

**CRPC - Easter Week 2020:**      *Readings for personal and family worship.*

Using this devotional

The Scripture readings are designed to follow the Gospel of Luke as it traces the last week in the life of Jesus. Each day begins with a background reading from the Old Testament and then the Gospel reading. The short meditation is meant to guide a period of reflective prayer. You may find it helpful to record your thoughts and prayers in a journal. The final reading is from elsewhere in the New Testament and is meant to give perspective on the sacrifice of Jesus. Finally, there is an optional hymn that relates to the topic. All hymns can be found online either at in the Indelible Grace online hymnbook (<http://www.igracemusic.com/hymnbook/hymns.html>), or in the Trinity Hymnal, through the website of our sister denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (<https://opc.org/hymnal.html>).

Individuals can work through all of this material in a personal time of reflection. However, it is also helpful for families or household units to do this together. Depending on the age of your children, you may choose to do some parts of this, but not all of it. In this time of quarantine, some members may want reach out to friends in the church and read this together. While singing alone or in small groups may not be comfortable for everyone (hence the song is listed as “optional”), there is great benefit to trying to worship in smaller settings. If you are alone there is no one to hear you sing off key. But if all else fails, you could read the lyrics and consider their application. Also, don’t feel like you have to sing every verse of every song. Sometimes singing the first and last is the most realistic way to do it.

Monday, April 6

OT Invitation: **Isaiah 40:1-11**

Gospel Reading: **Luke 19**

Meditation:

*In this chapter, Jesus enters Jerusalem as a public figure at the height of his ministry. His arrival in the religious capital raises the stakes and “forces the question.” Will he be received as the promised Messiah (king), or will he be rejected? There is no room for a half-way answer. Consider the response of various people: Zacchaeus, the servants and citizens in the parable, the crowds on the way to Jerusalem. Consider how Jesus regards the spiritual state of his own people as he weeps over Jerusalem and cleanses the temple. Consider your own heart response to King Jesus. In what ways do you bear resemblance to characters in this story?*

NT Reflection: **John 1:9-13**

Optional hymn: “Come Thou Almighty King” (Trinity Hymnal)

Tuesday, April 7

OT invitation: **Job 38:1-11, 42:1-6**

Gospel Reading: **Luke 20:1-21:4**

Meditation:

*After arriving in the city to great fanfare of the crowds, Jesus is challenged by the religious leaders. Notice how they ask questions to try to undermine his authority. Consider the motivation of the scribes, the chief priests, and the Sadducees. Considering the parable that he tells and his closing remarks, how does Jesus regard their questions? On one hand, God invites brutally honest questions from people who trust him and want to move closer to him. Even when we are struggling with doubt, God invites us to cry out to him in our confusion. But on the other hand, there is a type of question that is used to keep God at a distance. This second type of question is not seeking knowledge, but seeking control. The questions that the religious leaders ask Jesus in this section are definitely of that second type, ones that are meant to undermine the authority of Jesus. Consider the doubts and questions that you have. Are they questions that open your heart to God, or are they questions that you use to keep God at a distance and to retain control of your own life? As a rule, talk to God honestly, but be suspicious of your own motivations. Confess where you see hardness of heart, but bring your honest questions to God.*

NT Reflection: **Romans 3:20-25**

Optional Hymn: “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name” (Trinity Hymnal and Indelible Grace Hymnbook)

Wednesday, April 8

OT Invitation: **Psalm 32:1-7**

Gospel Reading: **Luke 21:5-38**

Meditation:

*[Note on this prophecy: The prior sections of the Gospel of Luke were located in the temple, which became the focal point of this prophecy by Jesus. The central concern was a future event which would leave all of the stones of the temple displaced (v.6.) When the disciples asked what would cause this to happen, Jesus warned them of a time in which Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies (v.20). The purpose of this warning was for people to flee to the hills when the armies surround Jerusalem (v.21). This did in fact happen when the Romans conquered and destroyed the rebellious city of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Similar material is found in both Mark and Matthew, but in those books further prophecies are included which relate to the final judgment at the end of history. By contrast, Luke appears to focus almost exclusively on the destruction of the Jerusalem and the temple which would occur in the lifetime of his disciples. While the language of "seeing the Son of Man coming on the clouds" (v.27) can make us think of the second coming of Christ, that sort of language was used in the OT to describe God's judgment on Egypt (Is. 19:1), and this may also relate to the destruction of Jerusalem.]*

*With that word of explanation aside, there are important considerations we can make in this section. First, God brings his judgment into history. Just as God brought a measure of judgment to Jerusalem in 70 AD, God continues to act in history. All negative experiences are an opportunity for us to reflect on our relationship with God and draw near to him in repentance. Certainly, our current pandemic offers that type of opportunity. Consider how God may be giving us a warning through unpleasant circumstances. Second, every time God enters into history with judgment it foreshadows the great and final "day of the Lord" when God will definitively bring a final judgment and renew all things (Rev 20-22). In the middle of his week in Jerusalem, Jesus reminded his disciples that their lives need to be lived with the expectation of God's work in history and also his future return. Consider how our current lives must be oriented to the future return of Jesus. Third, Jesus warns his disciples to "watch themselves lest your hearts be weighed down" (v.34). Consider how are you distracted by the "cares of life" such that your heart is not soft toward God and the Gospel?*

NT Reflection: **2 Peter 3:17-18**

Optional Hymn: "How Firm a Foundation" (Trinity Hymnal or Indelible Grace Hymnbook)

Thursday, April 9

OT Invitation: **Hosea 11:1-9**

Gospel Reading: **Luke 22:1-46**

Meditation:

*On his last night with the disciples before the cross, Jesus shares the Passover meal with them and institutes the Lord's Supper. In Church history, this was often called "Maundy Thursday." The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin for "mandate" and refers to the new commandment that Jesus gave his disciples (recorded in the Gospel of John) to love each other. Ironically, at the same moment that Jesus is preparing to lay down his life as a sacrifice and calling the disciples to love one another, their weakness is most evident. Judas is preparing to betray him. Peter will deny him. And the rest will fall asleep while Jesus prays desperately in the Garden of Gethsemane. All humanity will fall short of God's glory, but God will work salvation through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. He was faithful to the end.*

NT Reflection: **2 Timothy 2:11-13**

Optional Hymn: Man of Sorrows (Indelible Grace Hymnbook or Trinity Hymnal)

Friday, April 10

OT Invitation: **Zechariah 12:10**

[Because it is traditional for Christians to have extended times of prayer and reflection on Good Friday, there are several Gospel readings for this day.]

Gospel Reading and Meditation #1: **Luke 22:47-71**

*Jesus is rejected by his own people. Judas betrays, Peter denies, the Sanhedrin stages a phony trial and convicts him on fabricated evidence. The people on earth who had the clearest revelation of God rejected his Son. In this, we see that we are all guilty.*

Gospel Reading and Meditation #2: **Luke 23:1-24**

*Jesus is condemned by the Roman Empire. Known for having fair and just laws, first Pilate, then Herod recognize Jesus is not guilty, but they allow an innocent man to be killed. Their desire to keep the peace at all cost led the civil leaders with the most advanced justice system in the ancient world to sentence Jesus to death. In this, we see that we are all guilty.*

Gospel Reading and Meditation #3: **Luke 23:25-43**

*Jesus is crucified with two common criminals. Death by crucifixion was designed to be as brutal and painful as possible to have the maximum power of deterrence. On top of it all, Jesus was publicly mocked and humiliated. Yet, Jesus prayed for his enemies to be forgiven and welcomed one of the convicts with him into the Kingdom of God. In this, we see that Jesus is greater than our guilt and sin.*

Gospel Reading and Meditation #4: **Luke 23:44-49**

*In the climactic moment of Jesus' death, the sky becomes dark and the temple curtain is torn in two. These are supernatural signs to show that both the natural order and the religious order (temple) has been impacted. Strangely, it is the Roman centurion who pronounces the truest words from any of the people during this whole ordeal. The death of Jesus will shake the worlds, and shake the hearts of unexpected people. In this we see that God will shake the whole world through the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

NT Reflection: **2 Corinthians 5:20-21**

Optional Hymn: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (Trinity Hymnal)

Saturday, April 11

OT Invitation: **Psalms 16:5-11**

Gospel Reading: **Luke 23:50-56**

Meditation:

*The Saturday of Easter Week does not have a special name. After Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, but before Easter Sunday...it is simply "Saturday." It is an "in-between day", where nothing visible happens. The gospel reading for today closes with the sentence, "On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment." Saturday is a day of waiting. It is a day when the power of death is visible and when it seems that Jesus has been defeated. Resurrection Sunday is not far off, but on Saturday we wait. Perhaps this has powerful connections to our lives. We are waiting more than ever these days. In the near term we are waiting for the pandemic to recede and for life to return. Personally, we have things that each of us are waiting for. In the larger picture we join with all of Creation in waiting for the return of Jesus and the renewal of all things. What things are you waiting for? Consider how you can draw near to God in this time and consider how your waiting is part of God's larger story.*

NT Reflection: **Romans 8:22-26**

Optional Hymn: "Abide with Me" (Indelible Grace Hymnbook)