

Devotions for the Week of March 25, 2018

LARGE-PRINT

Palm/Passion Sunday

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, March 25, 2018

Read John 12:12-19 and Luke 19:28-44.

Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem, palms waving, coats being thrown on the road, people cheering, “*Hosanna... Blessed Is He Who Comes In The Name Of The Lord.*” I can see Jesus, smiling, joyous...the Pharisees tell him to stop the people from shouting and he replies, “*If they keep quiet, these stones will start shouting.*” All the universe is shouting as Jesus enters His place of sacrifice...as Jesus takes the next step, the final steps, to bring redemption to humankind.

Riding humbly on a donkey, Jesus enters Jerusalem, as fulfillment of the nation’s hopes, answering their longings for a king who would bring peace to earth from heaven itself. Jesus understands why there needs to be a celebration; He is coming to bring God’s salvation. The crowds don’t quite understand how this is to come about...they’re still expecting a king that will rise up and slay the oppressor, lead the rebellion...a few days later, many in the crowd, shouting and waving palms, will be confused, puzzled, and distressed. Wasn’t Jesus the one?

Two thoughts...

First, we see the men and women lined up along the road into Jerusalem, praising Jesus, waving palms, believing Jesus is about to come in and do what they want, lead the rebellion, be the rightful king instead of the Roman oppressor. Tom Wright, in his commentary, Luke For Everyone, writes, “*Are we going*

along for the trip in the hope that Jesus will fulfill some of our hopes and desires? Are we ready to sing a psalm of praise, but only as long as Jesus seems to be doing what we want? Are we ready not only to spread our cloaks on the road in front of him, to do the showy and flamboyant thing, but also now to follow him into trouble, controversy, trial and death?"

Secondly, Max Lucado, in his book, And the Angels Were Silent, asks about the gentleman, the family, that gave Jesus the donkey to ride. Lucado asks, *"How did you know? How did you know it was Jesus who needed a donkey? Was it hard to give? Was it difficult to give something to Jesus for Him to use? Sometimes I get the impression that God wants me to give him something and sometimes I don't give it because I don't know for sure, and then I feel bad because I've missed my chance. Other times I know he wants something but I don't give it because I'm too selfish. And other times, too few times, I hear him and I obey him and feel honored that a gift of mine would be used to carry Jesus into another place. And still other times I wonder if my little deeds today will make a difference in the long haul. All of us have a donkey. You and I each have something in our lives, which, if given to God, could, like the donkey, move Jesus and his story further down the road. Maybe you can sing, or hug or program a computer or speak Swahili or write a check. Whichever, that's your donkey. Whichever, your donkey belongs to Him."*

What is God calling you to give? What is your donkey? Are you ready to sacrifice, to follow, to begin to give up your wants for His wants for your life? How will you place Jesus more at the forefront of your life in the year to come? Take time to pray and think about the sacrifice God is asking of you.

Monday, March 26, 2018

Read Matthew 21:12-17, Luke 19:45-48; John 12:23-36.

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on a Sunday. On Monday, Jesus went to the Temple and cleared it of moneychangers and hypocrites. Remember it was Passover week and people from all over Israel would travel to Jerusalem in order to meet two requirements in the Temple. First, an animal sacrifice, usually a dove. And secondly, they had to pay a temple tax, due every year, paid in local currency.

Jesus, in John 12:23-36, knew He had to soon suffer...He knew that His path did not lead to rebellion but to submission, not to war but to love, not to fighting but to surrender on a wooden cross. Before that walk to Calvary, Jesus' compassion for the people exploded. He saw what was happening. He saw the hypocrisy, the greed.

The animal for sacrifice could be brought in from anywhere, but most likely it would be considered insufficient by the authorities of the Temple, so dove sellers were available with a "*pure sacrifice*" at their price. Secondly, since the Temple tax had to be paid in "*local currency*," there were moneychangers set up and offered to exchange foreign money for local – for a modest fee. Lucado writes, "*It's not difficult to see what angered Jesus. Pilgrims journeyed days to see God, to witness the holy, to worship His Majesty. But before they were taken into the presence of God, they were taken to the cleaners.*"

Jesus wasn't so much angry about people selling items in the Temple courts, as he was angry about the greed, the hypocrisy, the exploitation of innocent people for others' gain. This could not and cannot be tolerated.

This Holy Week, look closely at your own life. Are there areas of your life where greed holds power, where people

witness hypocrisy in the way you live your life, where you find yourself stepping over others to get ahead? Are there places within your heart, tables that need to be turned over by Jesus? Are there areas where others need to be put ahead of yourself?

Pray and ask Jesus to help you see, to open the eyes of your heart to know.

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Read John 13:1-20.

On Thursday night, that week, Jesus met with His disciples in the upper room and He washed the disciples' feet. We will remember this night at our Holy Thursday worship service.

Jesus showed us an example that night of how we should reach out to one another, how we should be of service to one another, humbly reaching out, considering others greater than ourselves.

C. Gene Wilkes, in Jesus on Leadership, writes, *“I realized that we who lead often overlook the fact that the true place of Christ-like leadership is out in the crowd rather than up at the head table. People who follow Christ’s model of leadership would never be embarrassed to find themselves among the kitchen help. Such a leader is comfortable working with those who serve in the background and gladly works alongside them until they complete the job. Head tables are optional for leaders who follow Jesus. Service, not status, is the goal of this kind of leader.”*

What kind of servant are you? What kind of leader? Are you concerned about being recognized or are you willing to work behind the scenes unnoticed for Christ? Pray that God will help you become a “*servant leader*,” placing your thoughts and energies on others, and how you can serve them.

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

Read Matthew 26:26-30 and Luke 22:14-23.

The Last Supper. Jesus sat with His disciples and broke bread, drank wine, and celebrated the Passover meal together. The Passover meal was in remembrance of the Exodus. When the powers of evil, Egypt, were enslaving God's people, God came and brought them out of Egypt through Moses. Now Jesus, celebrating the moment God brought His people to the Promised Land, away from death and the evil oppressor, alludes to the fact that Jesus, Himself, will enable people to escape from evil, from sin, from death itself. It will be His body, His blood, His trip to a Roman cross, that will defeat a greater evil than even Egypt, that of sin, death, Satan. Jesus' sacrifice will defeat evil and bring freedom, forgiveness, salvation.

Lucado writes, *"For some, communion is a sleepy hour in which wafers are eaten and juice is drunk and the soul never stirs. It wasn't intended to be as such. It was intended to be an I-can't-believe-it's-me-pinch-me-I'm-dreaming-invitation to sit at God's table and be served by the King himself."* It is a reminder of the greatest gift of love God, through Jesus, ever gave...Himself.

Reflect tonight on Christ's love for you...that you are invited to feast at His table... you are His child...Take time to talk w/ God.

Thursday, March 29, 2018

Read Luke 22:39-71 and 23:1-25.

DON'T FORGET: HOLY THURSDAY SERVICE @ 7:00 PM

Jesus steps into the garden of Gethsemane. It was to be the place Jesus would go to pray, to be with His Father before His

death. It was to be the place where Jesus would resolutely go to His death for us.

Lucado writes, *“Imagine, for a moment, yourself in this situation. Your final hour with a son about to be sent overseas. Your last moment with your dying spouse. One last visit with your parent. What do you say? What do you do? What words do you choose? It’s worth noting that Jesus chose prayer. He chose to pray for us. ‘I pray for these men. But I am also praying for all people who will believe in me because of the teaching of these men. Father, I pray that all people who believe in me can be one...I pray that these people can also be one in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me.’”*

Lucado goes on to write, *“You need to note that in this final prayer, Jesus prayed for you. You need to underline in red and highlight in yellow his love: ‘I am also praying for all people who will believe in me because of the teaching.’ That is you. As Jesus stepped into the garden, you were in his prayers. As Jesus looked into heaven, you were in his vision. As Jesus dreamed of the day when we will be where he is, he saw you there. His final prayer was about you. His final pain was for you. His final passion was you...It was in the garden that he made his decision...He would rather go to hell for you than go to heaven without you.”*

Take time to thank Him and to give Him your heart.

Friday, March 30, 2018

Read Luke 23:26-56.

*DON'T FORGET—GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE—12:00 PM
@ SAINT MARY ANNE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH*

Lucado writes, in He Chose The Nails, *“There were no accidents that day. Jesus’ last moments were not left up to*

chance. God chose the path; he selected the nails...Your Father left this message: 'I did it for you. I did it all for you.'"

On this Good Friday, please take time to simply think about...sit for half-an-hour and think about...what Christ did for you...He took the nails, died a horrific death...for you... everything we have read of the last week of Christ's life was for you...embrace it, give thanks for it, praise God for it, accept God's gift, His Son.

Saturday, March 31, 2018

Read The Gospel of John Chapter 12-Chapter 19.

Lucado talks about his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the supposed burial place of Jesus. He writes, *"The low ceiling forced me to squat and lean against a cold, rough wall...I sat in silence...It began to occur to me where I was: in a tomb. A tomb which could have held the body of Christ...We didn't dare speak. We couldn't. Nothing is blacker than a grave, as lifeless as a pit, as permanent as the crypt. But into the crypt he came."*

Christ was willing to be buried so we would be raised. Take time tonight to prepare your heart for Easter morning. Travel the scriptures...travel through Passion Week...from the Triumphal Entry, to the Last Supper, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, to the tomb...hear the weeping of Jesus' friends, mother, disciples...recognize once again that He died for you...kneel before His body...thank Him for His sacrifice...prepare to visit His grave tomorrow morning. And remember to bring someone to church tomorrow so they may experience the Easter story.