

Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.



April 2-9, 2023

Holy Week

Holy week is the most important season in the Christian calendar. From the highs of the crowd lauding Jesus as the Messiah on Palm Sunday to the crowd's betrayal and condemnation on Good Friday, we journey with Jesus and see his love and resilience in the face of our human fickleness. It ends with the glorious celebration of Christ's resurrection. No matter the depth of sin, death could not defeat him. Praise be to God!

They said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

– Mark 10: 16-27

Palm Sunday: April 2, 2023
Memories and Moving Forward
Mark 11:1-11

Connect:

Describe the largest parade or public celebration you have witnessed.

Engage:

In the biblical tradition, throwing cloaks and palms on the ground before a royal procession symbolized respect and honor for the king. Zechariah 9:9 reinforces the messianic overtones of this parade. Some suggest riding on a donkey was a common symbol of peace, whereas a horse symbolized war. Palm branches also bear significance. In the Greco-Roman culture, palms were a sign of triumph and victory. In Egypt, palms were used in funeral processions and symbolized eternal life.

Read Mark 11:1-11

1. How is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem consistent with his character and teaching? Do you think he was being intentionally provocative?
2. The crowds were in the city to celebrate the Passover Festival, which marked the dramatic deliverance of God's people from Egyptian enslavement. Given this context and what you know about 1st-century messianic thought, what do you think the crowd expected of Jesus?
3. Mark does not mention the religious leaders in this passage. What do you imagine they thought of this parade? How would they have interpreted the crowds' cries of "hosanna" or save us as blasphemy?
4. How do you think the Romans would have interpreted this public parade?

Apply

What are your expectations of Jesus? Conquering hero, a gentle prince of peace, a compassionate savior? How have your expectations of him changed?

As you move through Holy Week, reflect upon whether or not you take Jesus for granted. How are you a "fan" one day and then disappointed in Jesus on another? Or is indifference more your challenge?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

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Good Friday: April 7, 2023

Stabat Mater

Various

Connect:

Describe a time of deep despair and suffering you or someone else experienced.

Engage:

Our Good Friday service will look at the suffering of Christ from the perspective of Mary, his mother.

Read Matthew 26:14—27:26

1. Of all the twists and turns of betrayal depicted here, which stands out as the most painful?

Read Psalm 88

2. This is the only lament psalm that does not end with a hopeful note. Could this have been the psalm Jesus recited on the night of his trial and crucifixion? How do you imagine Jesus felt about his relationship with God as these events unfolded?

Read Matthew 17:27-65

3. The story comes to a climax with the death of Jesus. How do you imagine his mother interpreted these events? How would she have experienced his beatings, trial, public humiliation, and death?

Read Isaiah 53:1-9

4. How does Isaiah's ancient prophecy bring meaning and insight to Jesus' suffering?

Apply

How does Jesus' suffering and death impact your understanding of what it means to "follow him?"

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Easter: April 9, 2023
All Things New
Matthew 28:1-10

Connect:

What does joy feel like to you? Describe a time when you were saturated with joy.

Engage:

At the end of chapter 27, Pilate ordered the tomb secured and sealed with a Roman guard posted at the front to ensure that no one could get into the stone vault.

Read Matthew 28:1-10

1. With the tomb guarded and sealed by Rome, why do you think the women returned to the grave? Would it not have been dangerous for them to be there? Why or why not?
2. During the crucifixion, Matthew describes the sky turning black for three hours. Then, God sends an earthquake at his death and tears the temple veil in two. Now at his resurrection, he describes a shimmering angel causing another earthquake, rolling back the stone, and giving instructions to the women. What does this say about God's power and the cosmic implications of Jesus' death and resurrection?
3. Why did Jesus appear first to the women before his male disciples? How does their response to him remind us of the incredible gift of his resurrection?

Apply

Matthew describes Jesus' resurrection as a spiritual event that disrupts the created order. Something new is born. All creation – heaven and earth - are bound together in God's restoration. The Son of earth and heaven turns fear and death into joy and life.

How can you carry the resurrection's promise, hope, and reality when facing challenges this week?

Pray

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