

Introduction: A Week in the Life Like No Other

Today begins “Holy Week,” (a.k.a. Passion Week) which is the most remembered and memorialized of any seven-day period in human history. It was a week like none other for heaven, hell, and earth. From the highest of highs to the lowest of lows let’s highlight this week’s most significant events.

Palm Sunday

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, the day Jesus, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, “triumphantly” enters Jerusalem bestriding a colt. An international crowd is already assembled to kick off the week-long Passover holiday. They pivot their attention, however, when they sense their political Messiah has arrived and is about to drive out the disgusting Romans occupiers. These Passover Pilgrims easily convert into Palm Sunday Praisers as they coronate Jesus as their King with the chanting of the ancient Hallel psalms (113-118) and by throwing palm branches and clothing before him.

Great Monday

Then Monday happens (it always does). Known as “Great Monday” the day represents the downside of emotion for Jesus. He does two things that are quite “Monday-ish.” First, he curses a fig tree for its failure to produce and then, his “meters go into the red” while he drives out marketers, merchants, and money changers from the Temple. The fact of his fury? His Father’s House is premised to be a house of prayer not a place of corrupt commerce. Monday ends with Jesus staying in Bethany, presumably with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, the later, whom you may recall, was raised from the dead a few days prior.

Holy Tuesday

On “Holy Tuesday” Jesus and his disciples do the two-mile jaunt back to Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus stops and hammers on that poor little fig tree he cursed the day before and delivers an impromptu, albeit opaque message on faith. Jesus is walking himself straight into an ambush, however. The religious elite are enraged that he is being regarded as an authentic spiritual authority and they are having none of it. For three years this vaunted teacher and miracle worker was stealing both their spotlight and sheep. They begin to conspire his comeuppance which in their calculus will be swift, surgical, and much sooner rather than later. Because Jesus wasn’t born yesterday, he sidesteps their trap and trolls them at the same time (Matthew 23:24-33)

Blind guides!... You are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness...Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?

Feeling the political and spiritual winds blowing ill against Jesus, I’m sure his disciples wished he had read Dale Carnegie’s “How to win Friends and influence People.” Nevertheless, Jesus visits the Mount of Olives, one of his favorite places to pray. Once there, he utters a veiled prophecy about his 2nd Coming and then weeps over Jerusalem, a city, that in a few short days, will utterly reject him and then trade him in for a career criminal called Barabbas. While Jesus is processing his grief, his good friend and trusted treasurer, Judas, is stealthily brokering a deal with the religious powers to capture and condemn him.

Spy Wednesday

Spy Wednesday was certainly not the “over-the-hump” day we come to know and love today. This is the lowest stress/event day of Holy Week as Jesus and his disciples stay put and rest-up in Bethany, perhaps to build strength and stamina for what is about to occur. Despite the respite, his popularity ascends to new heights as news is circulating about Lazarus’ resurrection. From behind the scenes, however, the religious powers, after receiving reliable intel from Judas, began to surveille Jesus as a pathological blasphemer.

Maundy Thursday

Thursday of Holy Week is known as Maundy Thursday. This day touches off the “Triduum” i.e., the big three events of Holy Week, i.e., The Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. At the Passover Meal, Jesus washes his disciples’ feet, institutes the New Covenant with bread and wine, and then reveals, not only that he must soon die, but also that his Benedict Arnold is present. After Judas is exposed and the meal is over, he and his disciples head to an olive garden named Gethsemane for prayer. After agonizingly yielding to the will of his Father, Jesus gets up, slams his heavy-eyed disciples for their lack of spiritual vitality, and then is betrayed by Judas with a kiss. Immediately, the Jewish secret service whisks him away to stand before the Sanhedrin, a.k.a., kangaroo court. Concurrently, Peter, awaiting the verdict, denies Jesus three times and the rest of the disciples abandon him out of fear. His fake trial and abuse last throughout the night.

Good Friday

We’ll have much more to say about Good Friday this Friday only to add that this day might be more properly called “Evil Friday” or “The-Day-Humanity-Murdered-Its-Creator-By-The-Worst-Means-And-Most-Grisly/Ghastly-Way-Possible” Day. We also might ponder how the Palm Sunday Praisers became Good Friday Hell Raisers in five short days, and would we respond similarly when Jesus disappoints us.

Holy/Wait Saturday

From an earthly perspective “Holy/Wait Saturday” for obvious reasons, was even a lower event day than Spy Wednesday. Jesus is lying dead in a heavily guarded and sealed tomb while his disciples are ambling about dazed, confused, and broken hearted. A few people drop by to pay their last respects, but what was going on in heaven on this day? You’ll need to be here next Sunday to find out.

Resurrection Sunday

Holy Week culminates in Resurrection Sunday which was nothing less than a heaven celebrating, hell destroying, earth reconciling, history changing, and Jesus vindicating day. This one catalytic day forever changed everything we ever thought possible or dare imagined. No other day fills the world with hope, joy, peace, and love more than this one. Make sure you celebrate it with me next week and bring a friend with you.

Conclusion

Holy Week is the apex of the church year so as we conclude this morning, my hope is that we can cherish this week. Let's focus on it by laying aside our extraneous busyness and by ratcheting up our acts of love, prayer, and service. To help make this Holy Week more meaningful, I will be emailing short devotionals each day. Until then, make sure to come to the Good Friday where we will pay our last respects to Jesus during the Service of Tenebrae.