

A vertical photograph of a deep, narrow forest canyon. The walls are covered in thick, vibrant green moss and ferns. A river flows through the bottom of the canyon, its surface reflecting the surrounding greenery. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a serene and somewhat mysterious atmosphere.

Lent

Holy Week Devotional 2019



BE IN **CHRIST**
CHURCH OF CANADA

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Palm Sunday

Losing on Purpose

READ - Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

REFLECT

The story of Palm Sunday is the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. He arrives on a donkey, a beast of burden, but many recognize his authority based on Zechariah 9:9. In reverence they lay down their palm branches and cloaks for his entry into the Holy City.

Palm Sunday parallels today's text from Philippians 2:5-11. This passage describes Jesus' humble entrance into the world of humanity. As with Palm Sunday, some recognize the importance of this moment but most do not. Jesus arrives on planet earth, having relinquished the power and prerogatives and privileges of the Godhead, and he comes in simplicity and humility. The Philippians text is clear, what seems like a loss is actually a win. It is an act of love that will change the world forever. Jesus loses on purpose and enters our sin-broken world to win freedom for humanity. He gave up all that he had as a member of the godhead (he emptied himself, v. 7) and became human. His birth and life and death are the acts of a servant king.

As the servant king enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus knows what is ahead. It is a cross. As Philippians elaborates, Jesus will lose on purpose and submit to that cross so that

redemption is made possible for all who will put their faith in him.

RESPOND

What are practical ways to live as Jesus lived in light of the Philippians 2:5 instruction to have the same attitude as Jesus?

Like those on Palm Sunday, what are the ways we can acknowledge that Jesus is king of this world and in our lives?

PRAY

Father in heaven. Help us live with the love and humility, to have the same attitude, as our Lord and Saviour Jesus. Give us the mind of Jesus that was so clear in his purpose and give us the love of Jesus that was so centered on others.

Monday

READ - Mark 1:9-15

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus Announces the Good News

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

REFLECT

What would you say is at the core of who you are? The default attitude or lens that you view the world through? How do the various experiences that have made up your life so far influence how you respond to the world around you? What is your identity based on?

If I'm honest, I would say that I often view the world around me through a lens of fear (or maybe on my best days, care or concern). It is all too easy to try to take on the responsibilities around me and try dealing with them in my own strength or at least try to feed them into a system that will, hopefully, fix everything! Not surprisingly, this never works out in the long run. The identity that I seem to continue to try to craft for myself is fragile, broken and its demands are never-ending. Even an identity of care is not an identity of love.

Jesus, in his own humanity, is faced with the choice of where to find his identity. At his baptism, God establishes with him his true identity. This is the same identity that is offered to us through Jesus' life and death. The identity of a beloved child of God - "this is my son with whom I am well pleased".

This is an identity based in Love. In relationship. In life itself.
It builds up. It restores. It creates. It grows.

But then comes the choice, a choice that is echoed in our own lives. The temptation is offered to put aside that identity and, instead, accept a false identity. An identity based on fear, or power, on isolation and control. Initially these identities seem to promise ease and comfort, and to fulfill all our desires. But over time they demand our hearts, our lives and our very souls. All they can ultimately do is destroy.

And yet, how often do we reach out to try and take these identities for ourselves?

RESPOND

As we move through Lent towards Easter, we are reminded of Jesus' life. A life firmly based on the identity of love. We are reminded again of his example. A life of love that, despite hardships and even death, overcame everything.

Let us commit again to our own identity of love. It builds up. It restores. It creates. It grows.

PRAY

Lord of Love we thank you for your gift of love extended to us through Jesus and his example. May we also accept the identity you offer for us to enter into, an identity of being your love to the world around us. We pray that, when temptation comes, we will continue to choose your love. Amen

Tuesday

READ - Isaiah 42:1-4

The Servant of the Lord

¹ Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on Him, and He will bring justice to the nations. ² He will not shout or cry out, or raise His voice in the streets. ³ **A bruised reed He will not break, and a smouldering wick He will not snuff out. In faithfulness He will bring forth justice;** ⁴ He will not falter or be discouraged till He establishes justice on earth. In His teaching the islands will put their hope.

REFLECT

A bruised reed is a damaged plant, a smouldering wick is a barely burning flame. These are word pictures of things that are broken and barely hanging on.

If you could sit with Jesus and He could ask you ... What is one thing in your life that I could take away? ... what would be your answer? Think about it a bit don't answer too quickly.

A disappointment, a loss, a damaged relationship, an illness or physical limitation, a bitter memory, some past abuse, a financial reversal? We all carry around some pain that is part of the depths of our story. And in that quiet moment you would say to Jesus, "Yes - just take that away." Maybe you've already had that conversation with Him.

Our scripture today is a description ahead of time by Isaiah the prophet about how Messiah Jesus would "be" - how He would relate to us. The best word that comes to mind is ****gentle****.

When you have some pain, when you are wounded and hurting and barely hanging on, you don't need someone telling you to buck up. You just don't need more pain. What you need is someone who will listen, someone who will be patient, someone who will reach into your soul and, for heaven's sake, do it with gentleness. The good news this Easter week is that this is exactly what Jesus does for us. This is the life we can have with Him. It is the life we invite others into. It is also the way that He invites us to "be" to others. Gentle.

RESPOND

Got any pain? Jesus invites you to bring it to Him and promises He will be gentle. Know anyone in your life with some "stuff" that has hurt them? Maybe you get to be that gentle "soulful" presence to them. Receive well and look around for your opportunities.

PRAY

Lord, sometimes I have felt like I am barely hanging on. Help me to receive your gentle, healing presence all over again this Easter and to bring it to others.

Wednesday

Subversive Silence

READ - Mark 15: 12-15

12 “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

13 “Crucify him!” they shouted.

14 “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

REFLECT

A short time ago I witnessed a debate in which a good friend and mentor of mine was invited to share his thoughts on a topic as a panelist at a university. On the panel were three other highly educated and eloquent scholars and each presenter was given a chance to open with a few sentences that outlined their position. Surprisingly, one by one each of them walked through their positions making a point to pre-emptively argue down and dismantle what they presumed would be the positions of the other panelists, arguing that their position was strongest, better founded, and more Biblical. All of this happened within the first 5 minutes...as the introduction...in a room packed with religious people. My friend was the last to present and with much grace, he introduced himself by name (not title), thanked the other panelists (making eye contact), said he felt that he had much to learn (from the others), that he was glad we were all family even if we disagreed (while looking down the table), and then gently shared two sentences about his understanding of the topic (without tearing down the others).

It felt weird.

Subversive silence.

In Mark's gospel we read about the panel Jesus sat on which would eventually lead to his torture and death. He appeared before a Jewish counsel, was turned over to Roman leaders,

interviewed by Pilate, and then led out to a group of religious people who were bent on his destruction.

And to each, Jesus says little to nothing.

It reads weird.

Subversive silence.

In the face of power Jesus is silent, showing that the only way to subvert power is to submit to love. Instead of assuming power, Jesus submits in silence...for us.

Subversive silence.

RESPOND

May we be people who are willing to lay down position for peace, religion for grace, and the lust of power for love.

PRAY

God of grace, in a world where empire rules, allow us to lead with grace and humility. In a culture that is bent on conflict, may we subvert with peace. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

The Command

READ - John 13:1-16

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

¹ *It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

² *The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.* ³ *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;* ⁴ *so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.* ⁵ *After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

⁶ *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

⁷ *Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

⁸ *"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."*

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ *"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

¹⁰ *Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."* ¹¹ *For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

¹² *When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.* ¹³ *"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.* ¹⁴ *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.* ¹⁵ *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.* ¹⁶ *Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*

REFLECT

I can picture the disciples relaxing around the table after having eaten. Maybe they were talking to the one beside them about their day, not realizing what Jesus was about to do for them. One can see the shock registering on their faces as Jesus rises up, wraps a towel around his waist and, kneeling down at a basin, begins to wash their feet.

Washing feet was a function or job that was viewed as demeaning and belittling. In fact, it was a job that even Jewish slaves were not required to do; it was left to other slaves. But Jesus knelt down and, with overwhelming love, washed the feet of his disciples – the teacher caring for his students – as he looked into their eyes with adoration and love.

When he was finished, he gave a command to his disciples. He told them that he had just set the example for them.

An example that really was a command – show this kind of humility and servanthood to all. To love without borders, be willing to serve others, no matter who they are, where they are from or what differences may exist...even the ones we deem unworthy. What would it look like for us to live this out?

For us to wash our neighbour's feet, the doctor's, the cashier's, the police officer's or the person who we just honked at because they cut us off? What would our world be like if we knelt down and looked into people's eyes with love and understanding?

The word Maundy comes from the Latin word for "Command". When Jesus demonstrated and gave this command to serve with humility at the Last Supper, he expected us to follow it as well.

RESPOND

How should this affect the way we respond to others around us – to our spouse, our boss, our employees, the people in line at the store, those we do not like, or the ones that make us angry?

PRAY

Dear Jesus, Help me to wrap the towel around my waist and wash the feet of those who I meet during my day. May I keep your command of serving and loving my world and, in doing that, show the love of you, my Saviour. Thank you for washing my feet and making me whole. I love you. Amen.

Good Friday

READ - Isaiah 53:1-5

¹ Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

REFLECT

Belonging is a fundamental human need. It brings feelings of safety and security. We need places where we feel at home. We run to those places, both physically and emotionally, because they create a sense of wholeness and well-being.

We can all think of times when we have felt on the outside. We were in a social situation and thought, "I don't think I fit here. Other people belong, but I don't." Whether we are 6 or 96, we feel the need to belong and we painfully feel the lack of it when we don't.

Jesus accomplished many things on the cross for us. He suffered to bring us wholeness and healing. In selfless obedience he laid himself down so that we can have what we need most.

Today let's focus on the fact that, through his suffering, Jesus gave us a place to belong. He brought us unhindered access to the Father. We belong to God and we belong to his family. Romans 8:15-16 says, "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him,

'Abba, Father.' For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."

RESPOND

Close your eyes and picture Jesus on the cross. See him suffering for you. Thank him for this extravagant love and sacrifice that brings you true peace and healing.

PRAY

Thank you, God, for wanting me and accepting me. I am so grateful to be part of your family. Thank you for saying that I belong.

Saturday

Hold on for [dear] life!

READ - Romans 6:3-11

³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

REFLECT

When I was little, our church would go skating in the winter. My favourite part was when my brother Randy and his friend Chris would pull me around the ice as fast as possible. I would get a good grip on their coats and they would dig in with their skate blades and take off. When I let these teenagers pull me around the ice, it was the most exhilarating feeling because what was happening on that ice was something I couldn't accomplish on my own. All I had to do was hold on.

The same is true with God. We so often forget we rose up out of the grave with Him into life. Romans 6:10 says, "The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God." The enemy continues to throw things in our face. He reminds us of our mistakes, failures & inadequacies. We get distracted from the truth that we belong to Jesus. He can pull

us forward and we will be able to accomplish things through Him we never could on our own.

All we have to do is hang on!

RESPOND

Reflect on the ways you return to the tomb at times and picture yourself holding tight to Jesus as He pulls you out of the grave to life.

On this eve of Easter, celebrate that you are no longer a slave to sin.

PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank you for dying once to sin for all. Enable us, by Your strength, to walk fully alive in You.

Amen

Easter Sunday

Remembering His Promises

READ - Luke 24:4-6

⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:

REFLECT

When I was a child, I often forgot things...whether it was turning off lights, putting my bike in the garage, picking my clothes up off the floor or saying please and thank you. I simply forgot these things despite all the times my parents would remind me of these simple things to do.

In Jesus' day it was the same. Those who loved him, followed him and sat under his teaching...and even those who didn't agree with him...on that wonderful Sunday they all seemingly forgot what Jesus had said. Jesus had spoken of his resurrection on numerous times (Luke 15:24,32; 16:31, etc.). That day, the women went to the tomb with spices - spices that would have been used in the burial of a person who had died. They had forgotten what Jesus said would happen. They expected a body. Instead, they found an empty tomb! As the angels spoke to them, the text says, "And they remembered his words." (vs 8). They were surprised. They didn't go to the tomb expecting it to be empty...they went looking for a body. And so that morning when they arrived at the tomb they were likely confused. Confused, surprised, shocked by the fulfilled promises of Jesus!

For us, how often do we go through life forgetting the promises of God? How often do we fail to look for the places where God is doing a resurrection in our life? Where the new work he is doing within us is simply a continuation of his promises? How often are we confused, surprised and shocked by the fulfilled promises of God?

Promises like:

- We can never be separated from His love - Romans 8:38 - "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- He is our constant help and presence - Psalm 121:1-2 - "I lift up my eyes to the mountains; where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."
- We will have strength - Phil 4:13 - "I can do all things through him who gives me strength."

RESPOND

So, on this resurrection Sunday, what promise do you need to remember? What promise do you need to live life in the reality of, and give thanks to God for? Why not spend a few minutes opening up the Bible and looking for His promises to us and give thanks to God for them?

PRAY

*God, may I be a person who reads, trusts and lives in light of your promises. Help me to trust you, even when it is hard.
Amen.*



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