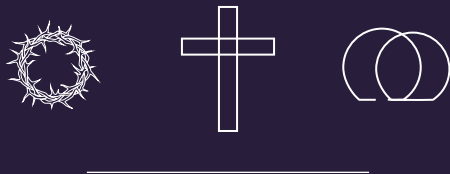
Almighty God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, teach us to put to death our own sins. Remind us of the glory, power, and necessity of the cross, and forgive us of the ways that we have taken it for granted. Grant us the courage we need to declare the mystery of Christ crucified and to live in light of his resurrection. Amen.

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

Good Friday- The Crucified King

- *Man of Sorrows*- Ellie Holcomb
- *Lead Me To The Cross*- Hillsong
- *How Can It Be*- Lauren Daigle
- *Jesus Paid It All*- Passion



Saturday

He Descended To The Dead



Decent into Death | Artist: Angela Spegal



Saturday

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

Acts 2:24-27

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

From an earthly perspective, we know very little about what took place on the day following Jesus' crucifixion. Scripture does not explain what transpired, or the conversations that the disciples had on Saturday. Though we are firmly in the realm of speculation, it's safe to assume that John, along with Mary, relayed Jesus' final words to the apostles, most of whom were in hiding for fear of suffering a similar fate.

Those words, "It is finished," must have haunted them. To the 11, it was an admission of defeat: all of the promise of the kingdom of God had been in vain. There could be no kingdom without a king. And who were they to believe that simple fishermen from Galilee could have been a part of God's mission in the world? No doubt, they pondered how they would explain to their families that the man each had left everything to follow was not who they thought He was. The disciple's dreams and hopes died with Jesus on the cross, and they were left behind to pick up the pieces.

For this reason, "Holy Saturday" has come to be seen as a way of describing the inevitable battle with doubt that every Christian faces. There are days, even now, when it feels as though Jesus will remain in the tomb forever, and we feel foolish for having believed in the promise of resurrection, and forgiveness, and grace.

But while the disciples doubt, Jesus is at work. Christians, the world over, have offered their perspectives on what took place on Holy Saturday. One of the earliest explanations comes in the apostle's creed, which says,

“He descended to the dead.” Whatever that might have looked like, Jesus explains to John the final result of his time spent in the grave, “I died, and behold I am alive forever more, and I hold the keys to death and hades.” While the apostles think that hope is lost, and the power of death has won, it is the exact opposite. By entering into death, Christ destroyed it.

The grave cannot keep Him, and the gates of Hell cannot prevail against Him. Nor will they triumph over those who belong to Jesus. Holy Saturday is a moment that each of us will pass through at various points in our lives, but it is never ultimate.

The tomb does not speak the final word over Jesus, and it will not speak the final word over us.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) In Revelation 1:17-18, Jesus says that He now holds the keys to death and hades. What does this mean?
- 2.) How does Jesus’ death offer comfort for us as we face death?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

Lord, I confess that often You have been at work, even when I couldn’t see it. Thank You for subduing my enemies, and delivering me even while I was full of fear like the disciples. Christ, even now You are at work, interceding for me at the right hand of the Father. I’m grateful to know that You are always active, even when I’m unaware. Teach me to trust in Your goodness in the midst of my own Holy Saturdays, and look with confidence towards resurrection.

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

Holy Saturday

- *Washed by the Blood*- CityAlight
- *The Story I’ll Tell*- Maverick City Music



Sunday

Christos Anesti





Sunday

PERSONAL STUDY

SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the following passages of Scripture:

John 20:1-21

COMMENTARY

As you reflect on these passages, read over the commentary below:

Jesus' earthly ministry begins and ends with a virgin birth.

The first takes place in Bethlehem, as Christ is born from the womb of Mary, who had not yet known her husband. The second is in a garden in Jerusalem where Christ emerges as firstborn from the dead, out from the tomb of Joseph of Arimethia, a place where no body had yet been laid.

But Easter Sunday did not begin that way; it began in darkness. Because of the rush to prepare for the sabbath, Jesus' body had been placed in the tomb with haste. So, in the cool morning air, Mary Magdalene and several other women who had followed Jesus made their way to the tomb in order to properly prepare the body for burial. What they found looked like a crime scene; the stone was rolled away, the grave clothes lay empty, with no sign of the Roman guards who had been stationed there previously.

This was insult to injury: it was not enough that they had murdered Jesus. His enemies would not even let his body rest in peace .

In a frenzy, the apostles traveled back and forth between the tomb, in disbelief and shock. First John, then Peter. But in the midst of all of this Mary remained at the grave, overcome with grief, unable to process what she had found. There comes a point where we simply can't take any more disappointment.

It is here that the risen Christ met her. Through her tears, she noticed the angels in the tomb, and then Heard a voice from behind her, “Why are you weeping?” In the midst of grief, she could not recognize the one speaking. Perhaps He looked familiar, but she had remained at the foot of the cross when all the disciples had fled. Her last memory of Jesus’ face was one that was marred beyond recognition. This was not the same man, how could it be?

Then He called out her name, “Mary.” That was when she knew.

Mary, through her tears, became the first to see the risen Christ and this has become a pattern throughout the ages. It is always the brokenhearted who are the first to feel Christ’s resurrection power.

Shortly after Mary announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, they gathered in secret, no doubt to discuss the rumors that had begun to circulate. With the doors locked, Jesus suddenly appeared among them. There was no sign of forced entry and no slight of hand. He was simply there, and with that, the room erupted into chaos. It was into this that Jesus spoke his first words to the disciples, “Peace be with you” and He showed them the wounds on his hands and his side. Jesus’ greeting was customary among Jewish people in his day. The word, “Shalom” translated in English as, “Peace,” implied a prosperity, joy, and comfort that came as a result of God’s favor.

As Jesus held out his hands, this customary greeting finally reached it’s fullness. The wounds in his palms and in his side have become the basis for true shalom; it is his death and resurrection that brings true peace, and assures us of God’s care. Finally, after years of teaching and countless hours spent in conversation, the disciples began to understand the mission of Jesus. No sooner had it begun than Jesus commissioned them to go and declare the mystery of faith. Just as Christ was sent by the Father into the world, the risen Christ commissions His people to go into the world and declare the mystery of the Gospel, and to rejoice in the Lord’s triumph over death.

We, too, are called to bear witness, to testify to the resurrection of the King, and his victory over sin, darkness, and death.

So, we reach the end of Holy Week. But it ends with a beginning.

The world that was made in 7 days has been made new through the events of this week. Things are not the same as they were before. This is why Jesus was raised on the “first day.” As if to say, that in the resurrection, a new creation has begun to emerge with Christ as the firstborn. In a world as seemingly as barren as a virgins womb, life has sprung forth.

In light of that we wait, longing for the day which Christ will call us by name and all of creation will emerge from its tomb into resurrection life. On that day, there will be no more tears, and all that is sad will become untrue.

These things are not hopes or dreams; they are certainties. They are as certain as the resurrection of Jesus, and for that reason, on this day, the church the world over celebrates: THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Answer these on your own or discuss them as a family:

- 1.) Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that all of Christianity depends on the resurrection of Jesus. Why is the Easter Sunday so important?
- 2.) How does the resurrection of Jesus change the way that we approach our day to day lives?
- 3.) What are some ways that you and your family can celebrate the resurrection of Christ today?

PRAYER

Take some time to pray through the themes for today. You can say something like this:

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O Father, is Your mercy and kindness towards us. To redeem a slave, You gave Your son. Through Jesus' death and resurrection You have restored our relationship with You. Forgive us for the times that we have taken salvation for granted. Holy Spirit renew our passion for the gospel, and our desire to live as resurrection people. On this day, remind the Church again that Christ is risen indeed, and send us into the word to declare this good news.

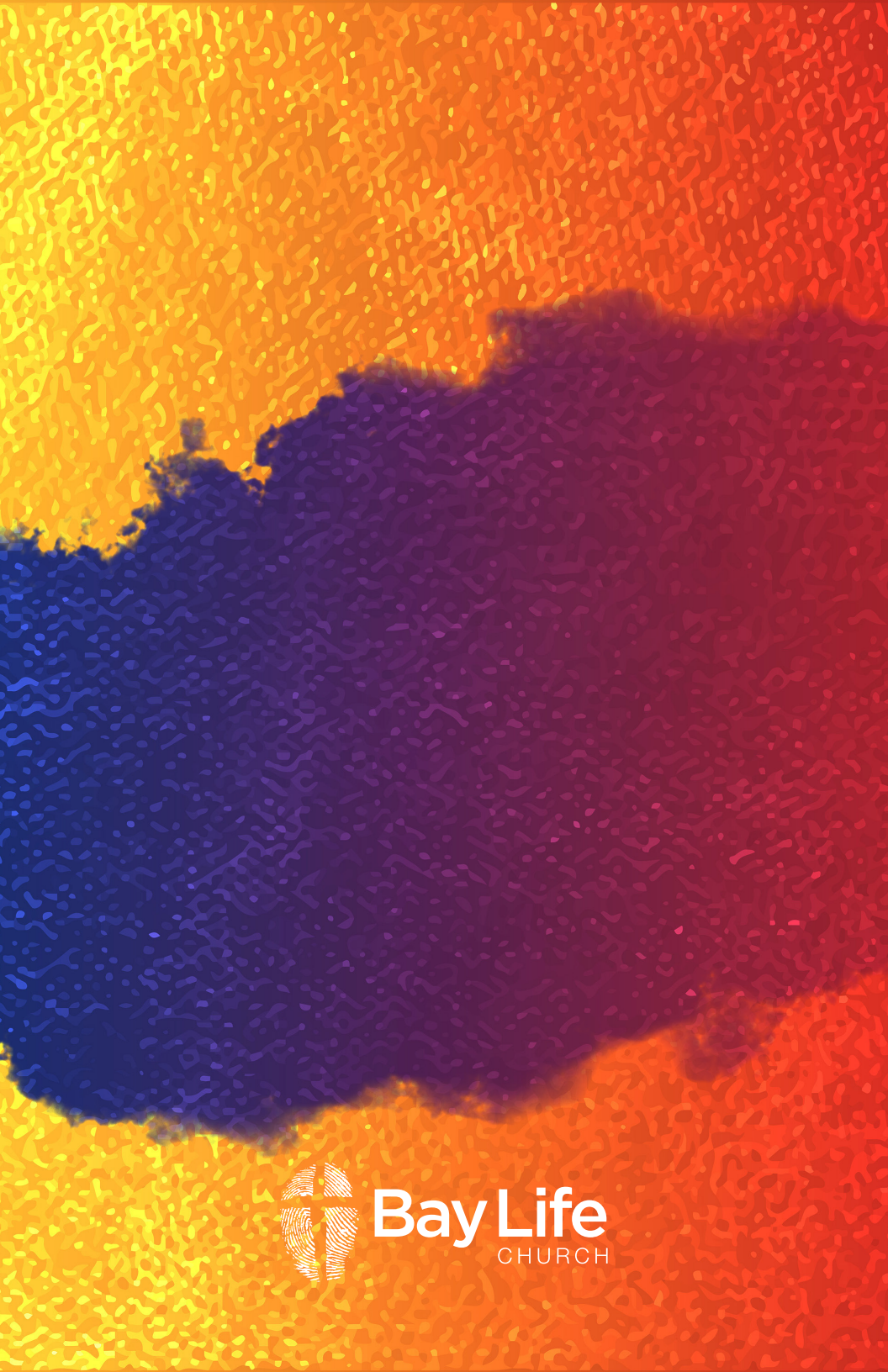
(This prayer has been adapted from "The Great Vigil of Easter" found in the book of common prayer.)

WORSHIP

Go to baylife.org/easter for quick links to these songs.

Resurrection Sunday

- *Our God is Alive*- Austin Stone Worship
- *His Heart Beats*- Andrew Peterson
- *Opened Up the Heavens*- Isla Vista Worship
- *Resurrecting*- Elevation Worship



Bay Life
CHURCH