

HOLY WEEK

Activities Guide

Welcome

Holy Week 2020 strikes particularly “close to home”—because we find ourselves confined to our houses or apartments in unusual ways, but more importantly because the global anguish this season make questions of life, death, fear, and loss much more near and real to many of us of than perhaps they normally are. There is no better time than this to enter deeply into the foundational Christian story and discover anew the series of events that took a few frightened followers of a man named Jesus of Nazareth and turned them overnight into fearless prophets of hope and of a future far brighter than the world can dream.

This guide provides outlines for short, home worship experiences on Monday through Saturday of Holy Week. Our hope is that you will join your own community (in whatever format they offer) for the celebration of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

Each daily worship experience should take around 15 minutes to complete. The guide is designed to be flexible for individual or family use. Questions can be used for personal reflection and journaling, or families who are worshipping together are encouraged to discuss their answers with each other.

We recommend that you set aside a particular time and physical space for this daily worship and maintain it consistently over the week.

Instructions

Each day before beginning, gather the few household items listed at the top of each page. Then simply work your way through the outline, beginning each day with a Scripture reading describing a moment from the last week or so of Jesus’ life, each taken from the Gospel of Mark.



Trinity MENNONITE CHURCH

Monday

Supplies:

Something to use as a blindfold

Scripture Reading:

Mark 10:46-52

Act:

The healing of Bartimaeus is the last healing miracle that Jesus performs in the gospel of Mark before he goes to his death in Jerusalem. This timing lends added significance to Bartimaeus' determination to get to Jesus at any cost, because Jesus will not pass this way again. This moment, even though Bartimaeus cannot know it now, is his critical window of opportunity.

After reading the story, blindfold yourself. Cry out as Bartimaeus did, "Jesus, show me mercy!" Picture Jesus stopping in front of you and asking the question he asked Bartimaeus: "What do you want me to do for you?" Speak to Jesus, and tell him your answer.

Reflection or Conversation:

Just prior to the story of Bartimaeus (in Mark 10:35-45), Jesus asks James and John the same question he asks Bartimaeus: "What do you want me to do for you?" James and John ask for seats beside Jesus when he "enters his glory." In other words, they want good positions in Jesus' Cabinet when he takes over Judea as king. Bartimaeus, by contrast, asks for mercy and the ability to see clearly. Note that Jesus responds quite differently to these two types of requests.

How does what *you* just asked Jesus for compare to the requests of Bartimaeus and of James and John? What do you think Jesus might say back to you?

Song To Worship By:

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior (Hasan Green)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1D0ltWnz6g>

Prayer:

Lord, sometimes our slowness to ask reveals how little we trust your generosity. Sometimes the nature of our requests reveal how little we have understood your character and ways. Give us the vision of Bartimaeus to see the things most worth asking for and the wisdom of Bartimaeus to recognize today as the crucial day to act. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Tuesday

Supplies:

Soap, towel, water

Scripture Reading:

Mark 11:12-19

Act:

One of the key events that incited the plot for Jesus' death was his cleansing of the temple. Jesus' actions highlight what these people involved have done wrong—they have jacked up prices on the sacrificial animals for a profit, taking advantage of poor pilgrims who have come to worship. But his comments also note what they have left undone—they have not preserved a place of prayer welcoming to all nations, and they have not borne “fruit” from their relationship with God (recall the cursed fig tree).

The term “sin” encompasses all the things we do that dishonor God and damage God's good design—in ourselves, in others, and in creation. It also includes vital acts of love and faithfulness that we neglect because we are busy, distracted, or preoccupied with self.

Offer this prayer of confession from the *Book of Common Prayer*:

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.

(pause for silent prayers of personal confession)

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.

You wash your hands many times each day as an act of physical cleansing. Following the prayer, wash your hands once again, this time as a representation of spiritual cleansing. Accept the new beginning Jesus offers.

Reflection or Conversation:

What is an unhealthy pattern of word, thought, or behavior you've been stuck in that you are ready to invite God to disrupt? What is one concrete step you could take today to step into a new pattern?

Song To Worship By:

Kyrie Eleison—Lord, Have Mercy (Vineyard Worship)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T7n1j03UZA>

Prayer:

Lord, we are so thankful that you readily receive our confessions and offer us forgiveness—even if it's the hundredth time we've made the same mistake. Show us the path to true, abundant life. Reveal what we should take up and what it is time to let go. Produce the good fruit of your kingdom in us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Wednesday

Supplies:

Something that smells good (ex. a candle, perfume/cologne, room spray, etc)

Scripture Reading:

Mark 14:1-11

Act:

Mark doesn't tell us the specifics of this woman's history with Jesus, but we can guess that it must be a remarkable story given that she pours an entire year's wages in perfume over Jesus' head in an extravagant gesture of love and honor. People watching criticize her offering as not "useful" enough to be anything but a waste. However, Jesus suggests that her act of devotion and sacrifice will be taken up by God and used in a bigger way than even she could have foreseen.

Worship does not always feel as intuitively "productive" as other ways we spend our time. However, Jesus' response to this woman suggests that worship is in fact the *first* thing. Worship helps cultivate a posture of gratitude, devotion, and open-handedness before God. This posture, this inner attitude of the heart, is the foundation for all other more external forms of discipleship. The choice is not "worship Jesus" OR "care for the poor." Rather, those who cultivate gratitude toward Jesus will be formed for generosity toward others by the act of worship itself.

Release the aroma of one of your favorite scents so that it fills the air like this woman's offering. Offer Jesus your gratitude for the ways he has shown up in your life and story.

Reflection or Conversation:

Jesus doesn't dismiss the care for the poor in this story but rather tells his followers that in the future, when he is no longer physically present with a body that needs tending, the poor will still be there with their own bodies that have need. Elsewhere Jesus identifies himself explicitly with the poor and says that whatever is done for them, he will receive as an offering to him. What could you offer Jesus today that would be an extravagant, self-sacrificial act of worship?

Song To Worship By:

Revelation Song (Kari Jobe)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FrhDJa3XCM>

Prayer:

Lord, you have always offered us more than we could ever match; we can never out-give your generosity. Please forgive the smallness of our worship and the forgetfulness of our gratitude. Show us what it means to love you well, and form in us a posture of generous self-giving that mirrors who you are. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Thursday

Supplies:

A bit of vinegar

Scripture Reading:

Mark 14:32-42

Reflection or Conversation:

It is comforting, and perhaps a bit intimidating, to recognize that Jesus struggled with temptation just as we do. Specifically, Jesus was tempted to protect himself, to preserve his own life and ambitions, at the expense of obedience to what God was calling him to do. Jesus can identify with our desire to avoid suffering, with our fear of loss, with our feeling that some sacrifices are too much to ask. But Jesus prayed again and again “not what I want but what you want,” turning his internal resistance into submission to the desires of God.

Where do you experience the tension Jesus describes between a willing spirit and weak flesh?
What might God currently be calling you to that you are resisting?

Act:

Name your temptations honestly to God, the places you feel yourself resisting or holding back, saying “God, you can have anything but just not that.” Pray the same prayer Jesus prayed—“Abba, Father, for you all things are possible. Take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want.” Repeat this prayer several times, seeking to mean it a little more with each iteration.

At the end of your prayer, take a small sip of vinegar as a symbol of your submission to God, whatever may come, whether the taste be sweet or bitter.

Song To Worship By:

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (the song and its true origin story)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeceKPufFOc>

Prayer:

Lord, we want to be obedient to you, but we also have other powerful desires and fears that pull us in other directions. Our spirits are willing, but our flesh is weak. Give us your strength to resist temptation to flee when we should stand, to fight when we should forgive, to cling when we should surrender. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Friday

Supplies:

Bread (or crackers) and juice (or other drink)

Scripture Reading:

Mark 14:10-26

Act:

The meal Jesus was eating with his disciples the night before his death was the Passover meal which commemorated the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, God made a covenant with them. If they lived in faithful obedience to God, God would bless and preserve them; if they disobeyed and rebelled against God, the blessing would be withdrawn, and they would suffer the consequences. Of course, the Israelites ultimately chose disobedience, which resulted in the people going into exile.

The prophet Jeremiah eventually announces that in the future God will make a new covenant with the people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). All the sins and mistakes of the past will be completely erased. God won't even remember them any more. All people will have the capacity to know God personally, and God's good desires will be written on their hearts. When Jesus gives his disciples a cup of wine and says "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" he is announcing that with his death, the new covenant Jeremiah predicted will begin.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and then eat a piece of bread and drink some juice as Jesus and his disciples did during the Passover meal. The bread and juice are symbols of God's promise to be personally available to every one of us and to forget our sins and mistakes.

Reflection or Conversation:

What does God's grace mean to you? How would your life be different if you more fully embraced the truth about this grace that covers you?

Song To Worship By:

What Wondrous Love is This (Chelsea Moon)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1g26dbNJYJI>

Prayer:

Lord, we thank for the privilege of being people who live inside this new covenant Jeremiah spoke of. Show us what it means to live within the liberty of grace so we can be fully yours without fear. Forget all our mistakes, and teach us more of who you are through your Spirit living in us so we can know and follow you faithfully. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Saturday

Supplies:

A closet or dark blanket

Scripture Reading:

Mark 15:33-47

Act:

At the cross, Jesus entered into the deepest reaches of human experience—the places we feel most alone; the times when God seems most absent. The dread and loneliness of Thursday. The pain and suffering of Friday. The darkness and silence of Saturday. All these places we fear most, Jesus enters with us.

Find a very dark space in your house—perhaps a closet or bathroom—or if you prefer, simply throw a dark blanket over your head. Set a timer for 3-4 minutes and just sit there and experience the darkness and silence around you. When you emerge, read Psalm out loud 139:1-18. (Recommendation: for a fresh hearing, read this passage in the *Common English Bible* translation).

Reflection or Conversation:

What word or phrase from the psalm jumped out at you today? Why? What might the Spirit be saying to you through this word?

Song To Worship By:

The Silence of God (Andrew Peterson)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvytewIxlI0>

Prayer:

Lord, there is so much suffering around us that we don't understand. But we thank you that even the darkness is not dark to you. There is no place in the universe where you are absent. When our words and vision fail, yours do not. So hold us here in the silence as we wait for your appearance. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.