



By the Cross: The Week that Changed your Life

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Opening Prayer

Leader **Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.**
People ***His mercy endures forever.***
Leader **Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.**

Silence may be kept. All pray together:

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Remembering the Message ***The Friday before the Week***

Read John 12:1-12

What words or phrases stood out to you as you read this passage?
What is John seeking to emphasize as he relates this story?

Introduction

The week of Jesus' passion is the week that changed the world. It's the hinge on which all history hangs. And there is one purpose for all that is written in the gospel of John. John 20:31 says that "...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." All that is said about the ministry of Christ, especially the last week, is to point us to belief in Christ.

John 12 takes place at a party, one of the few mentioned in the gospels. The party takes place at the home of Simon the Leper. At dinner with Simon are Jesus and his 12 disciples along with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In the actions of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus we see examples of people close to Jesus who worship, grow, and serve.

Martha – Serve

We have seen Martha in the kitchen before. Luke 10 describes a dinner where Martha is busy preparing the meal, but is frustrated that Mary is not helping. Jesus told her not to be worried about things less important than spending time with him. Here in John 12, Martha is serving again, seemingly content with her place of service and the place that other people have at the dinner party. In this scene, Martha becomes an icon for all Christians who are called to live fully into the gifts that God have given them to use in service of his people.

Reflection: Why do you think Martha had a change in heart about serving?
What are ways that you are gifted by God to serve?

Mary – Worship

Mary has the most unusual place at the party. During dinner she comes to anoint the feet of Jesus with oil. An act which Jesus says is a sign of his coming burial. It is also unusual because of the way that Mary goes about it. To let down her hair in public would have been the scandalous act of a loose woman. And yet her heart is purely devoted to the Lord. Using expensive perfume that was worth one year's wages was considered a waste. Judas was indignant, saying the money could have been used to help the poor. Yet Jesus tells Judas to be silent. Jesus declares that rather than scandalous, Mary's act is one of pure worship and devotion.

Reflection: Why was Mary motivated to give such a lavish gift of worship?
Why did Mary take the risk of being misunderstood in her actions toward Jesus?
What would be an equivalent modern-day extravagant act of worship?

Lazarus – Grow

Lazarus is the most intriguing guest at dinner. He had just been raised from the dead days before. Now he is dining next to the one who raised him. By staying close to Jesus, Lazarus is affirming his desire to continue to grow in his understanding of the Lord who had raised him from the dead.

Reflection: What do you think Lazarus and Jesus discussed at dinner?
What would you say to Jesus if you had the opportunity to dine with him?
What are ways you desire to continue to grow in your faith?

Remembering the Message
The Sunday of the Week

Read Mark 11:1-11

What words or phrases stood out to you as you read this passage?
What is Mark seeking to emphasize as he relates this story?

Jesus is in control

Each moment of this week is under the complete control of Jesus. While some say that events got out of hand, we see in the events of the days of passion week that Jesus had ordered each step. For example, Jesus took nine months to take a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem that could have been walked in three or four days. This was to time his arrival in Jerusalem right during the Passover festival.

Jesus also sent his disciples ahead of him to get the colt. Jesus also has the strength of character to leave the crowds at evening and return to Bethany.

Significance of the Parade

As Jesus journeys to Jerusalem on a colt, each moment has significance that points towards Jesus as King and Lord.

Mount of Olives

4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. ... 9 The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

Zechariah 14:4,9

The Colt

9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9

38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and put Solomon on King David's mule and escorted him to Gihon. 39 Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, playing flutes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound. I Kings 1:38-40

The Song

25 O LORD, save us; [Hosanna!]
O LORD, grant us success.
26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you. Psalm 118: 25-26

The Temple

1 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. Malachi 3:1-2

From Silence to Celebration

Jesus spent the better part of the gospel of Mark trying to keep his identity secret. Eight times in ten chapters Jesus tried to keep his identity under cover (Mark 1:25, 1:38, 1:44, 3:12, 5:43, 7:24, 8:30, 9:9). So why did he decide to publicly declare his place as King now? Very publicly, he wanted people to know he was King and Lord over Israel and this world. But they would see in the course of the week that his kingship would be very different than they expected.

The Work of the Cross

All of this, every moment of Sunday, was in preparation for Friday when Jesus would die on the cross for the sins committed by humanity. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us so that we could have the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21) Jesus didn't only take on our sin, he took on all of the effects of our sin: The black cloud that hovers over our lives and the lives of ensuing generations because of the things we do.

Because he is the King proclaimed on Sunday who died for us on Friday and rose again on Easter, we have life and freedom from sin.

Reflection: What did it mean for the people of Jesus' day to declare him King and Lord? What about for people in our day? Do you have a cloud over your life as a result of sin? Do you believe that you can turn it over to Jesus and have him cleanse the darkness of your life?