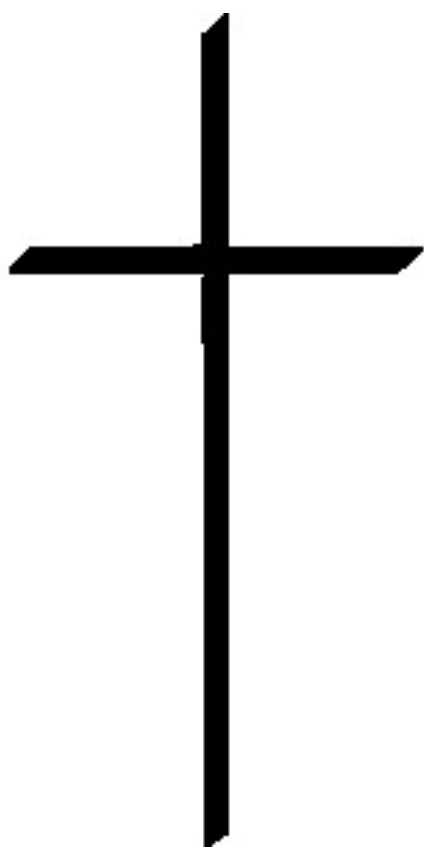


Journey to the Cross

Devotional Guides



Week Six

You may not be aware of this, but the four gospels spend an extensive amount of material specifically on the last week Jesus was alive. Here is how it breaks down in terms of each gospel:

A third of Matthew, from Matthew 21-28

A third of Mark, from Mark 11-16

A quarter of Luke, from Luke 19-24

Nearly half of John, from John 12-20

It is clear, from the sheer amount of content, that the last week of Jesus' life was of immense importance. Because He knew the cross awaited him, every action He took or word He spoke became all the more critical.

This series of devotions is called "Journey to the Cross," and is an attempt to bring into view some of the many experiences and teachings of Jesus leading up to His crucifixion on the cross. The devotions will serve in a three-fold capacity.

They will help each of us prepare our hearts for Easter. The 40 days preceding Easter have, in historical Christianity, been celebrated as the season of Lent. While the methods used to celebrate these days have varied, each Christian tradition has aimed to use this time to help Christians get spiritually ready for the good news of Easter.

They will help you get to know some church members you may not have met yet within the congregation. I asked each of our staff members to cover one week of devotions by writing one devotion themselves and by utilizing members from within their ministry sphere as the writers for each devotion. The composite of devotions intentionally covers a wide variety of members at Central. From some of our newest members, to some of our longest tenured members, from student ministry parents, to senior adults, my desire was for us to hear from parts of the congregation other than the groups we normally interact with and thus expand our understanding of how God is at work within the life of Central.

They will prepare you for the sermon each Sunday. I began the series knowing the 7 sermons I would preach beginning on February 21 and extending to April 4, Easter Sunday. From those 7 sermons I picked 6 characters, themes, or passages from the last days of Jesus that would help prepare the way for the sermon to occur on the following Sunday. As a result, if you have followed these devotions during the week, then your heart will be all the more prepared for worship each Sunday!

It has been my privilege to get to read these devotions in advance and you are in for a treat! The layout of each devotion begins with a Bible reference at the top of the page - you should read the passage first. From there, our writers have given wonderful explanations and illustrations that serve to help us know what is occurring within the text. The devotions conclude each day with some application questions that force us to do something with the truths we have just studied.

Please note, there will be a new week of devotions available to be picked up each Sunday, and we will post the devotions online so that anyone not able to come in person can still participate.

Remember, the best is yet to come!

Rob

Centurion At The Cross

Written by Josh Jacobs

Scripture:

Luke 23: 47; Matthew 27:54

When I began to read these scriptures about the centurion and his reaction to what he had just watched, I imagined the centurion with his armor standing strong with his spear at his side, a grimacing look on his face, and wearing a big helmet with a red plume coming out of it. I pictured a mighty Roman soldier. However, I want to help paint a different picture of this man for you.

The centurion, at his core, was not just a mean soldier or a commander in the Roman army. This is not how Jesus saw him. Jesus saw and loved this man for who He created him to be regardless of his actions. The centurion had a heart and soul that Jesus wanted and had suffered and died for. Jesus not only died for the Jews, He died for everyone, including the men who beat him and the ones who cast lots at his bleeding feet. This centurion was created in the image of God and was loved by Him. The crazy part is that it took seeing the miracle of the veil being torn, tombs opening, dead coming to life, and the temple crumbling for the Centurion and those who were with him to believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

Application:

1. Do you believe that Jesus is the son of God and that He loves you and desires a relationship with you regardless of your mistakes?
2. How are you missing what God is doing right in front of you? Are the eyes of your heart open?
3. Are you working to be like Jesus by loving those who are against you?

Prayer:

Lord make me more like You today. Give me Your humility. Help me see people the way that You see them.

The Veil Is Torn In Two

Written by Gaylon Partain

Scripture:

Matthew 27:51

As a parent, one of the wonderful things that my wife and I get to do is teach our daughters to pray. We do this by praying for them and with them daily. We also encourage them to think of things they want to pray for and have them voice their own prayers as well. It is easy to take for granted that each of us, even a small child, can personally talk directly to God in prayer without going through a priest or making a sacrifice.

In the last moments on the cross Jesus cries out and gives his spirit up. This moment is the culmination of his sacrifice, of shedding his blood, and giving his life for every believer. At the very moment of his death, the barrier meant to exclude all except the high priest from entering the Holiest Place to approach God is torn from top to bottom. When the veil in the temple was “torn in two,” Christ became our go-between, so we could “approach God’s throne of Grace with confidence” (Hebrews 4:16). Because of his sacrifice on the cross, we no longer require another person to speak for us; we only need to use his name when we pray.

What an amazing gift for us ordinary human beings. No one gets preferential treatment or takes a number to wait his or her turn. Everyone is welcome to speak directly to the God of the universe, at any time and in any place. This Easter season, let us not take this extraordinary privilege for granted as we come boldly before him in prayer.

Application:

1. Does your prayer time reflect the reverence of entering the Holy of Holies?
2. What “veils” do you place between you and God?

Prayer:

God, I thank you for the priesthood you have given me and the audience you extend to all believers to boldly enter your presence through the blood of Jesus. I pray that I always remember the sacrifice made and the privilege it is for you to hear and answer my prayers.

Blessing and Honoring Our Lord

Written by Kim Hargett

Scripture:

Matthew 27:57-60, Luke 23:50-54, Mark 15:42-46, John 19:38-42

What love Joseph of Arimathea displayed asking for the body of Jesus! I can't imagine how he must have felt, in a very dangerous time, coming out of the safe shadows of being a secret disciple and openly displaying his love for Jesus. What boldness it took to go before Pilate, who presided over the trial and gave the order to crucify Jesus. Joseph's desire was to bury Christ's body honorably. He didn't pray to have someone else do it. He displayed courage by asking, himself. Oh how he honored and blessed his Lord that day!

I look at where we are today as we face the cross and everything it meant and still means. How do we display such boldness in a day where we have freedom to be open with our belief? Do we pray for someone else to do the bidding for Christ or do we display the courage to share what He has done for each and everyone of us? Sometimes we get so comfortable in our surrounding of believers and taking care of each other, that we fall short of being bold to go out and do for Christ. We pray for someone else to do it. We miss blessing our Lord and showing Him the honor He so deserves.

As we look at the cross, let's be about our Savior's business, not just in our church but outside of these "safe" walls. Let's not wait for someone else to display their love for Him. Let's be bold in displaying our love for Christ and telling anyone who has ears about this Wonderful Savior who loved them enough to die for them. Be bold and show courage as Joseph of Arimathea did long ago and bless our Lord, beginning today.

Application:

1. Are you being bold in displaying your love for Christ?
2. Where are you falling short in sharing His love?

The Guard at the Tomb

Written by George Kellum

Scripture:

Matthew 27:62-66

As we consider how the Roman guards lied and willingly took part in covering up the greatest miracle of all time, I think it is important to understand that they had not been bought up or educated as had the Jews. However they did witness the resurrection and "they shook for fear of Him risen and became like dead men" (Matt 28:4). But Jesus died for each of the guards (their sins) the same as he did for mine and yours. Salvation was available to them the same as it was to the thief on the cross who repented and was saved!

The priests and Pharisees, on the other hand, had every reason to know that Jesus was the Messiah, God incarnate. The prophets had foretold the very things that they had witnessed during His time on earth. They were more interested in their positions of power and prestige than they were in God's will. Instead, they paid a lot of money to the guards to lie about what they saw. The real sin - the reason that the guards, along with the Jewish leaders will spend eternity in the agony of Hell, like many right now in our neighborhood, our state, our country and throughout the world - is that they did/do not believe that Jesus is God and has the power to save them, admit they are sinners, repent and ask for forgiveness.

Application:

1. Like the Pharisees, are there any areas in our life where we are rejecting or doubting God's ability to work miracles?
2. Are we actively praying for the lost and sharing the Gospel?

Prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, we praise your Name. Please give us a broken heart for the lost and a fervent desire to share the Gospel. In Jesus Name.... Amen

The Road to Emmaus

Written by Ken Nelson

Scripture:
Luke 24:13-21

Not Hope! Blessed Assurance!

As we as Christians walk with JESUS it is important to KNOW that he IS walking beside us every step of the way. Not just to HOPE for the best but to have the Blessed ASSURANCE that HE is with us all the way.

As the two men walked along the road they did not recognize that it was JESUS who had joined them! Today we have GODS Holy Word telling us that HE is with us and will NEVER forsake us. It was the very day that Christ had risen from the grave. These two disciples had heard that the women had found the tomb empty and had reported that Jesus was alive. Jesus had explained to His followers that He must die and that He would be resurrected. Yet, they were extremely sad and discouraged. They didn't believe the report from the women and felt that Jesus had failed to do what they believed He should have done, to defeat the Roman empire and restore the nation of Israel.

Jesus asked them why they were sad and what they were discussing. They didn't recognize Him and couldn't believe that anyone could not know of the terrible news of the crucifixion. He admonished them, called them foolish and slow of heart because they didn't believe what the prophets had explained in the Bible. He asked "**Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things and enter His Glory?**". Then He patiently explained everything written about Him in the scriptures.

When they got to their house they begged Him to stay. He came in and as He blessed the meal and ate with them, God allowed them to recognize him. He disappeared from their sight. They immediately left and went back to Jerusalem and shared the good news with the disciples there.

Praise GOD from whom all Blessings flow!

Application:

1. Do we many times miss the blessings and opportunities in the things God is doing today because they don't fit with our understanding, or misunderstanding, of His word and His will?
2. When we are sad, disappointed or discouraged do we turn to God's word and to prayer for the answer?
3. Do we put a high priority on sharing the good news with others, especially our family and neighbors who are lost?

The Plan from the Foundation of the World

Written by Mike Tucker

Scripture:

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

These verses should give us great joy and yet also cause us to tremble! These are not verses to be read quickly or passed over. As Christians we are grateful to be forgiven of our sin, yet we will never comprehend the price that Jesus paid to cleanse us. The plight of humanity is that nothing we could ever do could satisfy God's desire for righteousness. But the miracle of God's mercy is that God exchanges our "filthy clothes" of sin for "splendid robes" of righteousness (Zech. 3:4)! In this awesome exchange, God placed the sin of humanity on His Righteous Son.

Never take this righteousness for granted. Never take the forgiveness of your sin lightly. It cost God a terrible price to forgive you and make you righteous. Jesus never knew the "pleasure" of sin...only the pain of it – *all* of it. Therefore, we must walk in a manner worthy of this righteousness while also recognizing that we have a responsibility.

The world abounds with people whose sin has alienated them from God. Once Christ dwells within us, we are not only reconciled to God, but we then become his ambassadors, taking this same message of reconciliation to others. Sin breaks our fellowship with God, it severs relationships with others, it alienates family members, separates friends, divides churches, and destroys marriages. Sin creates mistrust, jealousy, hatred, and greed. Christ is the *only* remedy for the disastrous effect of sin on human relationships. As his ambassadors, we must take the message of reconciliation to a broken, divided world but first, we must be honest and open about our own relationships – first with God then with others (Matt 7:3-5).

In each of your relationships, make certain that your actions share the love and forgiveness that reflect what you received from God. Then you will not only speak the message of reconciliation, but you will live it as well.

Application:

1. Have you taken Christ's imputed righteousness for granted? Do you need to confess that to Him now?
2. Are there relationships or sin in your life that need to be dealt with so that you can be an effective ambassador for Christ?

Prayer:

Father, What an amazing privilege that You would choose to use me to be your ambassador to a lost and hurting world. Forgive me for so often taking the truth of this scripture for granted overlooking what my forgiveness cost You – Your Only Son! Bring to mind now those relationships that I need to nurture so that I can be an effective witness for you. Enable me, give me boldness, and provide opportunity for me to share the wonderful news that God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ - simply by believing in Him! I pray that many may come to trust in Jesus in the days ahead. In Christ's name, Amen.

Announcements

EASTER at Central

10:00 AM On The Front Steps

(In case of rain we may decide to have 3 different service times at
8:15, 9:35, and 10:55 AM in the Sanctuary.

A decision will be made by Saturday, April 3rd at 7:00 PM)

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

Our Church Goal is \$10,000

Blood Drive

April 1st from 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Scan the QR code below
to go to our website where you can sign up.

Remember to make the extra count with your offering!

We WILL have our 10:30 AM Wednesday morning service.

There will be NO Wednesday Night Activities

Enjoy your Spring Break!

