



walking with purpose

Preparation for Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

DEFINING MOMENTS

INTRODUCTION

During the three years that Jesus spent in public ministry, He consistently tried to keep a low profile. To the healed leper in Mark 1:44, He said, “See that you tell no one anything.” When He healed two blind men in Matthew 9:30, He said, “See that no one knows about this.” In John 6:15, after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, Jesus knew that the people “were going to come and carry Him off to make him king.” In response, He slipped off to the mountain alone.

But all of that was about to change. Palm Sunday commemorates a climactic moment in the life of Jesus, one that He planned with great intentionality. He chose a time and place when the maximum number of people would be impacted by the scene. Secrecy, which had previously shrouded the true identity of Jesus, was about to be lifted.

Pilgrims would have flocked to Jerusalem in order to obey the law which required every male Jew to come to the temple for the Passover.¹ According to Biblical scholar William Barclay, “Thirty years later a Roman governor was to take a census of the lambs slain in Jerusalem for the Passover and find that the number was not far off a quarter of a million. It was the Passover regulation that there must be a party of a

¹ “Three times a year, then, all your males shall appear before the LORD, your God, in the place which he will choose; at the fast of Unleavened Bread [Passover], at the feast of Weeks, and at the feast of Booths.” Deuteronomy 16:16

minimum of ten for each lamb which means that at the Passover time more than two and a half million people had crowded their way into Jerusalem.”²

The stage was set for Jesus’ dramatic unveiling of His Messianic claim. For years He had avoided being crowned a political king. But at the largest gathering of Jewish pilgrims, a setting surging with religious expectations, He was about to claim His true kingship, as the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16). In doing so, He was throwing down the gauntlet, challenging the religious authorities who were threatened by Him to bring on their worst attack.

Things to Remember:

Each one of us comes to this material from our own unique vantage point. You are welcome as you are. No previous experience is necessary. Some of you will find that the questions in this study cause you to think about concepts that are new to you. Others might find much is a review. God meets each one of us where we are, and He is always faithful, taking us to a deeper, better place spiritually, regardless of where we begin.

Bible Sourcing: There are many translations of the Bible; the Holy Spirit will speak to you in whichever translation you choose. The recommended Bible translations for Walking with Purpose are: *The New American Bible* (NAB), which is the translation used in the United States for the readings at Mass; *The Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (RSV); *The Jerusalem Bible* (TJB) and *The English Standard Version* (ESV).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Some short clips are referenced throughout the lesson to complement the Scripture study. Referenced in each lesson as CCC# and noted at the end of each corresponding lesson. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a catechism promulgated for the Catholic Church by Pope John Paul II in 1992. It sums up, in book form, the beliefs of the Catholic faithful.

Answer Key: The answer key is located at the end of this lesson. You will benefit so much more from the Bible study if you work through the questions on your own, searching your heart, as this is your very personal journey of faith. The answer key is meant to enhance and provide personal guidance through Biblical context and author’s insight where needed.

² William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 2* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976), 238.

Day One

THE PROCESSION

Read Matthew 21:1-11

1. What instructions did Jesus give to two of His disciples in Matthew 21:1-3? Why was it important that those instructions be followed precisely? See Matthew 21:4.

Jesus' decision to enter Jerusalem in this way was not a last minute one. He had likely communicated with the owners of the ass and colt and established the words "The master has need of them" as a password. This event had been foretold by the prophet Zechariah 9:9, "Exult greatly, O daughter Zion!³ Shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Jesus had chosen an animal that no one had ever ridden before (cf Luke 19:30). This choice was replete with meaning. In the Old Testament, the animal used for ceremonies of cleansing had to be "a red heifer without defect and free from every blemish and on which no yoke has ever been laid" (Numbers 19:2), and when the Ark of the Covenant was transported, the cart had to be new and unused for any prior purpose and the cows to pull it needed to be ones that had never had a yoke (1 Samuel 6:7). Jesus was more sacred than the Old Testament sacrifices and the Ark of the Covenant, and so also required an animal that had never been ridden before.

2. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, how did the crowds receive Him? See Matthew 21:7-9.
3. When had this kind of welcome been seen before in Scripture? See 2 Kings 9:13 and 1 Maccabees 13:49-51.

³ Zion is a synonym for Jerusalem.

4. The words “Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest” come from Matthew 21:9. Hosanna means *save now*. Similar words combined with the waving of the palm branches are seen later in Revelation 7:9-10. Describe the scene, noting where it takes place.

5. What was the whole city’s reaction to the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem? See Matthew 21:10.

6. The word translated shaken in Matthew 21:10 (NAB) comes from a Greek word that means agitated and stirred up. Why do you think this was His impact on the city?

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence...Trust that He will always show up for you.

In the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, we see His hand on the past, the present and the future. Recognizing what had been promised and prophesied by the prophet Zechariah, He made sure things happened as had been said. He didn’t forget the past. Stepping into the present, He controlled every aspect of His arrival. He commanded the present. With each step forward, the execution of each symbolic detail, He looked to the future and began to answer the people’s cry, “Hosanna! Save us now!”

We stand at a time in history when we desperately need to know that Someone is in control. Here is the good news: God is. God knows the past. He knows all the things that have terrified and wounded us and how current events are triggering all those emotions. He knows the things we have dreamed about and are now grieving as we let them go. He takes all of that into account as He executes His plan in the present moment. And this plan is for our future good.

So...

I declare that God knows well His plans for you, and they are to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future of hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

I declare that the Lord is your light, salvation and refuge. There is nothing you need to fear. (Psalm 27:1)

I declare that eye has not seen, and ear has not heard what God has prepared for those who love Him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

I declare that you will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. (Psalm 27:13)

Day Two

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Read Psalm 22:2, 8-9, 17-20, 23-24⁴

Note: The author of this Psalm is King David. There were many seasons of uncertainty and fear throughout his life, especially when he was on the run from King Saul and then from his son, Absalom. Both times, he experienced the agony of isolation. But no one experienced isolation to the extent that Jesus did during His passion. We read this Psalm on Palm Sunday because Jesus quoted Psalm 22 when He was dying on the cross.

1. What do the first four words of Psalm 22:2 indicate about the relationship between David and God? What do you think is the significance of David repeating his plea twice?
2. A. In what way does Psalm 22:2 point to Jesus? See Matthew 27:45.

⁴ The numbering of the verses in the Psalms varies according to the translation of the Bible that you are using. The verses referenced here are from the NAB version of the Catholic Bible. This is the version read at Mass in the United States.

B. How is that particular agony of Jesus described in 2 Corinthians 5:21?

C. Is it right to say that God the Father was totally separated from Jesus on the cross? See 2 Corinthians 5:19.

3. In what way does Psalm 22:8-9 point to Jesus? See Matthew 27:29, 43.

This is one of the enemy's favorite tricks—to call into question someone's relationship with God when the person is in agony. As tempting as it is to judge God's character by our circumstances, we are far wiser to judge our circumstances in light of God's track record of goodness and faithfulness.

4. In what way do the following phrases from Psalm 22:17-20 point to Jesus?

A. "Dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me" See Mark 15:29-32

B. "They have pierced my hands and my feet" See Mark 15:25

C. "I can count all my bones." See John 19:31-37

D. "They stare at me and gloat" See Matthew 27:39-44

E. "They divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots." See Matthew 27:35

5. Hundreds of years before the horrific execution method of crucifixion was to be invented, David was able to prophesy with incredible accuracy what the Son of David⁵ would endure. Does this in any way increase your faith during this uncertain time?

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence ...there is no shelter like the shelter of the Lord.

David penned the words of Psalm 3 at another time in his life when he was feeling afraid and alone. Read them aloud, and turn his words into your personal prayer:

“How many are my foes, LORD!

How many rise against me!

How many say of me, ‘There is no salvation for him in God.’

But you, Lord, are a shield around me; my glory, you keep my head high.

With my own voice I will call out to the LORD, and he will answer me from his holy mountain.

I lie down and I fall asleep, [and] I will wake up, for the LORD sustains me.

I do not fear, then, thousands of people arrayed against me on every side.

Arise LORD! Save me, my God!

For you strike the cheekbone of all my foes; you break the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation is from the LORD!

May your blessing be upon your people!” Amen.

Day Three

THE SECOND READING

Read Philippians 2:5-11

Note: Our reading at Mass on Sunday will pick up with verse 6, but verse 5 is critical to our applying what we read to our own lives. The passage begins with the words, “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus.” Other translations say, “Let this mind be in you.” The point is, it’s easy for us to read the following description of Jesus and admire it, basically

⁵ The Son of David is one of the names of Jesus as seen in Matthew 1:1, Matthew 12:23, Matthew 15:22, Matthew 21:9.

saying, “Yay Him!” God does want us to be amazed by Jesus’ humility, but then He desires and expects that we will imitate Him. “Have among yourselves the same attitude” indicates that we have a choice. Humility isn’t something we are born with; it’s something we choose to cultivate.

1. A. According to Philippians 2:6, although Jesus was in the form of God (which means to share the nature or essence of God), what did He NOT do?

B. According to Biblical scholar David Guzik, “It wasn’t that Jesus was trying to achieve equality with the Father. He *had it*, and chose not to cling to it. Jesus’ divine nature was not something He had to seek for or acquire, but it was His already.”⁶

If only we could grasp the significance of this and apply this way of living to our own lives. True, we aren’t equal with the Father. That’s not the application. But we are beloved children of God, “and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). We already have dignity, identity, and worth. This has been given to us through the graces of Baptism; therefore, it’s not something we have to hustle to get or go out and prove. What this means is you are enough. What you have accomplished in life is enough. There is nothing to prove. A higher bank account, a thinner body, a nicer house, a better job...none of those things will change what is already true. You have an inherent worth. Your true identity is given, not found. Sit with this truth for a minute. Does it ring true in your heart? Or do competing voices tell you something else? Who will you choose to believe?

2. A. Which actions did Jesus choose to take according to Philippians 2:7-8?

B. When this passage says that Jesus emptied Himself, it doesn’t mean that He divested Himself of His divinity. Jesus was divine, but in a sense, laid aside the

⁶ David Guzik, *Study Guide for Philippians 2*, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Phl/Phl-2.cfm?a=1105005, accessed March 25, 2020.

tokens of his royalty and put on the habit of a merchant.⁷ At no point did He cease to be a king. But He came disguised as one of us. That being said, Jesus was fully human. How is this explained in CCC #472? (CCC refers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church #472 can be found at the end of this lesson.)

When Jesus “humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8), He willingly died the most shameful death conceivable. It was such a horrific and degrading form of death that it was illegal for a Roman citizen to be crucified. The Philippians were Roman citizens, and this point wouldn’t have been lost on them. Jesus accepted a death that was as far from the Throne of God as was imaginable. His humility knew no limit. He stooped down as low as was possible in order to save us and lift us up.

3. According to Philippians 2:9, because Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross, what did God do?

Giving Jesus “the name that is above every name,” (Philippians 2:9) goes beyond giving Jesus the name of God. God revealed Himself in the Old Testament by many names (Elohim, El Elyon, El Roi, Jehovah, Adonai and more). Each of these names reveal a different aspect of God’s character. The Hebrew concept of a name goes far beyond our own because a name is solemn and sacred, revealing something about who the person is. When God gave Jesus “the name that is above every name,” He was communicating that Jesus’ character and power is ABOVE ALL.

4. One day, what will happen according to Philippians 2:10-11?

⁷ Matthew Poole, *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible Vol. 3*, (Arkose Press, 2015), 689.

One day, every knee will bend at the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. Some will do so with the greatest joy and faith, and others with despair and resentment. But there will be no doubt, no confusion, as to who He is, and who He has always been.

5. In Matthew 16, long before the final chapter of Jesus' time on earth, He leaned into His disciples. They had just seen the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand. In a quiet moment, He asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). He asks the same of you today. How will you answer that question? Share your thoughts below.

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . be inspired to reflect His humility.

How can Christ's humility be seen in me?

He was humble when He was born in a manger.

Can I humbly accept my home, as it is?

He was humble when He obeyed Mary, His mother.

Can I humbly obey those in authority?

He was humble when He embraced a life of simplicity instead of royalty.

Can I humbly be content with what I have?

He was humble as He used His hands to learn a trade.

Can I humbly respect my work and not need greater success to feel valuable?

He was humble as He waited to launch into public ministry.

Can I humbly wait for my plans and hopes to come to fruition, holding them loosely?

He was humble in His willingness to suffer and die on the cross.

Can I humbly accept the circumstances I cannot change and bear my difficulties with patience and grace?

Lord Jesus,

Please help me to have the same attitude that you consistently displayed. May your mind and Spirit be within me. Amen.

Day Four

THE GOSPEL, PART I

Read Matthew 27:1-2, 11-54

Note: The full gospel reading for this Sunday is Matthew 26:14-75 and Matthew 27. We will spend the next two days studying the shorter form, Matthew 27:11-54.

1. A. What did the chief priests and elders make plans to do to Jesus in Matthew 27:1?

B. Why, if they had already made this decision, did they then lead Jesus to the governor Pilate? See John 18:31.

C. The Sanhedrin (the name for the Jewish religious leaders) needed to find a charge for Jesus that the Roman authorities would take seriously. Although they were incensed at Jesus' apparent blasphemy in claiming to be equal with God,

this would have held no interest for the Romans. Matthew doesn't explain which charges they came up with, but Luke does. What are they? See Luke 23:2.

2. What questions did Pilate ask Jesus in Matthew 27:11-14, and how did Jesus reply? What impression did this make on Pilate?

3. In what way does Pilate then attempt to escape having to make a decision about Jesus? See Matthew 27:15-21.

The meaning of the name Barabbas is "son of the father." The irony instead of choosing to release the true Son of the Father, the people chose to crucify Him.

4. A. What did Pilate do to try to rid himself of guilt? See Matthew 27:24.

When Pilate washed his hands in front of the people, he was following a Jewish custom. Deuteronomy 21:1-9 outlines a ceremony of absolution in the event of an untraced murder. If a body was found, the elders of the city nearest to the corpse were to take a heifer that had never worked or worn a yoke and take it down to a valley. While there, the elders were to wash their hands over the heifer and sacrifice it. Ridding themselves of guilt, they'd say, "Our hands did not shed this blood, and our eyes did not see the deed" (Deuteronomy 21:7).

Pilate was going against his conscience when He condemned Jesus because He was afraid of the mob. Washing his hands was a futile gesture. Responsibility is not something that can be avoided in this way.

- B. In what ways do people try to unsuccessfully get rid of guilt today?

C. While there are times that we feel guilty over something we haven't actually done or something for which God has forgiven us, there are many situations in which the reason we can't get rid of guilt is because we haven't confessed what we have done wrong. So often, more than one person is at fault. When we choose to look at the other person's sin instead of our own, we get stuck. Are you in a stalemate in a relationship because you are waiting for the other person to own their part of the mess? What might change if you confessed first—even if your part in it is very small, relatively speaking?

5. What happened after Pilate washed his hands and before Jesus was handed over to be crucified? See Matthew 27:15-17.

A scourging was the most horrific form of torture. Barclay describes it in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew:

The victim was stripped; his hands were tied behind him, and he was tied to a post with his back bent double and conveniently exposed to the lash. The lash itself was a long leather thong, studded at intervals with sharpened pieces of bone and pellets of lead. Such scourging always preceded crucifixion and it reduced the naked body to strips of raw flesh and inflamed and bleeding [lesions]. Men died under it, and men lost their reason under it, and few remained conscious to the end of it.⁸

6. What followed the scourging? See Matthew 27:17-31.

⁸ Barclay, 363.

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . think of what it cost Jesus to offer us forgiveness.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed,” Isaiah 53:5 (RSVCE).

Reading the description of a scourging gives us sobering insight into what this prophecy from Isaiah meant. Sit with this picture for a minute, even if it is difficult to do so.

We must make a conscious effort to remind ourselves of what our sins cost Jesus. If we fail to do this, we’ll soon find that 2 Timothy 3:1-7 is a description of us: “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it.”

Those verses are a description of people who fail to take sin seriously. Sin is a most unpopular word today. We live in a culture that says sin doesn’t exist. The philosophy of postmodernism says that absolute truth does not exist, as a result, nor can a definitive definition of right and wrong. This makes any discussion of sin not only tricky—it sounds archaic and judgmental.

“Who am I to judge,” the motto of the current age, makes it difficult to move beyond superficial conversation. But tolerance is often simply a mask for intellectual laziness. It’s easier to say, “You do you, boo,” than to engage in thought-provoking discussion and respectful argument.

Any discussion of sin seems harsh and degrading to a culture that hails self-esteem as one of its core-values. Most people believe that humans are intrinsically good, and that given the right social conditions, we will make the right choices. When things go wrong, we blame poverty, or dysfunctional childhoods, or sexism, or racism. I am not saying that those societal problems are not incredibly damaging and that they do not significantly contribute to what goes wrong in our world. But it’s a “utopian view” of man that leaves all the blame there and assigns none to personal responsibility and choice.

Spend some time contemplating these thoughts, asking the Lord to bring to mind anything that you need to confess. Waste no time in doing just that. He is waiting, and His response is always to forgive.

Day Five

THE GOSPEL, PART 2

Read Matthew 27:32-54

1. A. Jesus was physically and emotionally exhausted after being examined by the Sanhedrin all night long and then enduring the scourging and abuse from the Roman soldiers. A person condemned to be crucified was required to carry least the crossbeam of the cross to the scene of his execution, but Jesus faltered under the load. What happened next? See Matthew 27:32.

Simon of Cyrene was likely in Jerusalem on pilgrimage for the Passover. Cyrene was in North Africa, approximately 800 miles away. Simon had no choice but to say yes to the request because Palestine was an occupied territory. All a soldier needed to do was nudge a Jew with the end of his spear and command him to obey. Carrying the cross was not only hard work, it was shameful and distasteful. Simon would have experienced the fear, the jeers, and the disdain of all as he walked the road to Calvary with Christ. It is interesting that in the Book of Mark 15:21, Simon is identified as “the father of Alexander and Rufus.” The fact that they are mentioned suggests the possibility that they were known to the early Christian community. What do you think they learned as they observed their father carry the cross? Is someone watching you?

While carrying the cross would have been easier if Simon had known who Jesus was beforehand, looking back, it was no doubt His life’s most defining moment.

- B. What trial are you facing right now that seems pointless? Does your obedience to God seem to get you nowhere? In fact, are there times that you feel you pay too high a price for it? Can you find any encouragement from the story of Simon of Cyrene, knowing that even though you don’t see the reason for the suffering right now, one day you may look back and see how significant this very moment was?

2. What was offered to Jesus in Matthew 27:34, and how did he respond?

3. A. What was the overarching message spoken to Jesus by those crucified with Him, the religious leaders, and those passing by? See Matthew 27:38-44.

B. In his profound teaching on the redemptive suffering of Christ, Dr. Bob Schuchts points out that Jesus left us an example of how to suffer without sinning or losing our belief in who and whose we are. The people's words pierced Jesus like arrows, saying that He was powerless, helpless, abandoned and rejected. But Jesus was able to continue "to receive His true name from the Father. He did not believe the lie...He did not sin in response to being wounded."⁹ He suffered *purely*. Chaos and confusion were all around Him. His capacity to think clearly was challenged, but He never bought into the lie that says, "I don't know what to do. It's all up to me to figure it out." He was clear on one thing - He had a Father who would lead Him through. What can you learn from His example?

4. What did Jesus cry out at about three o'clock? See Matthew 27:46.

While these agonizing words could lead us to assume that Christ had lost all hope and was in despair, we must remember that He was praying as He spoke them. His feelings were plumbing the depths of human experience. His sense of abandonment, rejection, powerlessness, confusion, and fear was acute. But He held on to hope. Remember His example during the times when you might feel that God has forgotten you. You are never left alone. There is always reason to hope. God says, "I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have engraved you" (Isaiah 49:15-16).

⁹ Dr. Bob Schuchts, *Healing the Whole Person Workbook and Journal* (Tallahassee, FL: Dr. Bob Schuchts, 2017), 45.

5. In Matthew 27:50, Jesus “gave up His spirit.” What events followed that climactic moment? See Matthew 27:51-54.

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . you have been granted access to the Father.

“And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.” Matthew 27:51

What was the significance of the veil of the sanctuary? Within the temple were two sections. The first and larger section was called the Holy Place. Only priests were allowed there. The next section was the inner room, the Holy of Holies. The Holy Place was separated from the Holy of Holies by the veil of the sanctuary. This was no see-through veil that a bride might wear. The Mishnah (which is the recorded oral tradition of Jewish law) says that the veil was the thickness of a man’s hand- around six inches. It was enormous. It’s said that it was sixty feet high - which is almost six stories, and twenty feet wide. It took three hundred priests to hoist it and move it into place. It was imposing and delivered a strong message - DO NOT ENTER.

Why was this place so protected? Why was it considered so sacred that no one could enter except the high priest, and Him, only once a year? The Holy of Holies was the place where God dwelt.

When Jesus gave up His Spirit, the veil of the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom. This isn’t something that a man could have done. God tore the veil. The torn veil symbolized a monumental change in the way that God was to relate to man. Everything had changed.

When the veil was torn, it was sending a message to us all saying, “There is a new way to gain access to God!” In John 1:12 we read, “But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name.” Children get access to their Father. Our Heavenly Father’s children don’t get shut out by a thick curtain. They aren’t put on hold and told to wait an indefinite amount of time. They are told to draw near. To come close.

Are you longing for Him? Are you hungry for Him? Tell Him how deeply you desire the ultimate intimacy with Him. He is longing for you, too.

CONCLUSION

The account of the crucifixion of Jesus is one most of us know well. Familiarity can cause our hearts to remain unmoved when we hear it told again. This is not necessarily because we don't want to be moved; it's just that we've heard it all before.

The story is told of two men who went on a weekend trip and indulged in every sin that enticed them. The list was long. On the way back, one challenged the other, "I'll bet you \$100 you can't go into a confessional and tell a priest everything you just did. You'd be too afraid of giving him a heart attack." Thinking that this was easy money, the man accepted the challenge.

With a heart hardened by years of unconfessed sin, the man entered the confessional and rattled off his weekend activities. He began with the words, "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned," and then shared all the graphic details. The priest, sensing that the man's confession was insincere, gave him his penance.

"For your penance," the priest said, "go into the church, and kneel in front of the crucifix. Then look up at the face of your suffering Savior and say, 'Jesus, all this you did for me. And I couldn't care less.'"

The man exited the confessional and prepared to walk out the door and collect his \$100. But his friend stopped him. "Not until you finish. You have to do your penance." So the man rolled his eyes and went over to kneel in front of the crucifix.

He started out flippantly, "Jesus, all this you did for me and..." But then he found he couldn't continue. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Jesus, all this you did for me and..."

Perhaps it was the prayers of the priest, or the quiet of the church, or the presence of the Holy Spirit, but as the man knelt there, something shifted in his heart. He couldn't say the words, "I couldn't care less." And so began his journey back home to the heart of His Father.¹⁰

¹⁰"Unmoved by the Cross," Steve Malone, Sermon Central, <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/unmoved-by-the-cross-steve-malone-sermon-on-jesus-christ-34828>, accessed March 26, 2020.

Oh Lord, may we never lose the wonder. May these truths never grow dull or stale to us. They truly are the words of life. May we be changed as we encounter them anew.

*“As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, the living God.
When can I enter and see the face of God?” Psalm 42:1-3*

MY RESOLUTION

“My Resolution” is your opportunity to write down one specific personal application from this lesson. We can take in a lot of information from studying the Bible, but if we don’t translate it into action, we have totally missed the point. In James 1:22, we’re told that we shouldn’t just hear the Word of God; we are to “be doers of the word.” So what qualities should be found in a good resolution? It should be **personal** (use *I, me, my, mine*), it should be **possible** (don’t choose something so far-fetched that you’ll just become discouraged), it should be **measurable** (a specific goal to achieve within a specific time period), and it should be **action-oriented** (not just a spiritual thought).

In what specific way will I apply what I learned in this lesson?

Example:

I will tune in to an online Mass this weekend, having done these lessons and prepared my heart to go deeper in intimacy with Christ, the Word of God.

I will make the following Act of Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,

and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

My resolution:

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Summary of Day 1: Jesus' actions as He entered Jerusalem were planned and deliberate. He was taking control of the narrative and ensuring that God's eternal plan for our salvation would come to pass.

Summary of Day 2: Reading the details of David's prophecy regarding the suffering of Jesus during the Passion should remind us that God is in control of every detail of our lives. He has a plan and is not caught off guard by current events. He sees into the future and incorporates everything that happens into His overarching plan for our good. What appeared to be the abandonment of Jesus by His Father was actually the fulfillment of the promise of our rescue. This challenges us to look past what "appears to be" and trust in God's goodness.

Summary of Day 3: Jesus humbled Himself, so we could be lifted up. We are to have the same attitude and respond to all we face in life with humility. If we want to experience peace in the midst of our current circumstances, we must humbly recognize that God is God, and we are not. We will not understand God's ways, because His mind is so far beyond ours and His ways beyond our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Summary of Day 4: Jesus was falsely accused and suffered horrific torture, willingly. He endured the scourging, mockery and abuse out of love for us. "By His stripes, we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). May this truth lead us to honestly confess our sin.

Summary of Day 5: The trials we are facing are not without purpose, even if we can't see it at present. It is critical that we hold on to truth when lies swirl around us. We may feel powerless, confused, abandoned and afraid, but God is in control, we are His children, and He is taking care of us. We can draw near to Him in any circumstance. He will never abandon us.

CATECHISM CLIPS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC #472 This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, “increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man”, and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience. This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking “the form of a slave”.

LIVE WITH LISA BRENNENKMEYER FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Be sure to join us on Saturday, April 4, at 2pm EST/ 11 AM PST on Facebook Live and Instagram Stories for teaching and practical application to prepare us for Palm Sunday!

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Answer Key

Day 1

1. Jesus asked two of His disciples to go into the village and find an ass and a colt. They were to untie them and bring them to Jesus. If anyone asked why they were taking them, they were to say, "The master has need of them." Then they were assured that the owner would let the animals go. The reason why He wanted these instructions followed precisely was because Jesus was preparing to fulfill a prophecy.
2. The crowds spread their cloaks on the road, and people cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. The crowds coming ahead of him and those following him cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." (Matthew 21:9)
3. In 2 Kings 9:13, the people spread their garments under Jehu on the steps when they declared him king of Israel. In 1 Maccabees 13:51, the people welcomed Simon Maccabees with shouts of praise and the waving of palm branches to celebrate a great victory over their enemies.
4. A great multitude from every nation, race, people and language stood before the throne of God and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches. They cried, "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb," (Revelation 7:10). The setting is the throne of God in heaven.
5. The whole city was shaken because of the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, and asked, "Who is this?" (Matthew 21:10)
6. Answers will vary.

Day 2

1. The words "my God, my God" indicate that the psalmist had a relationship with God. The repetition of the plea indicates the intensity of the agony.
2. **A.** Jesus quoted Psalm 22:2 at three o'clock when He was dying on the cross.
B. It was as Jesus hung on the cross that "for our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin." (2 Corinthians 5:21)
C. Because of our belief in the Trinity, we believe that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19).
3. In Psalm 22:8 the people mocked the psalmist. In Matthew 27:29 the soldiers placed a crown of thorns on His head and a reed in His hand and mocked Him as the king of the Jews. In Psalm 22:9 the people said, "He relied on the LORD - let him deliver him; if he loves him, let him rescue him." In Matthew 27:43 the chief priests and elders mocked him and said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"
4. **A.** People walking by and those crucified with Jesus all reviled him, shouting insults and abusing Him.
B. Crucifixion involved putting a nail through the wrists and the feet.
C. David was able to see his bones, but they were not broken. Nor were any of Jesus' bones

broken, in keeping with the requirement that none of the bones of the Passover lamb should be broken (Exodus 12:46).

D. Jesus wasn't even granted the dignity of suffering privately. He did before a cruel audience who was delighting in His agony.

E. After Jesus was crucified, the soldiers divided his garments by casting lots.

5. Answers will vary.

Day 3

1. **A.** Jesus didn't regard equality with God something to be grasped.

B. Answers will vary.

2. **A.** Jesus emptied himself, took the form of a slave, came in human likeness, was found human in appearance, humbled himself, and became obedient to death on a cross.

B. Jesus' human soul was endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge was not unlimited. This is what Jesus was said to "increase in wisdom" and had to learn through experience what He needed to understand about the human condition. This process is what is meant by the voluntary emptying of himself.

3. "God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name." Philippians 2:9
4. One day, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bend—those on heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.
5. Answers will vary.

Day 4

1. **A.** They took counsel (or made plans) to put Jesus to death.

B. Under Roman law, the Jewish leaders did not have the right to execute anyone.

C. They charged Jesus with three things, and each one of them was a lie. First, they claimed that Jesus was "misleading our people" which they later clarified to mean that He was inciting them as a revolutionary. This would have been very threatening to Pilate, whose primary duty was to keep the peace. Secondly, they said that Jesus opposed payment of taxes to Caesar. In actual fact, Jesus had said, "Repay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God," (Mark 12:17). Thirdly, they said Jesus claimed to be a king. All three were political charges, the only type of charges that the Romans would take seriously.

2. Pilate asked Jesus if He was the king of the Jews. Jesus replied, "You have said so." This is the same response He gave the high priest when he asked Jesus whether or not He was the Messiah, the Son of God in Matthew 26:64. There's no powerful self-defense or attempt to protect Himself. Even when the Jewish religious leaders continued to accuse Him, Jesus made no answer. Then Pilate asked, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" And Jesus said nothing. All of this greatly amazed Pilate.

3. It was a custom during the feast of the Passover for the governor to release one prisoner. He hoped that in giving the people the option of choosing either Jesus or Barabbas, they'd release Jesus. But instead, the people choose to release Barabbas.

4. **A.** Pilate publicly washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves."

B. To rid ourselves of guilt, we blame others, turn to substances to numb the feelings inside, minimize the seriousness of what we have done, and practice positive thinking. We often

look at ourselves as victims instead of taking responsibility for our part in things.

C. Answers will vary.

5. Pilate had Jesus scourged.
6. Jesus was taken into the praetorium where the soldiers gathered around Him. They stripped his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak around him. They made a crown of thorns and placed it on his head while mocking Him as “king,” they spat on Him, struck Him continuously with a reed, then took off the cloak, put His own clothes back on, and led Him off to crucify Him.

Day 5

1. **A.** The Roman soldiers had Simon of Cyrene help carry the cross of Christ.
B. Answers will vary.
2. Jesus was offered wine mixed with gall, but once He tasted it, He refused to drink. According to Barclay, “A Jewish writing says, ‘When a man is going out to be killed, they allow him to drink a grain of frankincense in a cup of wine to deaden his senses’...Wealthy women of Jerusalem used to contribute these things and bring them.”¹¹
3. **A.** All the people ridiculing Jesus were suggesting that He was powerless, helpless, abandoned and rejected. But nothing could have been further from the truth.
B. Answers will vary.
4. “And about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)
5. The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two, there was an earthquake, tombs opened and bodies were raised to life, and those who were keeping watch over Jesus were terrified and said, “Truly, this was the Son of God.” (Matthew 27:54).

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¹¹ Barclay, 366.

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