

A Prayer Guide for Holy Week

In this guide, you will find daily devotionals to follow throughout Holy Week. Each of these devotionals was written by one of the pastors at Stone Hill Church of Princeton. If you have prayer requests or are interested in joining a regularly scheduled prayer meeting, please email prayer@stonehillprinceton.org.

Sunday: Palm Sunday

Scripture Passages: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19

Today is Palm Sunday, the day of Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He came as a humble king, riding slowly through Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

A Prayer for Palm Sunday:

King Jesus, you sit on the throne of heaven with nail marks in your hands and feet. You have defeated death and the power of sin, and yet we still experience pain and suffering. As we wave these palm branches, we declare that you are our King, and we are your people. We remember all that you have done and look forward to all that you will do. We eagerly await your next triumphal return, when you will make all things right. But until then, may your peace rule in our hearts. Amen.

Monday: Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Scripture Passages: Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47

Jesus's clearing of the temple is an explicit act to rid the temple of practices that do not belong there. The temple is a place to pray, to make atonement for sins, and to meet God. It is interesting to note that the day after Jesus is being praised and celebrated as a King (Palm Sunday), he goes to the temple. Jesus is Priest as well as King (and as we will see later in the week – Prophet). With his actions in the temple Jesus is actively and visually showing what worship and honoring God is not. Jesus wants to restore the right relationship between people and God, something he does in complete fullness when he sacrifices his life for us, for the atonement of our sins, on the cross four days later.

A Prayer for Monday:

Lord, we need to be reminded what proper worship is meant to be. Like the money changers and merchants in the temple, we do get lost in our own world and desires. We need redirection just as those in the temple needed their tables turned over. We thank you for giving us a way back to you through your mercy, grace and love, not only through your many callings but ultimately and completely by your work on the cross. Continue to prepare us and teach us, opening our eyes, hearts, and minds for the message of the cross and the good news of Easter. Amen.

Tuesday: Jesus's Conflict with the Religious Leaders

Scripture Passage: Luke 20:1-22:2

After Jesus cleanses the temple of the corrupt practices of the sellers and religious leaders on Monday, he enters into direct conflict with the religious leaders on Tuesday. We see this confrontation in the combative exchange between Jesus and the religious leaders; the parables Jesus tells about the religious leaders' stubbornness towards his message; Jesus' argument with the Sadducees about the resurrection; and finally Jesus' warning about the destruction of the temple and the last days. Remarkably, sandwiched between these heated confrontations, Luke makes note of a widow's faith in Jesus (Luke 20:45-47). The religious leaders reject Jesus' message, and she is willing to give her last penny to support it. In her simplicity, she gets the profundity of what Jesus is doing. The religious leaders are blinded by their knowledge. What a contrast!

This set of readings is longer for today. I encourage you to take the full ten minutes and take in for yourself Jesus' wisdom and unique authority behind his claims.

I invite you to close your time of reading with this prayer:

"Lord Jesus, truly you are the Son who came down from heaven and yet was rejected by the very leaders who were to prepare the people for your coming. Forgive us for taking you for granted and not embracing your life giving message. Make us like the widow who had simple but great faith in you. Although this world will be filled with many troubles, recenter our lives on you and on the kingdom you are bringing when you return to judge the whole earth with justice. In your name we pray. Amen."

Wednesday: Silent Wednesday

Wednesday is the only day of Holy Week for which Scripture is silent regarding Jesus' activities. It comes in between two full days of ministry in Jerusalem, involving conflict with the authorities on Monday and Tuesday, and then Passover, the garden, and his arrest on Thursday. Given that Jesus had likely spent the previous night in Bethany, it is believed that he spent the Wednesday of Holy Week resting there. It was Bethany where he raised Lazarus from the dead, and Bethany where the sister of Lazarus had recently anointed his head with perfume to prepare him for burial.

Knowing that Jesus was fully God, we often don't think of him in terms of going through the most basic human experiences, but he was also fully human. The things he had gone through in the previous days and the things that he knew he was about to go through in the next days, would have been weighing heavily on him on this day and this would have taken a toll on his physical and emotional well-being. Taking a day of rest in Bethany, in a place where he had treasured friends and followers, before heading back to Jerusalem for the last time, could very well have been extremely helpful to him.

When we are feeling weighed down by our burdens in life, there is no better place to lay them down and find rest, than at the feet of Jesus, who himself has carried the greatest of burdens for us, and knows well the feeling.

A Prayer for Wednesday:

Father, thank you for your Son, and for what he went through, that we could be free. On this day, Scripture doesn't tell us where Jesus was or what he was doing, but we know well the burdens he was bearing that day and the toll it must have taken. We pray that as we continue stumbling after him to the best of our ability, you would help us to daily lay our burdens down at his feet, and to find rest there. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thursday: Maundy Thursday

Scripture Passages: Matthew 26:17-75; Mark 14:12-72;
Luke 22:7-71; John 13:1-18:27

Today is Maundy Thursday, the last full day of Jesus's earthly life. The name "Maundy Thursday" comes from the Latin, *mandatum novum*, referring to the "new commandment" that Jesus taught his disciples in John 13:34:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

On this day, we remember the last evening Jesus shared with his disciples in the upper room before his arrest and crucifixion. We invite you to join us tonight at 7:00 p.m. as we dive deeper into the theological significance of this day.

Friday: Good Friday

Scripture Passages: Matthew 27:1-61; Mark 15:1-47; Luke 23:1-56; John 18:28-19:42'

Today, Good Friday, marks the death of Jesus Christ. We call it "good" because of what Jesus's death means for the redemption of the world.

We invite you to join us for 1) a prayer meeting at 5:00 p.m. in the prayer chapel, 2) our Good Friday Service at 6:00 p.m. and 3) a Soup Potluck dinner following the service.

Saturday: Holy Saturday

Scripture passages: Matthew 27:62-66; John 19:38-42.

Jesus, although poor and a 'criminal', is buried with the rich as Joseph of Arimathea allows Jesus to be buried in his family plot. His body is in the tomb on Saturday. But, we do not have specific evidence of where Jesus' spirit was located. Since Jesus told one of the criminals on the cross that 'Today, you will be with me in paradise.' We can infer that Jesus may very well have been in paradise enjoying fellowship with His father. Nevertheless, Saturday is a day of waiting, waiting until Jesus is raised again to life. That is our hope, as we live in the joy of Jesus' resurrection and in the hope of our future resurrection.

A Prayer for Saturday:

Lord Jesus, as we await your return and the full redemption of our lives and this world, may we wait with patience, hope and expectant joy. In Your holy name, Amen.

Sunday: Easter Sunday

Scripture: Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21

Today is Easter Sunday--He is risen! He is risen indeed! We hope that you will join us at one of our services today as we celebrate the joyous hope of our Lord's resurrection from the dead.