



# Journey to Easter

## *Your Passport to the Passion*

Welcome to Holy Week, that deeply spiritual period that spans from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

I encourage you to enter into a time of personal preparation by using this devotional booklet as a passport to the passion of Jesus. All through Holy Week, the sanctuary will be set up with various interactive stations designed to immerse you in the final days of Jesus' life, from His Triumphal Entry to the Last Supper, the cross, and ultimately the Resurrection. You are invited to use this booklet as a self-guided "Journey to Easter". Call the church office (628-2111) to book a time for your group or for yourself.

Eight contributors from First Baptist Church have penned these articles. May God guide you by His Spirit as you seek to walk the path Jesus trod into the joy of the New Life!

Easter blessings,  
Pastor Dave

## *Join Us for These Special Events*

Thursday	6:30 to 8 p.m.	Maundy Thursday – Drop in for a time of quiet meditation and communion.
Friday	11:00 a.m.	Good Friday – A service in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for us.
Sunday	9:30 & 11 a.m.	Easter Sunday – Enjoy the worship and the expanded halftime cafés.

Cover art by Andy Henderson

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## **“King of Glory”**

Bible reading: Matthew 21:1-11

It's the Sunday before Jesus' death, the day we call PALM SUNDAY. Jesus has come as the long awaited Messiah and for three years has proclaimed himself to the nation by unceasing journeys and miracles.

As Jesus, THE KING OF GLORY, riding on a colt, heads toward the Holy City of Jerusalem with his disciples, huge crowds line the highway. Everyone is heading to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. By this time everyone has heard of Jesus and his miracles and so the popular mood is in his favour. Joyfully they wave palm branches and shout “LONG LIVE THE KING” because they know Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The people are jubilant, thinking God is going to restore their Nation to its former glory. Jesus however, knew that his death had been determined by the rulers and he was ready for it. With his great love for the crowds, what was uppermost in his mind was their lost condition.

Jesus had chosen a time when all Israel would be gathered in Jerusalem, as a way to proclaim his mission. Here he would engage the leaders and common folk alike, proclaiming his mission that was unmistakable. However they were blind to Jesus real mission and when it became apparent that he was not going to fulfill their hope, they turned against him.

Are there times today when we turn against him by thinking only of ourselves? The body of believers ought to be an example of Heaven on earth, drawing people to Christ through love for God and for one another. God's word is not something we read and think about ... it is something we do. Belief, faith and trust must have hands and feet ... OURS.

Jean Hender

Monday

April 10

## ***“My House”***

Bible reading: Matthew 21:12-17

In Matthew 21:12-17, we come across a story documenting one of the few times Jesus was angry. Upon walking into the Temple, he found merchants selling various goods to the people entering the building to worship. As they preyed on the vulnerability of others, they took away from the One who was really able to save the broken. Jesus flipped the tables and yelled at the merchants, demanding they leave and never again attempt to sell goods inside the Temple.

Often times in the busyness of our schedules, our minds become cluttered. We're concerned about work, family, and commitments. These thoughts do not leave our mind when we enter through the doors of the church. Instead, our anxieties stay with us, and the outside world remains a priority as we enter into a time of worship. Like those who got caught up in what the merchants were selling, sometimes we get so entangled in our everyday thoughts and routines that we forget to prioritize God during our times of worship. We must remember that God created the church specifically for Christians to come together as one body to lift praises to the One who created us.

This Easter season, make the conscious decision to leave your clutter at the doors of the church and come forward with a clear mind. Let's make sure that we are able to fully appreciate the sacrifice that was made so that we can have hope each and every day.

Kayla Schut

Tuesday

April 11

## ***“Life Lessons”***

Bible reading: Matthew 21:23-25:46

In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus tells the Parable of the Wedding Feast, comparing the kingdom of Heaven to a wedding banquet that a king had prepared for his son. The king invited many people to the joyous event, but the guests refused to come (3).

The king, enraged at the guests who opted instead to work on their field or in their business, invited those he could find on the street instead.

But when the king came in to the room and saw his guests, he saw a man who wasn't wearing the proper wedding garments. The king had the man thrown out of the banquet, into the darkness, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," (14). For many are invited, but few are chosen, Jesus says after telling of the parable.

Just like it is insulting to the king to show up to the wedding without our wedding garments, it is insulting to God to show up in Heaven, boasting of our self-righteousness, instead of the garments of salvation that are given to us in Jesus' death.

Father, help us to not cling to our own works, but to boast in the cross, in Your death that clothes us in righteousness.

Allison O'Brien

Wednesday

April 12

## “Worship and Betrayal”

Bible reading: Matthew 26:6-16

*Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume and poured it over his head. The disciples were indignant when they saw this. “What a waste!” they said. “It could have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.”*

*But Jesus, aware of this replied, “Why criticize this woman for doing such a good thing to me? You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me. She has poured this perfume on me to prepare my body for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered.”*

Can we put ourselves among the disciples in the home of Simon? Imagine this woman entering, holding the alabaster jar. What do we think as she pours the perfume over Jesus? Do we see the expression on her face? Can we see what she is feeling, or are we distracted by the disciples? What is Jesus saying? How do we feel? Chastised, maybe, or ....

*Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests and asked, “How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?” And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.*

It involves conjecture, but what would motivate Judas to betray Jesus? Greed? Satan? Judas was later filled with remorse. To a lesser extent, are there occasions in our lives when we betray Jesus by deliberately going our way rather than His way?

Peter Lyon

Thursday

April 13

## “Last Words”

Bible reading: Matthew 26:26-46

A few years back, I wrote a song called “Cross Over Fear” with Kelley Mooney, a close friend, fellow believer and gifted singer-musician. I scrambled to send my Mother the song on a CD for her birthday. Although I was late sending the package, she received it early.

My Mother phoned me and left a tearful message on how she had listened to the song over and over again and how much it had meant to her.

Two days afterwards, the Lord called my Mother home. When I went back for the funeral, the song was in the CD player. To think that it had provided comfort for my Mother in her last few days was a blessing beyond measure.

The story in the song turns on a verse that says, “When I was at my lowest point, I was struck by a memory.

My teacher, many Sundays gone, said, “**Remember** that Jesus loves me.” It’s the **remembrance** that matters the most. In Luke 22:19, at the Lord’s Supper, Jesus says, “This is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me.” Every day, we must remember and in so doing, we will be blessed.

Diane Barnes

Friday

April 14

## **“God loves ME!”**

Bible reading: Matthew 26:57-27:61

Every Good Friday, John 3:16 reminds us that “...God so loved the world...” But have you ever felt like God loves everyone, well... except yourself? Can you say, “God loves ME,” without a hint of doubt? Can I? After believing in him, I have failed him so many times that I’ve lost count. And who am I among so many millions of believers, almost 2000 years since his death? Thoughts like these have left me feeling small and... not much worth loving.

But we’ve forgotten something. When we believed in Jesus, God became our *Father* and we became his *children* (John 1:12). That changes everything. If he loved us “while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:7,8), how much more so as his “dearly loved children” (Ephesians 5:1)? Yes, our good, good “Abba” or “Daddy” (Romans 8:16) knows our failings, but also knows our humanity (Psalm 103:13,14) and his infinite grace covers us still (Hebrews 10:14).

Consider this: The same God who determined the number of the stars and calls them each by name (Psalm 147:4,5) had you in mind when his Son was sacrificed and, for the joy of saving us (Hebrews 12:2), the Son consented... even before creation began (Isaiah 46:10). His sacrifice was unfathomably greater than those hanging to his left and right -- he paid for *each one* of your sins, so that he can *justly* stand before our God and Father when we sin (Romans 8:34) and declare, “I already paid for that.”

Go ahead, say it. Out loud. “God loves ME!”

Patrick Connor

Saturday

April 15

## **“Silent Tears”**

Bible reading: Matthew 27:62-66

Having celebrated Easter all of my life, it can become a bit routine. On Friday, I mourn the crucifixion and death of an innocent man – Jesus. On Saturday, knowing how the story ends, I am hope-filled and on Sunday, I celebrate His resurrection.

I don’t think much about Saturday. Friday and Sunday are the BIG days. I know the grave is defeated and death loses its sting, so Saturday is the day I like to skip.

But last year this changed for me. I felt an invitation to dwell in the Saturday – the day separating death and life. A place of immense sorrow, confusion, loss and anger, but also a place of the deepest, rawest hope.

In life, I live for the Sunday, for resurrection, for new life, for promises fulfilled, and for hope that becomes faith and faith that becomes sight.

When death comes and the aching and loss cuts deeply, my bones cry out for resurrection. These longings and anticipation are beautiful and necessary, but I’ve been blind to the reality that without death, without endings, without the grief and the darkest hour, I cannot experience the promised new life and resurrection. Promises fulfilled are incredible, but it’s often the journey in between where our faith is formed.

Although Jesus promised that He would defeat the grave, Saturday must’ve been scary for His followers. Maybe they questioned their trust in Him, His power, His plan. Can you relate? This year, I invite you to not bypass Saturday. Rather, journey through the sting of death. For it’s in that place where it seemed all hope was lost, that the greatest love story unfolded.

His plans are perfect. His promises stand. And He is with us in the process. Kara Cousins, Rwanda

Sunday

April 16

## ***“He’s Alive!”***

Bible reading: Matthew 28:1-10

The pre-dawn hours in Kenya are one of the great joys of living in Africa. Days begin with birdsong that breaks the quiet of the night. The sky changes dramatically from ebony to deep blue as the eastern glow quickly transforms into the golden waves of the rising sun. At dawn the world comes alive!

It was at this early hour that two women approached the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, but this was a dawn like no other. As they approach, the earth shakes and everything changes.

They thought that they were coming to mark an ending, but to their utter amazement God was bringing them face to face with the start of something completely new.

Are you ready for a new beginning? Might the words of the angels also be a message for you? “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, ... now go quickly and tell!”

The two women race back to the other disciples, as they take up the task given to them by the angel. But it is only once they have begun this journey of faith that they meet Jesus on the way. This is the second unforeseen encounter and it is here that they respond in worship as they fall to Jesus’s feet.

If you are running, maybe this is the moment when God wants to meet you. In the challenging and frantic moments of life, Jesus may want to disrupt us, to have us stop and fall before him.

Finally, Jesus calls the women to rise and continue in their mission. He promises to go ahead of them and assures them that they will see him again. Perhaps this is the most important message of all as we enter this new day with our Lord: That the journey is not walked alone, but that Jesus is with us always, even to the end.

Aaron Kenny, Nairobi, Kenya

## **An Easter Prayer**

Jesus,

Thank you for that sweet surprise of Easter morning. We are thankful that when you arose from your sleep of death, you didn’t go immediately to heaven, but instead you went and visited people. This visit of love reminds us that it was for people that you died. We praise your name for that sweet surprise.

- Max Lucado