



HOLY WEEK AT HOME

CELEBRATING ALONE *or* WITH OTHERS

In Holy Week, we remember the act of self-sacrifice which embodies the very love of God in Christ. And at the center of this moment are three services which not only tell the story of Jesus's death and resurrection but invite us into a collective remembering. For most of us, the idea of remembering is a given. It's not something we generally think about. But for Christians, it is something more.

The word we use for this is anamnesis. Which refers to not only the act of remembering but in our participatory role in *doing* the remembering and *being changed by it*.

So as we normally gather during these holiest of days, to remember the Last Supper and its teachings, the crucifixion on Good Friday, and the empty tomb on Easter, we aren't simply putting stories into our minds for amusement, but to fully and bodily *remember* them and be reflective of Christ's love.

Even though we cannot physically be together for these holy days, we can continue to *remember* together in a kind of spiritual togetherness.

What follows are simple liturgies for us to do at home by ourselves or with those nearest us. You are more than welcome to use them as they are or adapt them to your home. You may also use them right out of *The Book of Common Prayer* starting on page 274.

We will also be streaming our liturgies at <https://www.ststephensth.org/live>.

PALM SUNDAY

LITURGY OF THE PALMS

One Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

All *Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.*

One Let us pray.

Assist us mercifully with your help, O Lord God of our salvation, that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts, whereby you have given us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A person appointed reads Matthew 21:1-17 or all of chapter 21

One The Lord be with you.

All *And also with you.*

One Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

One It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way. Let these branches be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Reflection

When we normally gather to start Holy Week, we're given the strange juxtaposition of the crowds calling Jesus "prophet" and singing his praises. Then, shortly after, we're hearing the Passion. The shouts of praise become shouts to crucify him. As we have a chance to work through the story this year, please take a moment to consider how these are not the same voices. But Jesus is also not the same person they think he is.

Jesus wastes no time going to the Temple, as many pilgrims would do. This being the week of Passover, after all. We could imagine him striding in, certainly not with haughty pride, but with conviction. After all, people are noticing him, so there's no sneaking in. Besides, the entrance is bold--overturning the tables of the money-changers and dove-sellers. But Jesus doesn't treat the Temple any different than he treated the synagogues, and its leaders no better than the ones who confronted him on his way to Jerusalem. He challenges their authority and **shows** how God *really* feels about Sabbath and sacrifice by healing the sick.

And it should not be overlooked that the children respond with shouts of glory and the leaders with utter disregard for the miracles they are witnessing.

—Drew Downs

MONDAY *of* HOLY WEEK

IN THE MORNING

From Psalm 51

Open my lips, O Lord, * *and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.*

Create in me a clean heart, O God, * *and renew a right spirit within me.*

Cast me not away from your presence * *and take not your holy Spirit from me.*

Give me the joy of your saving help again * *and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: * *as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

A person appointed reads Matthew 21:18-22:46 or chapter 22.

A period of silence may follow.

A hymn or canticle may be used; the Apostles' Creed may be said.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Reflection

Jesus tells a sequence of disturbing parables (we'll get more in the coming days) which paint a strange picture for us. Especially when we want to listen to a Jesus who is committed to redeeming **all people**. But Matthew sets the stage for the conflict that will follow by showing us Jesus's response to the fig tree.

To get a hold of the story we have to consider what Jesus is trying to *show* his followers. Jesus is hungry. So he goes to a fig tree. And, as we know, this isn't the season for figs, so he there are none to feed him.

The thing about fig trees is that its fruit only ripen for an extremely short time--days out of the year is all. So it isn't just the wrong season, that season is *itself* a narrow window. So why is Jesus mad that a tree doesn't provide fruit outside that narrow window? The same reason that he's mad at the Temple authorities and frustrated with the leaders who keep harrassing him. All they ever have is excuses. Imagine a grocer only open one day a year or a fire department that only fights fires one day a month. The rest of the time? *That's not my job.*

Jesus, who could just as easily make the fig tree bear fruit as he is to wither it, is showing them, this isn't about the tree. Or the Temple. Or even the leadership. It's about their scarcity mindset. And how willing they are to deny health and life from the weak and suffering and ignore the cries of children.

—Drew Downs

TUESDAY *of* HOLY WEEK

AT NOON

From Psalm 113

Give praise, you servants of the Lord; * *praise the Name of the Lord.*

Let the Name of the Lord be blessed, * *from this time forth for evermore.*

From the rising of the sun to its going down * *let the Name of the Lord be praised.*

The Lord is high above all nations, * *and his glory above the heavens.*

A person appointed reads Matthew 23.

A period of silence may follow.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you:"

Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Reflection

Jesus turns his attention directly onto the leaders and confronts them. He calls them hypocrites and snakes. He says that they spend so much time looking pious and trying to get people to treat them as pious, but they do nothing about actually *being* pious.

Even as Jesus is drawing attention to their hypocrisy and calling them evil to their faces, he is *always* focused on their actions and how the community suffers because of them. They are blind guides because they obsess about the altar more than the gift, the money more than the intention, the power more than the community; and it is that *selfishness* that draws people *away* from God's dream for us.

In the middle of his condemnation, he centers their crime around refusing the purpose of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. Precisely because they focus on the wrong things and "major in the minors". Imagine all the ways we "strain out a gnat but swallow a camel."

Jesus concludes by naming how decoupling responsibility from history steals us of *both* our pain and the grace of forgiveness.

This past week, I binged a radio show called *White Lies* by NPR. It's the story of a famous unsolved murder case in Selma, Alabama from the civil rights era. In it, the investigators explore the effects of maintaining the lie of white supremacy. [It is a must-listen](#). The point, of course, is that white supremacy made a mockery of justice then. But in maintaining the lie for over 50 years didn't make the people innocent. Either of the crime committed all those years ago or of the fear, intimidation, and oppression that governed the decades after.

–Drew Downs

WEDNESDAY *of* HOLY WEEK

IN THE EARLY EVENING

Phos Hilaron

O gracious Light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed! Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light, we sing your praises O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

A person appointed reads Matthew 24-25.

A period of silence may follow.

Prayers may be offered for ourselves and others.

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way,
kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the
breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.*

Reflection

These aren't easy readings. And we aren't living in an easy time. But consider what happens when we
read chapters 24 and 25 as one whole reading. Jesus warns of the near future with its wars and
rumors of wars and its false prophets. The message through it all is to be prepared and watch. The
parables he then tells are in light of that teaching.

I always had trouble with this whole sequence. Not just the prediction of the Temple's destruction,
which sounds like a disaster movie, but also these three parables about the faithful and unfaithful
slave, the Bridesmaids, and the talents. And what got to me about them is that they don't sound
generous or grace-filled. In fact, the masters in each of these come off as cruel and unforgiving. And in
the case of the parable of the talents, encouraging the slaves to break Jewish law and extort the
suffering people so they can save themselves. And when I realized that maybe Jesus isn't
encouraging us to do that, then everything about them changed.

Remember yesterday that the sin of the religious leadership was in its selfishness and exploitation?
These are the cruel masters who reap where they didn't sow.

Jesus is making it clear that we should expect trouble ahead. We should know that God's grace won't
be found in the hands of those who benefit from others' suffering. But it can be found in those places
in which true holiness peaks through. When we give and serve and heal and be with those who need
us. That's where we'll find Jesus already is.

—Drew Downs

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Agapé for Maundy Thursday *

A meatless meal is to be preferred. The setting should be austere and the foods sparse and simple. Appropriate foods include soup, cheese, olives, dried fruit, bread, and wine.

The Word and the Prayers

At the end of the meal, Matthew 26 is read.

Psalm 63:1-8

O God, you are my God; *eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren and dry land where there is no water.*

Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place; *that I might behold your power and your glory.*

For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; *my lips shall give you praise.*

So will I bless you as long as I live *and lift up my hands in your Name.*

My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, *and my mouth praises you with joyful lips.*

When I remember you upon my bed, *and meditate on you in the night watches.*

For you have been my helper, *and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.*

My soul clings to you, *your right hand holds me fast.*

One The Lord be with you

All And also with you

One Let us pray.

O God of the crucified and risen One, from whom no trial or trouble can separate us:
you feed us with your Word and soothe us with your Spirit, closer to us than breath itself.

Make us glad this night for the life of your servant Jesus;

Make us servants of all for the sake of Jesus;

who for our sake gave his life for the salvation of all.

In the Name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord.

All Amen.

Reflection

Many of us associate foot-washing with this day. This comes from the gospel of John, when Jesus gets up from the Passover feast, ties a towel around his waist and washes their feet.

Matthew, however gives us a different version of the same teaching: that following Jesus means serving others. A woman anoints him with an expensive ointment, preparing him for burial. The disciples resist; the first of three contrasts with her service. Then they fall asleep in the garden, even as Jesus told them in yesterday's parables to keep watch. Third are Peter's denials.

When Jesus says "Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" perhaps we should consider that the central teaching.

–Drew Downs

*From the *Book of Occasional Services* 2018, adapted/edited by the Rev. Dr. James Farwell and Dr. Lisa Kimball for use when Maundy Thursday Eucharist is not possible. Appropriate adaptations for illness in the household can be made.

GOOD FRIDAY

The Passion

Matthew 27:1-60 is read.

The Solemn Collects*

One Dear People of God: Our heavenly Father sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; that all who believe in him might be delivered from the power of sin and death, and become heirs with him of everlasting life. We pray, therefore, for people everywhere according to their needs.

All **Let us pray for the holy catholic Church of Christ throughout the world; for all those who meet in homes on these holy days for those isolated due to illness or age that all your people might be one.**

Silence

One Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

All **Let us pray for all nations and peoples of the earth, and for those to whom their care is entrusted, that by God's help they may seek justice and truth, and live in peace and concord.**

Silence

One Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility your dominion may increase, until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All **Let us pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body or in mind; For the hungry and the homeless, the destitute and the oppressed For the sick, the wounded, and the crippled. For those in loneliness, fear, and anguish For those who face temptation, doubt, selfishness, and despair For the sorrowful and bereaved For prisoners and captives, and those in mortal danger**

One May God in mercy comfort and relieve them, and grant them the knowledge of his love, and stir up in us the will and patience to minister to their needs.

Silence

One Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that they may find your mercy present with them in all their afflictions; and give us, we pray, the strength to serve them for the sake of him who suffered for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All **Let us commit ourselves to God, and pray for the grace of a holy life, that, with all who have departed this world and have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to God alone, we may be accounted worthy to enter into the fullness of the joy of our Lord, and receive the crown of life in the day of resurrection.**

Silence

One O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

One Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray you to set your passion, cross, and death between your judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living; pardon and rest to the dead; to your holy Church peace and concord; and to us sinners everlasting life and glory; for with the Father and Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Service adapted from the Book of Common Prayer by The Rev. Josephine Robertson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bellevue, WA and the Rev. Joseph Peters-Mathews, St. Hilda St. Patrick, Edmonds, WA.

HOLY SATURDAY

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Matthew 27:61-66 is read.

The Lord's Prayer

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Reflection

Now, as we've engaged in the process of *remembering*, we've seen a constant juxtaposition between the world that *thinks* it has to be the way it is and a vision of Jesus that *says maybe not!* We've seen the way fear of that vision clouds judgment, invites fear and unreasonable expectations. And we've seen the way the disciples struggle to live into that Christ-like vision.

Now as we live into the day of waiting, let us do so in the knowledge that Jesus left the disciples with all they would need to witness in the coming days. And as a people of the Resurrection, we have all those tools at our disposal right now.