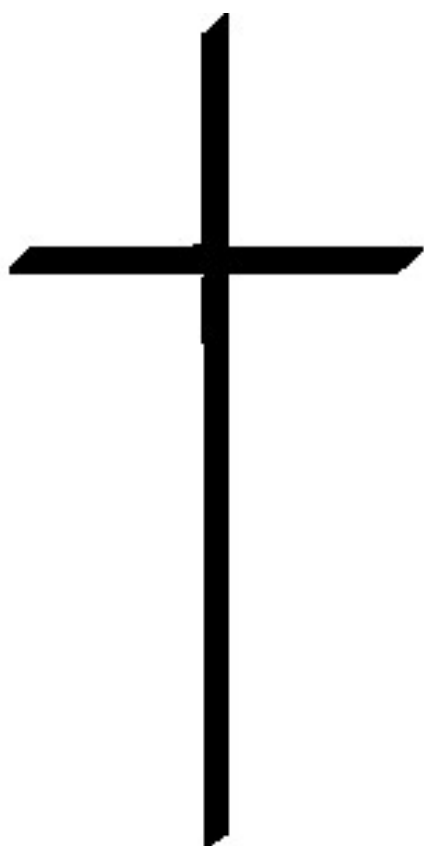


Journey to the Cross

Devotional Guides



Week Three

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

The Widow's Offering

Written by Andrea Payne

Scripture:

Mark 12:41-44

What was going through her mind that day as she walked to the Temple? Would her neighbors see her and sneer behind her back? *"Look at her – God has surely punished her, probably because of some great sin she or that late husband of hers committed. She looks practically like a beggar."*

Was she singing as she walked toward the collecting boxes in The Court of the Women? *"I surrender all; I surrender all."*

Jesus saw her. He sat down after long sessions of teaching and speaking with the religious elite who had come to confront and trap him. As He sat, He watched the wealthy depositing large sums in the collection boxes known as the "Trumpets." Then he saw the widow, carrying two practically worthless coins, leptons, "thin ones," and he saw her throw them in. Jesus called His disciples to Him and revealed what only He, in his divinity, could discern. The widow had given her "everything", all she had to live on was contained in those coins.

Her gift, surrendered to God in her want, out of obedience, sacrifice, and faith, outweighed the vast sums thrown in by the wealthy. She could have held one coin back, and yet she gave everything she had, as theologian William Barclay said, "with reckless abandon."

*"All to Jesus, I surrender;
All to Him I freely give.
I will ever love and trust Him.
In His presence daily live."*

In a very short time, Jesus would surrender Himself to the religious elite. He would freely give up His life on the cross, thus providing the perfect, sinless sacrifice that would make a way for all mankind thereafter to be reconciled to God if they would only believe.

Application:

1. What do we hold back from God: Family? Time? Career? Comfort? Finances? Security?

2. Though we do not know from scripture, how do you think the widow's story ends? What if our surrender to God requires everything we have?

I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Written by Corey Tyer

Scripture:

John 14:1-7

There are a lot of different things you can pull out of John 14:1-7, but the main purpose of these verses is to explain that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. Verse six of this passage is something we as Christians should be joyful about because not only does Jesus tell us exactly what we must do to come into the Father's house, but it is as simple as believing and trusting in Him.

This reminded me of a metaphor I heard the other day which goes something like this: *If many keys open a single lock, it is a faulty lock. But if only one unique key can open that lock, it is a good and proper lock.* This is a metaphor on how to get to the Father's house. You cannot get to heaven through your many good works or acts of kindness (even though He still tells us to show His love for others in our own lives.) The only way someone can be saved from sin and become a child of God is through the one and only Jesus Christ. This means we cannot focus on hoarding many faulty keys if we do not have the one and only key that can save us from our overwhelming sin.

Application:

1. Do you have the right key for the lock?
2. Are you sharing this key mold (salvation) with the world?

Signs of the End of the Age

Written by Ed Higdon

Scripture:

Matthew 24:1-35

Mark 13:1-37

Luke 21:5-36

Since childhood I have heard evangelists and preachers proclaim that the “End Times” were upon us. As a youngster, I thought it was a scare tactic to get people to accept Christ and join the church. Little did I know that in my senior years I would be faced with the prospects of seeing this happen in my lifetime? As our country seems to unravel into a shell of what I knew as I grew up, the end times seem to be our present day and age. The one thing we can rest on is the Scripture.

Many have tried to tie the end times to nuclear attacks, the Soviets or the Chinese wars destroying our nation and our way of life. Looking at this from man’s point of view this has been and will be a threat. Specifically, let’s look at Matthew 24:35, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”* Look at Mark 13:31, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”* In Luke 21:28, we read, *“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”*

We fear for our children and grandchildren’s well-being, but we should fear for their salvation, rather than the hardships that can and will occur. The “End Times” cannot be avoided - preparation is the key.

On a personal note, my belief is not from superpowers taking over our nation and our way of life, but the lack of our involvement in the spiritual life.

Application:

1. What will be your involvement in changing our community?
2. How can I influence my family to serve God?

Day and Hour Are Unknown

Written by Robert Smith

Scripture:

Matthew 24:36-42

The Boy Scout motto “*Be Prepared*” is the first thing I thought of when I read our scripture for today. Even as a youth, this motto had two levels of meaning to me. I was to prepare myself but also I was to be prepared to help someone else. The proverbial, “*help the little old lady across the street.*”

As Jesus was giving His last instructions, before the cross, to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, He answered a question some were asking themselves and many have asked since, “*when will You return?*” After telling them God the Father was the only one who knew “*the day and the hour,*” He gave them the Biblical example of Noah and the ark.

In Noah’s lifetime people were not expecting the flood. After all, it had never rained and how could there be a flood? People were going about their daily lives carrying on as usual “... *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark.*” (Matthew 24:38 - KJV) It didn’t start raining until Noah and his family were safely in the ark for seven (7) days. I can imagine scoffers outside the ark making fun of Noah and yelling things like, “*ok where is this rain you have been telling us about?*” And then, the unexpected happened.

One day the unexpected will happen again. “*No one but the Father knows the day and hour,*” yet Jesus will return for His church. We have been warned.

Application:

1. Are you prepared for Jesus to return? Have you accepted the gift provided through His sacrifice on the cross?
2. Are your friends and family ready for Jesus to return? What can you do to help them get ready?

Parable of 10 Virgins

Written by Jean Blass

Scripture:

Matthew 25:1-13

In this parable, verse one tells us ten virgins took their lamps out to meet the bridegroom. There was an expectation of his arrival. The virgins represent us, professing Christians and the bridegroom represents Jesus Christ. None of us know when Jesus will return but like the virgins, we expect His arrival. There were five wise virgins and five foolish virgins. The wise virgins were prepared to wait and were ready for the unexpected. They knew that the ceremony would only begin after the arrival of the groom. The foolish virgins were only prepared for the moment.

We are to be watching, waiting and prepared for His return. We must not sleep “*spiritually*”, but remain awake, alert and filled with the Spirit at all times, building up our faith. Be spiritually in tune with the Holy Spirit! Do not be a Christian who believes, but has grown slack in one’s zeal in preparing for Christ’s return.

Just as the wicks in the lanterns of the foolish virgins would not burn on the residue of the day before, likewise, our spiritual tank will not be full if we don’t refill it daily. Those who appear to be Christians, the foolish, but are not born again will be refused entrance into heaven. You must know Jesus and accept Him as your Lord and Savior in order to enter heaven.

Application:

1. Are you born again and prepared for His return, or are you just going through the motions like the unprepared foolish virgins?
2. How can you improve your daily preparations for the arrival of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ?

Parable of the Talents

Written by Elaine Francis

Scripture:

Matthew 25:14-30

Luke 19:12-27

The master in this parable gives talents to his three servants and goes away. Two of them trade what they were given and double the amounts. The third buries what he was given. At his return, the master was pleased with the first two and rewarded them, but the third one was thrown out.

As Christians, we are to serve our Master God and depend on His granting of talents which represents all the opportunities He gives people to serve Him, including their wealth, reputation, abilities, and learning. We will not all have the same opportunities but the ones we do have will be in areas of service that will bring honor and glory to the Lord as we await Christ's second coming. It will also give us a sense of peace and satisfaction for being part of His family.

The Lord may ask you to serve in an area that's unfamiliar to you. If so, He will prepare you and equip you so—as you are submissive to Him—you will see His will being done. In my school years I was terrified when I had to stand in front of my class to give a report. However, in my adult years, I was asked to teach a children's Sunday school class, which was great training for the time when I was asked to teach an adult ladies' class. The Lord has enabled me to share the lessons with our class without fear that I once had. What a joy and a blessing! He is our help and strength and enables each of us to carry out the assignments He gives to us.

Application:

1. Where does the Lord seem to be leading you to use the talents/gifts He has given you?
2. Are you willing to follow His lead?



Central Baptist Church

2801 Hwy 31 South

Decatur, AL 35603

www.cbcdecatur.org

256-353-5912