



STUDY GUIDE



# **WHY HE CAME**

lent 2024

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## An Invitation to a Holy Lent

Wait... what does “a holy Lent” mean?

In the early church, the six weeks leading up to Easter (40 days, not including Sundays) were to be a time of remembering Jesus’s journey to the cross. We begin with Jesus’s temptation in the wilderness and end with Palm Sunday, when he rides into Jerusalem on a humble donkey. A few days later, he will meet his death.

As part of their journey with Jesus over the course of these weeks, believers were encouraged to throw off sin through practices of repentance and confession and to fast (i.e. give up) a regular comfort like sweets, meat, or alcohol as a small way of sharing with Jesus in his sufferings.

Lent is a season of repentance, of realizing our own frailty in body and mind and spirit. It’s also a season of remembering, where we make the time and become still enough to reflect that Jesus is our only hope.

Lent can be a heavy season. Giving up a comfort is challenging. Turning from our sin is even more difficult.

And yet, the walk to the cross with Jesus is lined with incredible graces and profound joys. The joy of drawing nearer to our Savior. The grace of sharing in his sufferings. The wonder of remembering anew that he did this out of love for us.

Our temptation will be to run to the celebration of Easter—easier! happier! more fun!—but I encourage you to press in and seek to fully experience the deep spiritual practices of Lent.

There is truly nothing like rejoicing together on Easter Sunday after we’ve traveled through the valley of the shadow of death with our Savior. Will you join us?

On the journey with you, *Pastor Courtney*

# 1

# The Time Has Come

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MARK 1:9-15

## MEMORY VERSE

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee  
and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

—MARK 1:9

## AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: FASTING

To *fast* is to give up a usual comfort for a limited time in order to become more sensitive to God's presence. As we crave what we've given up, our cravings serve as a reminder to go to God in prayer as well as a reminder of our human frailty. Without our treats, we can get cranky quickly!

Consider giving up a comfort for the six weeks of Lent as a small way of participating in the sufferings of Jesus. Common fasts include sweets, meat, or alcohol—these were often chosen in the early church. More modern possibilities include logging off social media, turning off music or podcasts while in the car, or giving up television.

Remember: the goal of the fast is to draw closer to Jesus - not to prove your willpower or holiness! Anytime you crave your usual comfort, take a moment to pause in prayer. You may wish to use the following words:

*Lord Jesus, I give [your item] into your hands. As I notice its absence in my life, remind me of your loving presence. As I notice my weakness, give me your strength. Thank you for the grace to learn from you in this small suffering. Amen.*

## AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

The Gospel of Mark is sometimes called “The Cliffs Notes” version. Its stories are short and to the point, in contrast to Matthew, Luke, and John that often go into much more detail. While each Gospel gives us insights into the life and ministry of Jesus, Mark’s brief, concise style gives an overview of events that can help us cover a lot of ground in a short time.

As Barbara Brown Taylor notes in *Feasting on the Word*, “Mark does everything quickly in his Gospel, and his account of Jesus’s first public appearance is no exception.”

*Read Mark 1:9-11 aloud.*

**Q1.** What three things does the voice from heaven name about Jesus?

*Read Mark 9:12-13 aloud.*

We get our forty days of the Lenten season from the forty days of Jesus’s temptation in the wilderness. The Biblical wilderness would have been very similar to our local desert landscape--arid, sun-scorched, rocky, and barren.

**Q2.** What happens to Jesus in the wilderness? What do you imagine when you think through the scenes described in these two verses?

*Read Mark 9:14-15 aloud.*

**Q3.** Jesus proclaims that, “The time has come” and “the Kingdom of God has come near” (v. 15). In our weekly worship, we pray the Lord’s Prayer, which includes the words, “Thy Kingdom come,” which is echoed here. Why does the arrival of Jesus mean that the Kingdom has come near?

**Q4.** In v.15 Jesus goes into Galilee and tells everyone to “Repent and believe the good news!” In your own words, what is the good news?

#### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** This passage takes place at the very start of Jesus’s earthly ministry. Why might it be significant that the first major event Mark describes is Jesus’s baptism (v.10) and God’s pronouncement of love and favor (v.11)?

**Q2.** Have you ever had someone speak a word of love like this over you? If so, what was it and how did it feel? If not, is there an affirmation you long to hear? Do you think God might be offering it to you?

**Q3.** Jesus is sent out into the wilderness--a very real, very harsh geographical landscape. We may also face wilderness seasons in our lives--times of great difficulty, grief, or pain. Can you describe a recent wilderness season in your life? (It may be that you're in one right now, today!)

**Q4.** Jesus tells those he meets to "Repent and believe the good news!" To repent is to turn from the wrong path in order to follow Jesus wholeheartedly once again. It is a continual call to each one of us. When have you felt God's call to repent? What was it like returning to Jesus? Are there any areas of your life in which you are feeling that call today?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Memorize!**

Plan to learn each of our memory verses this Lent. (Each week's is written at the beginning of that lesson.) Memorization can be tricky, so think about what methods might work best for you. You may wish to set the verses to music, say them repeatedly out loud, or print them out and place them somewhere you'll see them often like your bathroom mirror. Start with Mark 1:9 today, and add a verse each week until the study's end.

### **2. Sit in silence**

Lent offers us an invitation to reconnect with God in times of silence. After the busyness of the holidays, we wait together for spring. Sit in a quiet, comfortable place (your living room, perhaps, or a bench in a local park), set a timer for 5-10 minutes each day this week, and simply sit in silence. Listen to your breathing, your heartbeat, the ambient noises around you, and anything God brings to your mind. As Elijah noticed in 1 Kings 19 (you may wish to read this powerful story in 1 Kings 19:11-18), God often speaks in a gentle whisper. We are more apt to hear him in moments of silence.

### **3. Repent**

If Q4 on page 7 stirred anything in your heart, this is a great opportunity to bring it to Jesus. There is no shame in the need to repent--we all wander from time to time. The key is to not persist in sin, but to confess it to God, turn from it, and receive God's love and healing. If the sin is persistent and you find yourself having trouble getting free, perhaps this is a good week to schedule a conversation with a pastor or trusted friend to confess in the presence of one who cares for you, can pray with and for you, and can help you make a plan for accountability.

# 2

## The Way of the Cross

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MARK 8:31-38

### MEMORY VERSE

Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

—MARK 1:10

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

#### *LISTENING PRAYER*

We often think of prayer as us talking to God, but Lent reminds us that prayer is not one-sided: it's a conversation. If we fill all of our prayer time with words, it will be difficult to hear the still, small voice of God.

Set aside five minutes (you may wish to set a timer, to avoid checking your watch or phone). Sit comfortably, with your feet on the floor and your arms resting comfortably. Breathe deeply in and out several times. Then tell Jesus, in your own words, that you love him and you're listening.

Then, wait in silence until the timer ends. If your mind wanders, know that this is very normal! Notice the distraction, set it aside and return your focus to your breathing.

Finally, reflect: Did you sense any leading from God? Did you receive a word of comfort, encouragement, conviction, or love? You may wish to write down your impressions from this time, or share them with your group.

**AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

*Read Mark 8:31-33 aloud.*

**Q1.** According to Jesus, what three groups of people must reject him (the Son of Man)? What two things must happen to him (v.31)?

It can be hard to hear the difficult news that someone we love will go through a hard time. Yet Jesus offers a new lens in which to view suffering: that because God's ways are different than our ways, it can have a redemptive arc.

**Q2.** What does Jesus say to Peter? Why do you think he uses such strong language?

*Read Mark 8:34-38 aloud.*

**Q3.** What must Jesus's disciples do (v.34)? What do you think this means?

In this passage, Jesus describes the topsy-turvy nature of the Kingdom of God, where power is found in self-giving love. To those holding on to power, these words are terrifying. To those seeking to follow Jesus, they are words of life and hope.

**Q4.** What do you think it means to “be ashamed” of Jesus and his words? What warning does Jesus give to those who are ashamed of him?

#### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** Jesus was clear on his earthly mission, and he spoke to his disciples often about what would be required of him. If you had to describe your mission in life, what would it be?

**Q2.** Jesus describes a contrast between the concerns of God and “merely human concerns” (v.33). What do you think God is concerned with? What wrong things can humans be overly concerned with?

Missionary Jim Elliot once famously said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” He was paraphrasing Jesus in this passage (v.35).

**Q3.** What does Jesus mean when he says “whoever wants to save their life will lose it”? Isn’t it good to try to stay safe and well?

Jesus tells his followers that “whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.” This can be read as an instruction to lay down our lives for Jesus--which people are sometimes called to do (and as Jesus did for us!). But more commonly, it is a call to walk in a Jesus-centered way, giving up our power for the sake of others and seeking to love our neighbors, strangers, and enemies as ourselves. In a way, this is even harder than a one-time act of courage.

**Q4.** In your own words, what would it mean to “gain the whole world” and yet “forfeit (give up) your soul?” What most tempts you in the realm of the world’s offerings? What does this passage tell us about the preciousness of our souls?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Meditate on the life of Jesus**

Take 5-10 minutes this week to read and meditate on Mark 8:31. This single verse takes us through the whole of Holy Week as Jesus suffers, dies, and rises again. Read the verse aloud several times and then sit quietly, soaking it in.

Picture each piece in your mind. What does it mean to you that Jesus did this out of love for us? What new insights or love does Jesus have to offer you in this silence today?

### **2. Pray through power dynamics**

How much power do you wield in your life? The answer may surprise you. To those in power, the realities of power dynamics can be almost invisible. To those without power, it is often very clear to them that they are on the bottom.

Make a list of anyone you oversee, whether as a professional, a parent, a customer, or an employer. Don't forget those who are often unseen--perhaps you have a gardener, a pest control service, a regular Amazon delivery driver, or a babysitter.

Then bring this list before the Lord and ask Jesus if you are treating those who have less power than you do with love, as neighbors and beloved children of God. Are you paying them fair wages? Do you see them as people and not simply providers of services? Are there ways you can pick up your cross in greater service to them?

### **3. Creatively express the story**

Draw, paint, dance, sculpt, sing, scribble, or poetically express one or two of the verses in today's passage. What does the scene look like in your mind? What images or sounds rise to the surface? What is Jesus doing? What about his disciples? The crowd? Take your time and let the passage speak to you as you inhabit it.

# 3

## My Father's House

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JOHN 2:13-22

### MEMORY VERSE

And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son,  
whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

—MARK 1:11

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: *SIMPLICITY*

The spiritual practice of simplicity invites us to uncompllicate and untangle our lives so we can focus on our deeper, God-given desires. For example, my deep desire may be to be hospitable to my neighbors, but if my kitchen table is always cluttered or my schedule is consistently filled to bursting, I may shy away from inviting people over.

Simplicity is all about a healthy letting go of having more than we need. Cultivating Christian simplicity helps us loosen our attachment to possessing, bringing us freedom and opening us to greater generosity.

This week, prayerfully tackle one small area of clutter in your life, either a space (one shelf, your pantry, etc.) or one week in your schedule (maybe the summer already feels overwhelming!). Instead of asking what you should give up, ask God what he's calling you to keep. Release the rest.

Then reflect: how does decluttering this one area make you feel? Prayerfully consider whether God may be inviting you to simplify other areas of your home or schedule.

## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

In Jesus's day, the Jewish people would make regular sacrifices to God at the Temple. Depending on their income, this would be a larger animal like a cow or a sheep, a small bird like a dove or pigeon, or an offering of flour or other grain. Markets often sprang up outside the Temple so those who needed an offering could purchase one.

*Read John 2:13-17 aloud.*

**Q1.** What does Jesus do when he sees people selling their wares *inside* the Temple? What does he say?

*Read John 2:18-22 aloud.*

**Q2.** The Jews ask Jesus to prove his authority. They want to know what right he has to come in and throw out the moneychangers. What is his answer?

**Q3.** What do the Jews think Jesus is talking about? What does he actually mean?

**Q4.** What happens to the disciples after Jesus is raised from the dead?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

This passage is often cited as an example of Jesus's righteous anger. People have turned the holy Temple of God into a place for haggling over prices. He responds with intensity--but not violence. No people are harmed. This is also the only passage we have in Scripture where Jesus responds with physical intensity. Far from it giving us license for brutality, it is a sign of loving restraint. He removes the offense and is clear about the problem without causing physical harm to anyone.

**Q1.** Do you think righteous anger is ever appropriate for Christians? Why or why not? If so, in what ways ought we to express our outrage?

**Q2.** Can you think of an example (either in your own life or in history) when an injustice was made right without the use of violence? Describe it. What is the relationship between gentleness and strength?

**Q3.** In v.18-19 the Jews ask what seems like a simple question and receive a very cryptic answer. Can you think of a few reasons Jesus may have answered their question in this way?

**Q4.** Why does Jesus call his body a Temple? In what way does it house the living God? In what ways is the body of Christ (the church!) a home for God?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Face your anger**

Do you struggle with anger? (If you aren't sure, ask someone close to you to tell you the gentle truth.) While anger can be a productive and necessary emotion, if left unchecked it can become overwhelming and—at its extreme—even violent. This week, set aside 5-10 minutes to tell God about your anger. What are you angry about? How does it feel to carry this anger? Then, invite God into that intense place in your heart.

Finally, ask: is there a further action (forgiveness, speaking up, counseling, etc.) that you feel God calling you to take?

### **2. Care for the body of Christ**

In today's Scripture, Jesus refers to his body as a Temple, or holy place that houses God. The body of Christ—the church—is also where God dwells. How might you care for the church this week? Maybe you've been meaning to volunteer, donate financially, or encourage a musician, teacher, or other leader.

### **3. Check in on your memorization**

Review and refresh your memorization this week. If you haven't begun, it's not too late! Start at lesson one and learn each of the three Scripture verses. You'll be ready to pick up with the rest of those who are memorizing for week four!

# 4

## For the Love of the World

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JOHN 3:14-24

### MEMORY VERSE

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

—MARK 1:12-13

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: *TRUST*

One way to lean into the spiritual practice of trust is to prayerfully lay out a concern before the Lord and wait to receive an answer. Take a moment and contemplate an area of your life where you are feeling particularly anxious.

Then, write it down as a prayer. Be as specific as you can about your difficulties and fears. Next, read your prayer aloud, but pause between each sentence to say, “Lord, I trust you.” Then close with the following words: *Jesus, \_\_\_\_\_ is scary. I’ve told you all the reasons why. You’ve promised to care for me and I’m ready to give this over to you. Please make it clear to me if there is any action you’re asking me to take. Until then, I will wait on you and watch to see what you will do on my behalf. Amen.*

Finally, write down your prayer request in the back of this book and check on it in a week or two. Has anything changed in the circumstance or in your heart?

## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

Earlier in this passage, we read about a man named Nicodemus who visits Jesus at night. He is a Pharisee—a religious leader who would perhaps have been nervous about approaching Jesus in daylight or out in public.

Jesus was a controversial figure. The crowds tended to love him for his healing and truth-speaking powers. But the cultural, political, and religious leaders were very wary. The power Jesus spoke about—God’s loving, gracious, all-encompassing power—threatened their own. If Jesus was truly God’s Son and the King of all Kings, what would it make them?

Nicodemus comes to figure out for himself who Jesus is. The following Scripture comes from their conversation.

*Read John 3:14-15 aloud.*

**Q1.** What did Moses do in the wilderness? (You may also wish to read Numbers 21:8-9 for context.) According to Jesus, what must happen to him (the Son of Man)?

Henri Nouwen writes that Jesus “is lifted up as a passive victim, so the cross is a sign of desolation. And he is lifted up in glory, so the cross becomes at the same time a sign of hope.”

*Read John 3:16-21 aloud.*

**Q2.** Whom does God love? How much does God love? Where is the proof?

**Q3.** According to the passage, why do people love darkness instead of light? Who comes into the light?

*Read John 3:22-24 aloud.*

Baptism is a sign of belief and repentance, of being buried with Christ and then rising to new life. It is not about our worthiness or finally believing “enough,” instead it is about what God has done for us in Jesus.

**Q4.** Who is baptizing in this passage?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** Share the story of your baptism. If you don’t remember it because you were very young, share what you know about the church community in which you were raised. (If you are following Jesus but have not yet been baptized, you’re invited to talk to a leader or pastor about it today!)

**Q2.** What does it mean to you to believe in Jesus (v.14-15)? How does that belief play out in your actions?

**Q3.** Can you think of a time in your life when you sought to hide because of sin or shame (v.19-21)? Write or share the story, if you're comfortable.

**Q4.** What does it look like to live your life in the light? What does it feel like? How might you share this goodness with someone else this week?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Read the conclusion of Nicodemus's story**

Nicodemus starts out a skeptic, but ends far from one. Read the conclusion of his story in John 19:30, 38-42. What risk was there in Nicodemus behaving in the way that he did? What does it show us about the state of his heart toward Jesus?

### **4. Step into the light**

If you are in a season of darkness yourself (and we all will be, from time to time), go to a trusted pastor, leader, or friend and let them know what's going on. Ask them to pray with you as a first step into the light, and then make a plan for next steps together.

### **3. Bring light**

Prayerfully ask God to bring someone to your mind who is struggling in darkness (or a situation or place). Perhaps a friend is in a season of deep depression, a local park is filled with garbage, or a cousin is trapped in an unhealthy relationship. Think of a gentle way you could bring hope this week, perhaps by bringing a meal to the friend, cleaning up the park, or asking the cousin if they are doing okay and spending time to really listen to their heart.

# 5

## Now is the Time

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JOHN 12:20-33

### MEMORY VERSE

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee,  
proclaiming the good news of God.. –MARK 1:14

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: *EMPTY HANDS*

(This prayer exercise is adapted from Richard Foster's  
*A Celebration of Discipline*.)

Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the ground. Place your palms down on your knees as a sign of your intention to turn over your concerns to God. Then give those things to the Lord in prayer.

You may wish to begin, "Lord, I give you," and then fill in the specifics: "my upcoming appointment" or "my daughter's struggle with addiction," etc.

After a few moments, when you feel you've shared all the concerns you wish to for today, turn your palms up as a sign of your desire to receive from God. Your hands are empty--how would you like God to fill them? Ask God for what you need. "Lord, I need courage to make it through this appointment," or "please give me hope that you haven't forgotten me." When you've finished, take a final moment or two in silence, breathing in God's love for you.

Afterward, reflect upon your experience, alone or with your group. What did God lead you to give over to him? What does God want to give to you?

## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

*Read John 12:20-22 aloud.*

**Q1.** Who is seeking Jesus? What do they want?

*Read John 12:23-26 aloud.*

**Q2.** What must those who serve Jesus do?

*Read John 12:27-33 aloud.*

When Jesus talks about being “lifted up,” he is alluding to the death he will die, being lifted up on the cross. In v. 27-28 we see Jesus’s honesty about his feelings. No one wants to die, much less in such a brutal fashion! Yet we also see his ultimate willingness to walk the road God sets before him, steep and painful though it would be.

**Q3.** What is the reason for his coming (v.27)?

**Q4.** What does Jesus mean when he says that when he is lifted up he will “draw all people to himself”?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** Greeks and Romans (non-Jews!) were drawn to Jesus, a Jewish teacher. What does it teach us about Jesus when we see that his message was enticing to people who had very little in common with him culturally, or even religiously? What first drew you to Jesus?

**Q2.** Jesus says “the hour has come,” alluding to his crucifixion. Can you think of any pivotal milestones in your life that felt, even in a smaller way, like this? You prepared and planned and got ready--and then it was *time*. Share the story.

**Q3.** In v.25 Jesus tells us that those who love their lives will lose them but those who hate them will keep them. This can seem like a very harsh teaching! Are we really to love our neighbors but hate ourselves, or is there something else going on here?

**Q4.** In v.27, we see Jesus's conflicting emotions. Suffering is never fun, even if you're the Son of God. Can you think of a time you did the right thing, even when you knew there'd be a painful cost? Share or write the story, if you're willing.

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Bring a goal into focus**

Jesus was clear about his mission. What mission has God given you in this season of your life? Prayerfully consider what God may be asking of you. How can your group (or your friends, if you are doing this study alone) help keep you accountable?

### **2. Bring your suffering to Jesus**

Sometimes it can help us to be brutally honest with God about our suffering. Prayerfully tell God what you're going through, how it feels, and why you wish it wasn't happening to you. Then, quietly receive his love and comfort as a God who intimately understands your suffering.

### **3. Bring others to Jesus**

Is there anyone in your life hungry for love and belonging who does not yet know Jesus? Ask Jesus for a window to share his love with them in your words or actions this week.

# 6

## Save Us!

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MARK 11:1-11

### MEMORY VERSE

“The time has come,” Jesus said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

--MARK 1:15

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: *HOLY WEEK*

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the most important week in the church year. During these last days of Lent we remember the final hours of Jesus: his trial, his torture, his death on the cross, his burial, and the terrifying silence during the day that followed.

Our temptation will be to rush ahead to the joy of Easter, but doing so would cause us to miss out on the profound gifts this difficult week offers us. Holy Week invites us to weep with those who weep, mourn with those who mourn, and bring the depths of our sin, suffering, and sadness before our Lord. It invites us to imagine Jesus’s passion (pain and suffering) on the cross without looking away or rushing off to easier, happier things.

Make plans to attend worship on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday at our church or, if you’re traveling for spring break, at a church in your area. You’ll find a guide to each of the days in Holy Week on page 35. You may also wish to fast for part or all of Good Friday in memory of Jesus’s death and in solidarity with the global church.

Give yourself fully to the story of God this Holy Week.

**AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

*Read Mark 11:1-6 aloud.*

**Q1.** What does Jesus ask his disciples to do? What does he tell them to say?

*Read Mark 11:7-11 aloud.*

**Q2.** What do those in the crowd shout? What does it mean? (Hint: check your Bible's footnotes!)

In Jesus's day, Israel was occupied by the Romans. They put governors in place who often ruled with cruelty or a lack of understanding about their subjects' Jewish faith (Pontius Pilate is one such example).

**Q3.** What practical things do you think the people wanted to be saved from?

**Q4.** What type of coming kingdom (v.10) do you think they may have expected Jesus to usher in?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

Scripture often overturns the expectations of those in the story. They expect Jesus to come in and overthrow the Romans--but instead, he is about to die on the cross! They are hoping for ease and comfort and instead receive a suffering servant who will invite them to take up their own crosses and follow him.

**Q1.** Are there any ways that following Jesus has been different than you expected? Describe them.

**Q2.** How does Jesus's sacrificial love turn our earthly idea of power on its head?

Most leaders would have expected Jesus to ride in on a war

horse as a conquering king. Yet he comes in on a young donkey--one so young it's never even been ridden (v.2)!

**Q3.** Picture Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt. How does this image differ from a warrior on a stallion? What does it teach us about who Jesus is?

In her book *The Crucifixion*, Fleming Rutledge writes, "From beginning to end, the Holy Scriptures testify that the predicament of fallen humanity is so serious, so grave, so irremediable from within, that nothing short of divine intervention can rectify it."

**Q4.** If Jesus was riding into our neighborhood today and you shouted "Save me!" what would you be asking to be saved from?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **Prepare for Holy Week**

Next week we will celebrate Palm Sunday (3/24), Maundy Thursday (3/28), and Good Friday (3/29). This week is known in the Christian tradition as “Holy Week,” the high point of the church year as we remember the life, suffering, and death of Jesus and build toward the great celebration of Easter. Make plans this week to attend each of these special services, either here at PCOM or, if you’re traveling for spring break, at a church at your destination.

On Good Friday, the ancient tradition is to fast (abstain from food), either for the entire day or for the lunch hour, as we remember the death of Jesus at noon and the darkness that came over the earth.

### **Read for Holy Week**

In addition, you may wish to set aside five or ten minutes every day for quiet prayer, to reflect on the events of this week. Suggested Scripture readings are as follows:

**Monday - Mark 14:1-9**

**Tuesday - Mark 14:10-11**

**Wednesday - Mark 14:12-16**

**Thursday - Matthew 26:17-29 & 36-56**

**Friday - Matthew 27:32-56**

### **Bibliography & Suggestions for Further Reading:**

Barbara Brown Taylor, "Mark 1:9-15," *Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Volume 2.

Elisabeth Elliot, *The Journals of Jim Elliot*

Richard Foster, *A Celebration of Discipline*

Esau McCaulley, *How Far to the Promised Land*

Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*

Henri Nouwen, "From Action to Passion," *Bread & Wine*

Lamar Williamson Jr., *Mark: Interpretation Commentary*

## Holy Week Invitations

### Maundy Thursday

Today we remember the Last Supper of Jesus. Read the story in **Matthew 26:17-29**. Put yourself in the shoes of one of Jesus's disciples. You don't know what's coming next, but you may sense a heaviness in the air. Now read **Matthew 26:36-56**.

Take a few moments in a quiet place alone and pray through these verses. What do you notice about Jesus's words? His emotions? Where are the disciples? Where do you find yourself within the story?

*If you are able, plan to attend a worship service. PCOM's Maundy Thursday worship is at 7:30pm in the sanctuary.*

### Good Friday

Take a moment and quiet your heart. Turn off your phone and any other digital devices. Breathe in and out and sit silently.

Read **Matthew 27:32-56**. What do you notice about the last words of Jesus? Who is present at his crucifixion? Who is missing? What might the disciples have felt? What emotions do you notice in your own heart reading this account?

This is the day of crucifixion, a day of worldwide fasting in the church. *Join this fast if you are able, and make plans to attend Good Friday worship. The sanctuary concert is at noon. Awake worship is at 7:30pm.*

## **A Place for Prayer Requests**



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**STUDY GUIDE**