



Week of Passion



DEVOTIONS FOR HOLY WEEK

BRIARWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PALM SUNDAY

THE ROYAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM | MATTHEW 21:1-11

Most of us are familiar with the events that took place on Palm Sunday when Christ made his royal entry into Jerusalem. Why is this day so significant? Israel had long awaited the Messiah, a king who they believed would come as a military leader to conquer all of their enemies. Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah King, but He looked very different from what Israel expected. On Palm Sunday, He came not mounted on a war horse, but mounted on a donkey, the symbol of peace. Palm Sunday is significant because Jesus was not only making His procession into the city of Jerusalem, but to the cross to take on the sin of His people! At the cross, He would make a way for man to have peace with God. He did not come to Jerusalem to conquer neighboring lands or people, but to conquer sin itself. This parade, this processional, is all about the King, who was also the unblemished Lamb who gave His life so that we may have life in Him.

Notice that Matthew describes the donkey as “a beast of burden.” Donkeys were used to carry both people and the weight of their cargo. Just as the donkey carried the weight of Christ into Jerusalem, remember that Christ carried the weight of your sin to the cross. He took on your burden of sin so that you may be free in Christ. All those who are in Christ proclaim “Hosanna (save us) in the Highest!”

Be sure and join us for the special concert with Fernando Ortega at 6:00 PM in the Worship Center.

Written by Rev. Jay Shaw

MONDAY

THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE | MATTHEW 21:18-19

The cursing of the fig tree is an interesting story. Jesus was returning to the city of Jerusalem and became hungry. He saw a fig tree that was full of leaves. It gave the appearance of a fruitful tree but upon closer examination he found no fruit. What did Jesus do? He cursed the fig tree, and it withered immediately!

Many scholars and commentators agree that this was a picture of the Jewish church at the time in Jerusalem. It had all the appearances of a fruitful church with its temple, yearly feasts, daily services, the Old Testament Scriptures, and its sacrifices. These were just mere leaves of religion, but the Jewish church had no fruit. JC Ryle says, “It had no grace, no faith, no love, no humility, no spirituality, no real holiness, no willingness to receive the Messiah.” Jesus made it a withered fig tree that couldn’t even give the appearance of bearing fruit.

This Easter let us use this story to honestly examine our own lives. Are you bearing the fruit of the Spirit or have you been caught up in just keeping appearances? The fruit of the Spirit is the only sure evidence that we are in Christ. Let us see this story as a warning that causes us to repent and trust in the work of Christ alone.

Written by Rev. Max Bunn

TUESDAY

JESUS' AUTHORITY CHALLENGED | MATTHEW 21:23-27

While He was teaching on one of the porches of the temple, Jesus' authority was challenged by the chief priests and elders. The major question was whether Jesus had authority from Heaven or were His words merely from man. Christ, in all His wisdom, turns the tables on the elders by asking a question of them regarding the authority of John's baptism. They tried to "trap" Him, but in His superiority of wisdom, He demonstrated the authority of His actions. John was "a man sent from God" and He came to bear witness of Jesus. And John confessed that he was not worthy to untie Jesus' sandals. John knew that Jesus truly was the One who came down from heaven, even the One who said of Himself, "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So, the question we have before us is "Do we truly believe?" It is the authority of Jesus found in the Scriptures that brings life-giving truth into the depths of our souls. May we gladly submit to the One who has all authority in Heaven and on earth.

Written by Rev. Chris Thompson

WEDNESDAY

JESUS ANOINTED AT BETHANY | MATTHEW 26:6-13

As the chief priests and elders plot to kill Jesus, Jesus goes to the home of Simon the leper in Bethany. While reclining with His disciples at the table, a woman enters and breaks an expensive alabaster flask of perfumed oil and pours it over Jesus' head. Jesus calls it a "beautiful thing," for she was anointing Him for burial. What an extravagant act of worship by this woman! The disciples saw things differently. Angered, they declare it a costly waste of resources that could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. Where were their hearts fixed in that moment? On worshipping their Messiah who had just told them that He would soon be delivered up to be crucified? Or on the poor whom Jesus said they would always have with them? In that moment, this woman spared no expense to come and see Jesus, giving her best, her all, in worship of her King! Jesus tells the disciples, "wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." Jesus is saying that her acts would be remembered in the Gospel Story!

What about you? Is your heart fixed on the worship of Jesus? Will your acts be remembered in The Story? He alone is worthy of our worship, our best, our all.

Written by Rev. Michael Wichlan

MAUNDY THURSDAY

JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE | MATTHEW 26:36-46

In Matthew 26:33 Peter declares that he will never betray Jesus, yet he and the other disciples quickly do so by failing to keep watch and pray during Christ's deepest and most sorrowful hour. In Gethsemane Jesus shows us His humanity by suffering great sorrow as He prepares to take upon Himself the wicked and vile sins of the world. Falling on His face He earnestly asks the Father three times for another way. Then He humbly submits to the Father's will.

This darkest hour for our Lord belongs to us. We deserve the wrath; it's our sin; and sin's penalty is death. How overwhelming is the love, mercy, patience and forgiveness of Christ—that while we are yet sinners, Christ suffers for us; and the reality is that we are not loved by the measure of love that we bring. He doesn't give up on us, and He faithfully submits to the will of the Father.

As we gather on Maundy Thursday at 7:00 PM for Communion, remember that in Gethsemane we see Jesus model the Fruit of the Spirit, and we are taught that prayer and obedience to God's will is the answer to our trials. Let's follow in the footsteps of our Savior in crying out to God when the trials of life come.

Written by Rev. Eric Reebals

GOOD FRIDAY

THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD | MATTHEW 27:27-61

In Matthew 27:60-61, we see Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sitting opposite Jesus' tomb while Joseph from Arimathea and his men rolled the great stone over the entrance of the tomb. No way! What just happened? I can't believe they crucified Him? Surely, He can't be dead! As hope seemed to fade and what seemed like a harsh reality of death and despair lingered, these women may have felt emotionally paralyzed by the bewildering events of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Just as these women would learn, we know the rest of the story. Rather than hope fading, it was building. Rather than a harsh reality of loss, the beautiful reality of gain arrived. Rather than death having the final say, death had actually lost its sting and dominion.

In our lives we can feel the same as these disciples when things don't turn out like we thought they would or should. But God uses what is counterintuitive to bless us by bringing us to our end to reveal His beginning, stripping us of what is needless while clothing us with what we need. The disciples were awaiting Christ to be Israel's earthly king, but God gave them what they and the world really needed—the Resurrected Savior, Lord and King Jesus. A Good Friday indeed!

Join us for the special Good Friday service at noon in the Worship Center.

Written by Rev. Ray Tucker

SATURDAY

ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE RESTED | MATT. 27:57-60; HEB. 4:1-13

After Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus and laid Him to rest in a tomb. The two Marys observed where Jesus was laid, and Luke adds that they returned home to prepare spices, but “on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56). This of course refers to the fourth commandment, which calls us to rest from our works (Exodus 20:8-11) and to rest in God’s work of redemption (Deuteronomy 5:15).

But how restless must those women have been! Their Lord had just been crucified and His body lay dead in the tomb! Yet as they strove to rest from their work and to remember God’s acts of deliverance, one wonders if the Spirit recalled to their minds Jesus’ words, “After three days I will rise”. How wonderfully ironic, that as Jesus “rested” in the tomb, God invited His disciples to “rest” in His promise of salvation.

As the author of Hebrews writes, this invitation to enter God’s rest remains for us today, and we are to strive towards that end (Hebrews 4:1-3;11). The tides of trials may assail our faith and we may wonder whether Christ will ever return, but we can rest in God’s promises just as the women could. We can be sure that Christ will return, for He rose again.

Written by Rev. Saeyoung Park

EASTER SUNDAY

JESUS IS RESURRECTED | MATTHEW 28:1-8

“He is not here, for He is risen.” Never has the absence of someone brought so many blessings. His absence from the tomb means God’s Word is true and He is working to make all things new. His absence means our sins are forgiven, Satan is defeated, and the sting of death is removed. His absence means we worship the living and not the dead. His absence means we have a secure inheritance and a hope that transcends earthly discouragements. His absence means we have the power of the resurrection as we seek to grow in maturity and expand His kingdom. His absence, simply put, means victory.

How do we now walk in this victory and the power that Christ’s resurrection secures for us? First, we worship. Worship is our right response to such great love. Worship also sets our minds on “heavenly things”, refocusing our gaze on eternal matters. Second, we preach. We preach the above truths to troubled, sin-battled souls that need encouragement and a gospel hope. Third, we move. We move out into the world with the confidence that Jesus is alive and He is building His church. He is risen. He is risen indeed!

Join us for a special evening concert celebration with Voice of the Martyrs artists, Gary & Amy (Shreve) Wixtrom at 6:00 PM in the Worship Center.

Written by Rev. Stephen King



Week of Passion

Palm Sunday, April 2

Services of Divine Worship • 8:00 & 10:55 a.m.
Fernando Ortega in Concert • 6:00 p.m.

Maundy Thursday, April 6

*Communion Service • 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday, April 7

*A Service of Reflection on the Cross • 12:00 p.m.

Resurrection Lord's Day, April 9

Sunrise Service • 6:30 a.m.
Services of Celebration • 8:00 & 10:55 a.m.
Gary and Amy (Shreve) Wixtrom in Concert • 6:00 p.m.

**Nursery Reservations are required for Maundy Thursday
and Good Friday services at briarwood.org/nursery.*