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#### THE DAY BEFORE:



#### SCRIPTURE: LUKE 19:1-10; MATTHEW 5:23-24.

Jesus is coming.

The streets are already crowded, the dust stirred by the pressing feet of the eager and the desperate. You know who you are to them—a tax collector, a sinner, an outcast. You are used to the glares, the whispered judgments, the way people turn away when you pass.

But today is different.

Something inside you stirs, a longing that words fall short to name. You have heard the stories—how this Jesus heals, how He forgives, how He calls the unlikely.

You run ahead, your heart pounding, and scramble up a sycamore tree. It is not dignified, but dignity has long since ceased to matter. Just a glimpse, just a moment, just a chance that I might see Him pass by.

And then—He stops.

Looks up.

Says your name.

"Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay at your house today." (Luke 19:5)

He sees you. Not your position. Not your past. Not the sin. *And you know you have been seen, maybe for the first time ever.* 





You thought you were here to see Him. But He was always coming to find you.

You welcome Him into your home, the murmur of the crowd following behind. They grumble, "Jesus has gone to eat with a sinner". But their voices are distant compared to the change happening within you.

His presence brings light into the places long buried in what felt like the necessary evils of life.

Your hands, once so quick to take, now open to give.

"Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." (Luke 19:8)

The love of Christ does not merely call us—it changes us.

Jesus smiles. The words He speaks next are not just for you, but for all who have ears to hear:

"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
(Luke 19:9-10)

You were lost. And now, you are found.

He acknowledged that his past had hurt others, and he chose to make amends, that his choices and his life would not take away from the glory and reputation of Jesus.

Reconciliation.

Restoration.

Jesus calls us to the same thing.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

Before we come to this week with Jesus, consider-

- Have my actions caused others to wonder why Jesus would dine with me?
- Have I wronged anyone through selfishness, pride, dishonesty, or indifference?
- Where is Jesus inviting me to repent and make things right?

Spend time with Jesus today, asking Him:

"Lord, show me where I need to repent—not just in my heart, but in my actions. Help me see where I have hurt others, where I have been blind to the impact I have had on others, and where I need to seek reconciliation. Give me the courage to make things right, so that I may come to You with a heart fully surrendered."



## palm sunday

Atop a young donkey, Jesus rode into Jerusalem. The streets swelled with anticipation. People spread their cloaks on the road, waved palm branches, and cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9). This moment was not a show of military might or a kingly display of power, but a humble entrance:

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

As we reflect on Palm Sunday, we are reminded of Jesus' teaching: true worship is not about a place, an event, or outward display—it is about our hearts.

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him."

— John 4:23

The crowds on that day raised their hands but many, not their hearts, did any truly recognize who Jesus was? The same voices crying "Hosanna!" would shout "Crucify Him!" just days later. (Luke 23:21).

We, too, must guard against worship that is fleeting. Our hearts must make room for Jesus—not just in times of celebration, but in the quiet spaces of our daily lives. True worship flows from a heart that is surrendered.

On that day in Jerusalem, people laid down their garments, a symbolic act of honor and surrender. Today, we are invited to lay down distractions, worries, and the busyness that keeps us from Him.

The psalmist reminds us:

"Be still and know that I am God."

— Psalm 46:10 (ESV)

Worship is not just an event before the message on Sunday mornings. It is setting aside time, making space, and choosing to recognize Jesus as King of every moment.

#### **A PRAYER**

Jesus, You entered Jerusalem humbly, yet You were worthy of all honor. Teach us to worship You in spirit and in truth, not just in moments of excitement but in the depths of our hearts. Help us to make room for You, to celebrate You daily, and to surrender all that we are. May our worship be genuine, rooted in love and truth.

As we wave our palms—whether literally or in our hearts—may we do so with a worship that is real. Jesus is worthy, the lamb who was slain, worthy. Will you make room for Him today?



#### MONDAY:

### an offering

#### MARK 12:41-44; LUKE 21:1-4

The grand temple, filled with people: Pharisees in fine robes, teachers of the law discussing scripture, wealthy worshippers dropping large sums of money into the treasury. Their coins clatter as they fall, a sound that longs for attention.

Then, a widow. Unnoticed, uncelebrated. She reaches into her worn-out cloak and pulls out two tiny coins, worth almost nothing. They barely make a sound as they drop.

Yet in the hush of heaven, the gift rang out.

Jesus saw her. Not just the coins, not just the poverty, but her. The guiet, trembling surrender of a heart that set itself on holding nothing back.

> "Truly, I tell you," He said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. They gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:43-44)

The world sees value in numbers, in power, in reputation. But Jesus sees worth in the unseen, in the sacrifice, in the heart behind the gift. While others gave what was comfortable, she gave in faith.

#### THE MEMORY

#### JOHN 12:1-8: MARK 14:3-9: MATTHEW 26:6-13

Another scene: A house in Bethany. Jesus is reclining at the table when Mary of Bethany enters, carrying an alabaster jar. The fragrance of costly perfume fills the air as she kneels, breaks the jar, and anoints Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair.

"Why this waste? This could have been sold and given to the poor!"

But Jesus defends her: "Leave her alone. She has done a beautiful thing to me... She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare me for burial.

Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."
(Mark 14:6-9)

#### REFLECTION: WHO HAS SHOWN YOU THIS KIND OF FAITH?

These two women had no titles, no influence, no wealth to speak of, and none of these things they sought; yet Jesus honored them. Their gifts weren't measured in dollars, usefulness or how they could increase the kingdom. These gifts were weighed with the heart they were given.

Who in your life has embodied this kind of faith? Who has given selflessly, loved deeply, or honored Christ in a way that seemed small, unnoticed, yet great in the eyes of God?

In a world that prizes spectacle, where worth is often measured in numbers and noise, we are invited into an upside-down kingdom. A kingdom where the unseen is seen, where the quiet offering is heard, where the fragrance of costly love lingers long after words have faded.

Who in your life has embodied this spirit? Who has given in ways unseen, poured out in love when no one was watching?

Let their sacrifice not go unnoticed. Reach out. Speak their name. Honor them, just as Jesus honored the widow and Mary.

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#### TUFSDAY:

## sitting at the feet of the master

"THE HOUR HAS COME FOR THE SON OF MAN TO BE GLORIFIED." (JOHN 12:23)

The air in Jerusalem is thick with tension. The temple courts, usually bustling with festival preparation, are charged with something greater, an urgency, a reckoning, a final call. Here, in these last moments of open teaching, Jesus speaks in parables, pouring out the deepest truths of the Kingdom to those who have ears to hear. Those who sit at His feet this day may not yet fully grasp it, but they are receiving some of the last words He will teach before His Passion.

Jesus looks at them, at us, with eyes full of love and sorrow. He knows what is coming. The Cross is near. Yet, even in the shadow of His suffering, He teaches, as one who knows the time is short and longs for His beloved to understand.

He tells of two sons—one who refuses his father's will but later repents, and another who agrees to obedience but never follows through (Matthew 21:28-32). His voice carries both gentleness and fire as He speaks: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you." It is not lip service that matters, but a heart turned in repentance.





He tells of vinedressers who were entrusted with a vineyard but rejected the landowner's servants and killed his son (Matthew 21:33-46). The weight of the story presses upon the hearers. The religious leaders know He speaks of them, their rejection of the prophets, and their blindness to the Son standing before them. He warns: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

And He speaks of a wedding feast, a king who invites many, but they refuse him, some even killing his messengers (Matthew 22:1-14). The invitation is cast wide, but not all are willing to come, and not all who come are prepared. The call of the Kingdom is not mere attendance but transformation.

We sit in the temple courts with the disciples, the pilgrims, the skeptics, the seekers, the hardened hearts. His voice is steady, yet urgent. The love in His eyes burns with longing, longing that we would listen, that we would turn, that we would know the depths of His mercy and love, the lengths He would and will go.

He carries the burden of what is to come. Every word He speaks is given with love. The agony of Gethsemane is already stirring in His soul, yet He spends these hours not withdrawing, not recoiling from His fate, but pouring out the deepest treasures of the Kingdom.

It is easy to hear these words and think them meant for another, to imagine the parables as warnings for long-dead priests or blind Pharisees. But as we sit before Him today, hearing these final teachings, we must ask, Where am I in these stories? Am I the son who gives empty words but no obedience? Am I the vinedresser rejecting the voice of the Master? Am I the invited guest too distracted, too self-consumed, too indifferent to accept the call?

These are the last days of His public teaching. He speaks not to condemn but to draw us near, to call us into repentance, to recognize and receive His love.

Let us not turn away.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, as I sit at Your feet, let me hear Your words as if for the first time. Open my heart to You. Show me where I have resisted Your call, where I have spoken empty words, where I have ignored Your invitation. Let me not be among those who turn away, I long to draw near to You. Amen.



WEDNESDAY:

# the weight of betrayal

"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me."

- Psalm 41:9

The weight of rejection is one thing; the weight of betrayal is another. To be hated by enemies is expected. To be forsaken by a friend is an agony few can bear.

Jesus knew this sorrow well.

The Son of God walked among those He loved, yet love was not always returned. He healed bodies and was met with demands for more. He spoke truth and was accused of blasphemy. He extended mercy and was repaid with scorn. The ones who should have known Him best, who saw the miracles, who shared meals, who whispered questions in the firelight, were often the ones who wounded Him most

#### JUDAS WAS ONE OF THEM.

One of the twelve. Handpicked. Trusted with the common purse. A witness to the dead being raised, the blind receiving sight, the storm-stilled sea. He sat at the Lord's table. He walked the same dusty roads. He heard Jesus call him "friend" (Matthew 26:50), even as silver clinked in his pouch, the price of his treachery.

Thirty pieces of silver. The cost of a slave. That was the value assigned to the Son of God.

And yet, is Judas so unlike us?

How often do we trade Jesus for our own desires? How often do we walk in His presence, yet resist His way? How often do we seek the gifts more than the Giver, or find our hearts cold when His will does not align with ours?

Jesus, too, knew the pain of unmet expectations.

His disciples expected a kingdom of power. Instead, He spoke of servanthood.

The religious leaders expected a Messiah who would confirm their righteousness.

Instead, He called them to repentance.

The crowds expected a warrior to overthrow Rome. Instead, He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, knowing the same voices that shouted "Hosanna" would soon cry "Crucify Him."

And still, He loved.

Even as Judas left the table to arrange betrayal, Jesus knelt and washed feet (John 13:5).

Even as Peter denied Him three times, Jesus turned to him with mercy (Luke 22:61).

Even as the crowd chose Barabbas, Jesus chose the cross.

He sees our betrayals. He knows our denials. And still, He does not turn away, from you and I.

#### REFLECTION:

Where have I placed my own expectations on Jesus, rather than seeing Him for who He is?

Where have I sought my own gain at the cost of my devotion?

Will I follow when He does not meet my expectations?

Tonight, as darkness falls and the silver is spent, let us sit with this weight.

Let us feel the grief of a Savior who is betrayed, denied, and forsaken.

And let us prepare our hearts for the costly, unfathomable love that will yet be poured out.

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

-Isaiah 53:3,5



#### THURSDAY:

## love in the shadow

#### JOHN 13:3-5, MATTHEW 26:36-39

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus took a basin and a towel. The hands that shaped the universe knelt to cleanse the dirt from the feet of men. The Master washed the feet of the servant. Peter recoiled. How could, Jesus, touch me, my feet? But Jesus responded, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (John 13:8).

How often do we resist the hand of God when He reaches to cleanse us? Are we willing to allow Him to wash even the those things we most long to hide?

#### **EXODUS 30:18-21 - THE BRONZE BASIN**

Before entering the Tent of Meeting, the priests were required to wash at the bronze basin, signifying purification before service to God. Jesus, our High Priest, stooped and washed His disciples, foreshadowing the greater cleansing through His sacrifice. He calls us not just to be washed, but to wash one another, He calls us to walk in his ways, to do as he has done for us.

#### MATTHEW 26:36-39 - THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

From the Upper Room, Jesus walked into the shadows of Gethsemane, where olive trees stood, witnessing His agony. He fell to the ground, praying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will." The weight of the world pressed upon Him, the crushing sorrow of sin and the suffering to come. He was fully God, yet fully man. His heart heavy with grief, His spirit resolute in obedience.

How often do we bring our burdens to the garden? How do we wrestle with the tension between our will and God's? Jesus' prayer echoes the words of the Psalmist: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Psalm 42:5-6). Yet, He entrusted Himself to the Father's plan.

#### ISAIAH 53:5 - THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Long before that night, Isaiah prophesied, "He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds, we are healed." In Gethsemane, we see the Servant's suffering beginning—not on the cross, but in His surrender

#### A CALL TO REFLECTION

Tonight, sit in stillness. Let the weight of Jesus' love and surrender settle upon you. Imagine Him kneeling before you, the water of His grace touching the places you hesitate to expose. See Him in the garden, praying with tears, yet yielding to the Father's will. Let His example guide you.

Will you allow Him to wash you? Will you kneel to wash another? Will you surrender your will to the Father, trusting in His plan?

Tonight, take the towel. Take the cup. And follow Him.

### paschal

#### ISAIAH 53:3-5, JOHN 12:23-24, JOHN 19:30

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. As one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds, we are healed.

(Isaiah 53:3-5)

The hour has come. The time appointed before the foundation of the world, foretold by prophets, awaited by heaven and earth. The Seed, planted before time itself, falls into the ground. The Lamb, long prepared, is lifted up.

As Isaiah beheld it, centuries before, he saw no beauty to draw us to Him. He saw a man broken beyond recognition, suffering in silence, bearing the weight of sorrows not His own. The Servant—the One who should have been exalted—was instead crushed beneath the burden of sin. The Prophet's words echo across the ages: pierced, crushed, chastised, wounded. A horror and a wonder intertwined.

And yet, on this day of suffering, John, the beloved, would have us see **GLORY.** 



From the Roman wood, Jesus speaks, not in despair, but in victory. It is finished. The work for which He came is complete. The cup drained to its dregs. The curse borne. The sin of the world carried into death itself. The grain of wheat has fallen, buried in the soil of sorrow, and yet, glory, a kingdom, evangelion, blooms.

#### John had heard His words:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12:23-24).

Now, standing before the cross, he sees its fulfillment. The King enthroned, not in gold, but in agony. The hands that shaped the cosmos, now pierced. The breath that breathed life into Adam, now faltering. Yet in this, the fullness of divine love is revealed.

The world shudders. The sun refuses to shine. The earth trembles as the blood of the Righteous One touches it. But within the darkness, the light of eternity burns. The hour of suffering is the hour of glory. The Seed will rise. The Lamb will reign. And those who see, who stand in this sacred shadow, will find that their sorrow has become salvation.

Let us stand in awe. Let us kneel in wonder. Let us behold the Son of Man, and behold our God.



THE SILENCE OF HOLY SATURDAY:

## when hope seems lost

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" — MATTHEW 27:46

The echoes of Friday's horror still linger. The cross stands empty, its work seemingly done, and the One who spoke life and healing now lies breathless in a sealed tomb. The sky, once torn in darkness, has quieted. Jerusalem, so full of cries and chaos, has settled into hushed, uneasy, stillness.

Wait.

Holy Saturday is the space between sorrow and joy, between loss and fulfillment, between despair and resurrection. It is the long night of uncertainty where the only sound is the aching of hearts too stunned to hope, too wounded to understand.

The disciples scatter, grief-stricken. The women prepare burial spices, laboring through their mourning. And the silence, deafening, heavy, settles like a stone over their faith.

Have you ever known a day like this?

A day when prayers feel unanswered, when expectations are shattered, when it seems God is nowhere to be found? When the weight of waiting presses so deeply that even hope feels buried?

Yet, even in the silence, God is near.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." — Psalm 34:18

What they could not yet see, what we, in our own waiting, often forget, is that silence does not mean absence. God is working in the unseen. Though the tomb is closed, Heaven is not still. The story is not over.

Holy Saturday teaches us that faith is not only believing in what we have seen but trusting in what we have not yet received. It is holding on when we do not understand. It is waiting, not in hopelessness, but in the expectation that dawn will break, that stone will roll, that death does not get the final word.

"Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." — Psalm 30:5

If you find yourself in a Holy Saturday season, in the waiting, in the sorrow, in the silence—know this: God is moving. The night will end. And the dawn will crest that horizon.

#### PRAYER:

Lord, in the silence, in the waiting, in the spaces where hope seems lost, remind us that You are near. Strengthen our hearts when we do not understand. Hold us in our sorrow. Teach us to wait with faith, knowing that You are working even when we cannot see. And when the morning comes, let us rise with it in praise. Amen.



### the dawn

SCRIPTURE: "HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE HAS RISEN, AS HE SAID. COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE HE LAY." - MATTHEW 28:6 (ESV)

The tomb is empty. The stone, meant to seal death, is cast aside by the hand of the Almighty. Darkness, which reigned for three days, is shattered by the brilliance of the risen Christ.

This is the day of triumph. This is the day where the impossible is made real. This is the day when life breaks forth, never to be bound again by death. As the women came to mourn, they were met instead with glory. As the disciples hid in fear, they were called into faith. As the world groaned under sin's weight, the chains were broken.

#### Behold the miracle!

The One who was spoken of by the prophets, the Seed promised in Eden (Genesis 3:15), the Passover Lamb whose blood shields us from wrath (Exodus 12:13), the suffering Servant who bore our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5), stands victorious.

DEATH IS UNDONE.

SIN IS DEFEATED.

HOPE IS RESTORED.

The resurrection is not simply an event; it is a declaration. It is the voice of the Creator, calling us from the grave of our own making.

"Behold, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5).

The risen Christ is the first fruits of the new creation (1 Corinthians 15:20), and through Him, we are reborn.

This is not a story to be remembered from afar. This is the reality in which we now stand. His resurrection is our resurrection. His victory is our victory.

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." (John 11:25).

**REJOICE!** This is the morning of renewal, where all sorrow is swallowed up in joy. The cross was agony, but it was not the end. The grave was sealed, but it was not final.

"O death, where is your victory? O grave, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Let the echoes of that first Easter morning ring in your soul. Let the weight of His triumph rest upon your heart. Let your spirit arise with Him, stepping into the newness of life that cannot perish, spoil, or fade (1 Peter 1:3-4).

#### HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

#### FOLLOW:

# a devotional for monday

"IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW ME."

— MATTHEW 16:24 (ESV)

The dawn of Easter Monday breaks, gold light spills over the horizon, illuminating a world made new in the triumph of the Risen Christ. Yesterday, we stood in the brilliance of the empty tomb, hearts and hands lifted in victory and wonder, life over death, love over fear, Christ over all things. But now—now we are called beyond wonder. We are called to follow.

The words of our Lord ring clear, uncompromising:

"Take up your cross and follow me."

No empty metaphor, no gentle suggestion. It is the footsteps he laid out for us, self-denial, sacrifice and nothing less than radical love that shatters the power of sin and darkness. Christ did not die and rise again so that we might admire Him from a far. He lived that we might also live, his steps carve the path before us. He walked that we might, in his name.

"A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20)





Easter is not only a celebration; it is a commissioning. To follow the Risen One is to take His road, to accept the burdens of love, of mercy, of truth in a world that resists them. This is the way of the cross.

What does it mean for you to follow Him in the ordinary and the extraordinary? Perhaps it is quiet surrender, daily perseverance in love when it would be easier to turn away. Perhaps it is standing for righteousness at cost, forgiving when it wounds, hoping when all seems lost. The cross is as unique as the life you have been given to bear it. But take heart, He does not call you to walk this road alone.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

(Matthew 11:28-29)

Christ walks before you. His footprints mark the way. The same Spirit that raised Him from the dead dwells in you. And beyond the cross, always, always there is life anew.

#### **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, You did not only conquer the grave; You also paved the way for us to follow You. Give me the courage to take up my cross, to walk in the path that was your joy. Strengthen my steps, that I may follow You wherever You lead. Amen

