

# Holy Week | A Prayer Journey

## **Palm Sunday: The Triumphal Entry**

Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-19

On the Sunday before His death, Jesus began His trip to Jerusalem, knowing that He would soon lay down His life for our sins. Jesus slowly and humbly, made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the back of a young donkey, fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The crowds welcomed Him by waving palm branches in the air and shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

On Palm Sunday, Jesus and His disciples spent the night about two miles east of Jerusalem, in Bethany, where Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, lived.

*Lord, I give You thanks, for You are good, and Your mercy is endless. Here I stand, at the start of this Holy Week remembering Jesus' sacrifice, death, and resurrection. Help me turn from distraction and set my eyes on the One who comes in Your name, the One who opens the gates of righteousness, the One who answers when we call. I bless You, Lord, for shining Your light on me, and for sending Your Son to us, in human frailty, to walk the road we walk. Open my eyes that I may see Him coming, and praise Him with a pure heart. For the glory of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Monday: Jesus Clears the Temple**

Matthew 21:12-22, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-17

The following morning, Jesus returned with His disciples to Jerusalem. When Jesus arrived at the temple courts, He found the courts full of corrupt money changers. He began overturning their tables and clearing the temple, saying, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” (Mark 11:17) On Monday evening Jesus stayed in Bethany again, probably in the home of His friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

*Lord God, Six days before His death, Your Son sat with Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, and ate dinner with His friends. Your Word tells us, Martha served, and Mary knelt at Jesus' feet to anoint them with costly perfume. Often we cannot discern when to pour out costly perfume for Your sake, or when to be busy serving, or when to rest at Your Son's feet and learn. Give us ears to hear You and eyes to see. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Tuesday: Mount of Olives**

Matthew 21:23–24:51, Mark 11:20–13:37, Luke 20:1–21:36, John 12:20–38

Tuesday morning, Jesus and His disciples returned to Jerusalem. Religious leaders organized an ambush with the intent to place Him under arrest. But Jesus evaded their traps and pronounced harsh judgment on them (Matthew 23:24-33). Later that afternoon, Jesus left the city and went with His disciples to the Mount of Olives, which sits due east of the Temple and overlooks Jerusalem. Here, Jesus gave an elaborate prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age. He speaks, as usual, in parables, using symbolic language about the end times events, including His second coming and the final judgment.

Scripture indicates that this Tuesday was also the day Judas Iscariot negotiated with the Sanhedrin, the rabbinical court of ancient Israel, to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). After a tiring day of confrontation and warnings about the future, once again, Jesus and His disciples returned to Bethany to stay the night.

*Lord, The message of the cross is difficult to fathom. How can death give way to life? How can weakness be strength? Yet Your word says that Jesus, being God, took on human flesh and suffered the worst kind of death. How can this be? Your foolishness, God, is wiser than our wisdom, and Your weakness is greater than our strength. Help us to know that none of us can boast before You; it is only in Christ Jesus that we can boast. In His name, we ask You to help our unbelief, that we may love You, and walk in the way Jesus taught us. Amen.*

## **Wednesday: Silence**

The Bible doesn't say what the Lord did on the Wednesday of Passion Week. Scholars speculate that after two exhausting days in Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples spent this day resting in Bethany in anticipation of Passover. Just a short time previously, Jesus had revealed to the disciples and the world that He had power over death by raising Lazarus from the grave. After seeing this incredible miracle, many people in Bethany believed that Jesus was the Son of God and put their faith in Him. Also in Bethany just a few nights earlier, Lazarus' sister Mary had lovingly anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume.

*Lord God, We tremble to think that it was one of Jesus' own friends who betrayed Him -- one who sat by Him, who broke bread with Him. Give us strength, we pray, to walk faithfully with Jesus. Even when the road we walk is rocky, when the message of the cross seems like foolishness, and when we feel betrayed, You, Lord, are always faithful. We stumble, we become lost, but You are steady and sure. Give us the grace to endure our troubles, and reveal to us the glory of Your kingdom, Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Maundy Thursday: Passover and Last Supper**

Matthew 26:17-75, Mark 14:12-72, Luke 22:7-62, John 13:1-38

From Bethany, Jesus sent Peter and John ahead to Jerusalem to make preparations for the Passover Feast. After sunset, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples demonstrating how believers are to love one another. Then He shared the feast of Passover with them. As the Lamb of God, Jesus fulfilled the meaning of Passover by giving His body to be broken and His blood to be shed in sacrifice, freeing us from sin and death. Jesus instructed His followers to continually remember His sacrifice by sharing in the elements of bread and wine (Luke 22:19-20).

Later, Jesus and the disciples left the Upper Room and went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in agony to the Father. Late that evening, Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested by the Sanhedrin. He was taken to Caiaphas, the High Priest, and the council gathered to begin making their case against Jesus.

*Lord God, You sent Your Son into the world, and before His hour had come, He washed His disciples' feet. He was their teacher and Lord, yet He knelt down on the floor, and washed their feet. God, help us learn from His example. Help us do as He has done for us. Strengthen our hands and our wills for love and service. Keep our eyes on Jesus, who, being God, became a Servant for our sake. All glory to Him, Amen.*

### **Good Friday: Trial, Crucifixion, Death, and Burial**

Matthew 27:1-62, Mark 15:1-47, Luke 22:63-23:56, John 18:28-19:37

Early Friday, Judas was overcome with remorse and hanged himself. Meanwhile, Jesus endured the shame of false accusations, condemnation, mockery, beatings, and abandonment. After multiple unlawful trials, He was sentenced to death by one of the most horrible and disgraceful methods known at the time: crucifixion.

Before He was led away, soldiers spit on, mocked, and pierced Jesus with a crown of thorns. Then He carried His own cross to Calvary where, again, He was mocked as Roman soldiers nailed Him to the wooden cross. Yet, among His final words were, "Forgive them." (Luke 23:34). By mid afternoon, Jesus breathed His last breath. That evening, Nicodemus and Joseph took His body from the cross and lay it in a tomb.

*Father God, Jesus cried out to you on the cross, "Why have you forsaken me?" You seemed so far from Him in His distress. Those who stood at the cross wondered where You were as He was mocked, shamed, and killed. God, when there is trouble, suffering, and death, we, too, cry out for Your help. Be near to us, and save us so that we may praise You for Your deliverance. Teach us to call Your name as Jesus did. Make us to trust in You like little children. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## **Saturday: The Tomb**

Matthew 27:62-66, Mark 16:1, Luke 23:56, John 19:40

Jesus' body lay in its tomb, guarded by Roman soldiers throughout the Sabbath day on Saturday. When Sabbath ended at 6 PM, Christ's body was ceremonially treated for burial by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both members of the Sanhedrin, the court that had condemned Jesus to death. For a time, both men had lived as secret followers of Jesus, afraid to make a public profession of faith because of their positions in the Jewish community. Similarly, both were deeply affected by Christ's death. They boldly came out of hiding, risking their reputations and their lives because they had come to realize that Jesus was, indeed, the long-awaited Messiah.

*Lord God, on the Sabbath, Jesus rested. He was in the grave. He had finished His work. To most people's eyes, it looked as if it was all over. He was dead and buried, but only as a seed dies when it is planted in the earth, not to decay, but to spring to new life. Teach us to take refuge in You when we are afraid, that death is not our end and to hope always in You and in the resurrection, the making of all things new. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

## **Resurrection Sunday**

Matthew 28:1-13, Mark 16:1-14, Luke 24:1-49, John 20:1-23

On Resurrection Sunday, or Easter, we reach the culmination of Holy Week. Early Sunday morning, several women (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Salome, and Mary the mother of James) went to the tomb and discovered that the large stone covering the entrance had been rolled away. An angel announced: "Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen." (Matthew 28:5-6, NLT)

On the day of His resurrection, Jesus Christ made at least five appearances. Mark's Gospel says the first person to see Him was Mary Magdalene. Jesus also appeared to Peter, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and later that day to all of the disciples except Thomas, while they were gathered in a house for prayer.

*Father God, You loved this world so much that You gave Your one and only Son so that we might be called Your children, too. Lord, help us to daily live in the gladness and grace of Easter Sunday. Let us have hearts of thankfulness for Your sacrifice. Let us have eyes that look upon Your grace and rejoice in our salvation. Help us to walk in that mighty grace and tell Your good news to the world. All for Your glory we pray, Amen.*