

HELPS

HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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HOLY WEEK
DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Valleydale Church



INTRODUCTION

By the time I met Mike Storter, his life would soon be over. Mike had a magnetic personality and was genuinely loved by the community. He was a bi-vocational minister; a teacher / coach in the public school system and the college pastor at First Baptist Church, Plant City, FL where we served on staff together. Mike suffered from leukemia and spent much time in the hospital for treatments and at home recovering. He endured as much treatment as his body could take and remained upbeat trusting God through it all. But it became clear over time that his days on earth were coming to an end. The pastoral staff stayed in touch with him, visiting him at the hospital and at home. We prayed for healing, peace and comfort. On the one hand it was very sad, yet on the other, it was miraculous. We were sad for his wife and two young and beautiful daughters but it was miraculous that Mike never complained or played the victim. Instead, he encouraged others and remained passionate in his love for Jesus to the very end. He even preached a sermon to a large crowd shortly before his death and gave a strong witness for Jesus. Mike's life deeply impacted me

because I saw how a committed Christian prepares to die and does it with complete trust in God. He died in peace and in complete surrender to God because of His relationship with Jesus.

The final days of Jesus' earthly life are known as Holy Week. The week begins with Palm Sunday and concludes with Easter Sunday. Jesus was on a mission to complete the work that God the Father gave Him to do. He did not complain or play the victim. Jesus completely surrendered to the Father's will and quietly paid the price for our sins. This was an active week of ministry for Jesus since roughly one third of His teachings recorded in scripture come from this week.¹ The Gospel of Mark, from which the verses in this devotional are drawn, contains 661 verses and 242 of them or 37% deal with the last week of Jesus' life.² Clearly, this was a significant week for Jesus and one that we should pay close attention to.

We wanted to publish a short devotional guide for this special week we call Holy Week. Read slowly through the verses and try to put yourself in Jesus' shoes imagining that you had less than a week to live. How would you spend your time if you knew you had five days or less to live? I would imagine that you would be very purposeful with your time. Jesus was too. Each day has at least one Scripture verse from Mark's gospel account, a short commentary, an application point and a prayer point. It is my prayer that the Lord will use this brief devotional guide to draw you closer to Him.

Barry Chesney, Ph.D.

Discipleship Pastor, Valleydale Church



SUNDAY

“And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” -Mark 11:9

The view was impressive and the mission was precise; it was time for Jesus to enter Jerusalem and finish His divine assignment. Elevated on the Mount of Olives, Jesus was 300 feet above Jerusalem and had a great view of Herod’s temple where God’s presence was known to rest.³ Over 600 years earlier, the glory of the LORD had departed from Jerusalem because of the people’s disobedience and descended upon the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:23). Now, the image of the invisible God descended on the Mount of Olives and made His way into Jerusalem. However, Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on this particular Sunday was not routine; it was royal and triumphal. The prophet Zechariah saw a day when the coming King of Zion would enter Jerusalem “righteous and having salvation . . . humble and mounted on a donkey” (9:9). That day had arrived.

A king mounted on a horse had war on his mind yet a king on a donkey came in peace.⁴ Jesus came to establish peace between God and man. But, how would He be received as King? Mark recorded that “many” spread their cloaks on the road and “others” spread leafy branches on the ground. When Jehu was installed as King of Israel, every man took his garment and put it under the bare steps and blew the trumpet acknowledging his kingship (2 Kings 9:13). Those who put their cloaks and branches on the road recognized Jesus as King and shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Hosanna means “Save, I pray” and is found in the Hebrew form in Psalm 118:25.⁵ Clearly, those who followed Jesus down into Jerusalem viewed Him as King. What about the people in Jerusalem and more importantly, the temple; how would they receive Jesus?

Mark 11:11 says that Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. He looked around at everything, it was late and so he left for Bethany with His disciples. There was no festive celebration for Jesus' arrival at the temple; it was a non-event. The religious leaders refused to receive Him as their King. In fact, the phrase, "King of the Jews," was the focus of the trial and crucifixion narrative in Mark 15. Jesus affirmed in Mark 15:2 that He indeed was the King of the Jews but not everyone received Him that way. What about you? Is He King in your life? You may have received Him as Lord and Savior but is He King right now? A king possesses authority and the only proper response to a king is not indifference or disobedience but submission.

APPLICATION POINT

Take a moment right now and invite Jesus to be King over every area of your life.

PRAYER POINT

Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to make peace between you and man. May Jesus take His rightful place in our lives as King and direct us all of our days. Draw us nearer to You this week as we contemplate the last days of Jesus and His sacrifice on our behalf, in Jesus name, Amen.



MONDAY

“And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.” -Mark 11:13

On the Monday following the Triumphal Entry, Jesus was hungry. Apparently, Jesus stayed in Bethany on Sunday night and when Monday morning arrived, he made the short journey (less than two-miles) back to Jerusalem.⁶ Jesus was hungry and, in the distance, he saw a fig tree with leaves on it. Fig trees were crucial to life in Israel; they were the most fruitful of all trees and often produced the first fruits that were brought into the temple.⁷ The first fig harvest did not arrive until May / June and the last one occurred in mid-October. So why did Jesus expect fruit on a tree before harvest?

After the final harvest in October, the fig tree branches produced buds that remained immature through the winter.⁸ In March / April these small buds developed into premature green figs known in Hebrew as *paggim*.⁹ Though small, the figs were edible. So, as Jesus saw leaves from a distance, He expected to find edible fruit on the tree. Yet, He was truly disappointed to discover only leaves with no edible fruit. The lack of fruit triggered judgment from Jesus and the disciples overheard it. The prophet Jeremiah saw a fig tree without figs as representing the lack of spiritual fruit and rebellion against God (8:13). Thus, God judged Judah through the Babylonians. Years later, Jesus came and was ready to gather His people to Himself but they did not bear fruit either.¹⁰ They were not ready and as a result, they experienced God’s judgment in A.D. 70 through the Romans. The fig tree was phony; it appeared to have fruit but did not. Likewise, the people of Jerusalem had the temple, they had religious festivals and they had Jesus in their midst, yet, they did not have spiritual fruit. They were

phony. They looked spiritual but lacked a genuine relationship with God through Christ.

What about you? Is there spiritual fruit in your life? You may have been a longtime church member and others think well of you. But are you saved? Does God see spiritual fruit in your life? If not, my friend, you will experience God's judgment after you die. So, turn to Him now and ask Him to forgive you of your sins. Then, He will begin producing fruit through you.

APPLICATION POINT

Take time to examine yourself and make sure you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

PRAYER POINT

Father, please open the hearts of people who may be familiar with Jesus but have never received Him as Lord and Savior so they might be saved and have fruit in their life.



TUESDAY

“And he called his disciples to him and said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.’” -Mark 11:43

At one point, Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart and Sam’s Club, was the richest man in America. Yet, if you saw him out in public you would probably have never known it. From 1979 until his death in 1992, Sam drove a Ford F-150 pickup truck because it was dependable and functional. At his death, Sam’s net worth was valued at \$8.6 billion yet he drove a simple working man’s truck instead of an upscale luxury vehicle that many people would have expected him to drive. It goes to show that expectations we place on people do not always equal reality.

On Tuesday, Jesus was at the temple in Jerusalem when another case of expectations not equaling reality arose. Located inside the Court of Women were 13 receptacles in the shape of a ram’s horn to collect offerings.¹¹ Many rich people walked by and deposited large sums of money in them. Sometimes when offerings were given the priest on duty examined the coins for authenticity and audibly directed the giver where to place the offering and its amount.¹² Perhaps that is what happened here and so all were aware of how much the rich were giving. However, free-will offerings were also given where the exact amount was not known unless one could tell by the sound of the coins hitting the receptacle. Jesus saw a poor widow come through the line and she gave two small copper coins. No one expected a poor widow to give very much since she did not have a husband to provide financially for her. The currency she gave was called a *lepton*, the smallest valued currency in use that was less than a centimeter in diameter.¹³ Yet, this was a large gift in Jesus’ eyes. He summoned the disciples and said the poor widow gave “more than all” the other givers. Wow! How could that be?

The wealthy gave from their overflow but the poor widow gave her livelihood. It is highly likely that she did not know where her next meal would come from yet she gave two coins instead of one. She truly gave “everything she had, all she had to live on.” Mark inserted this story to provide a stark contrast to the previous one where Jesus commented on the scribes’ desire for public approval and respect. The scribes appeared to be outwardly wealthy and spiritually rich yet Jesus said they would receive greater condemnation because they were spiritually bankrupt. The poor widow was physically poor but spiritually rich because she gave all she had. She trusted God to meet her needs and thus served as a model to Jesus’ followers. What about you? Are you giving all you have to God and trusting Him to meet your needs? Or, are you living for yourself and craving the approval of others?

APPLICATION POINT

Take some time to examine your time, financial giving and your abilities and evaluate how much is spent serving self as opposed to serving God. In what area(s) do you need to make a change today?

PRAYER POINT

Father, please break the hold of greed on my life so I can give generously to you in every area. Thank you that Jesus gave His all; help me to give mine, in Jesus name, Amen.



WEDNESDAY

“She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.” -Mark 14:8

Extravagance is acceptable normally as long as it is in certain areas. For example, millions of dollars can be spent constructing sports stadiums, shopping malls or other entertainment venues but spend millions of dollars on a church building and some people even in the church grow skeptical and even critical. On Wednesday before Jesus’ crucifixion, a woman did something extravagant for Jesus and it was met with harsh criticism from those closest to Jesus. In Bethany, an unnamed woman took pure nard and anointed Jesus’ body with it. Pure nard was a well-known perfume with a powerful fragrance that originated from a root found in India.¹⁴ She broke the nard container which meant she was not saving any for later; she poured it all on Jesus. This act was a complete waste in the minds of some in the room and they griped amongst themselves as to why the nard was not sold and the proceeds given to the poor. The nard was valued at a year’s wage which would have been a significant and generous gift to the poor. In addition, it is possible the nard was a family treasure so it carried emotional and economic value to the woman.

Jesus corrected their misinformed view noting she “has done a beautiful thing to me.” The woman’s act of elaborate love and commitment to Jesus prepared His body for burial. Jesus knew her intention and her act was appreciated. In fact, her act became a lasting memorial so that those who heard the gospel would hear of her commitment.

In this passage, Mark employs the “insider-outsider” idea in order to communicate his point.¹⁵ Jesus was at a home in Bethany (outside Jerusalem) of Simon the leper (outside social circles) and is anointed

by an unnamed woman (outside the disciples).¹⁶ Yet it was the disciples (insiders) who were furious with the woman for her extravagant gift. Mark's point is the outsider (an unnamed woman) recognized the true value of Jesus and her extravagant gift demonstrated her understanding of his immense value.¹⁷ Those closest to Jesus did not fully recognize Him; they valued the poor more than Him. What about you? Is there anything in your life right now that you value more than Jesus? Are you extravagant in your generosity to God's Kingdom? Or, do you get upset when you see extravagant acts of generosity like people selling everything they have and moving to the mission field or when people leave their careers to serve God in ministry? Wherever you are extravagant in life, it reveals what you truly value.

APPLICATION POINT

List one way you can show extravagant love for God this week.

PRAYER POINT

Father, please open our eyes so we can see how great is the love you have for us so that we may respond with complete devotion to you in every area of our lives.



THURSDAY

“And they all left him and fled” -Mark 11:50

In January 2019, the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister, Theresa May, appointed Tracey Crouch as the new Minister of Loneliness to address health and social problems that arise from loneliness. An article published by Smithsonian.com revealed that approximately 9 million people in the UK reported they suffer from loneliness either part-time or full-time. The article also stated that loneliness damages one’s health more than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The UK is addressing this problem by connecting older residents with younger ones and by creating designated areas in neighborhoods for people to connect and dialogue together. As we look at Mark 14 today, we are not told that Jesus was lonely but we do see that “all” left him and fled.

It was Thursday, the day before Jesus’ crucifixion, and Jesus shared a significant meal with the disciples, He prayed in the garden and then He was arrested. Earlier, Mark noted that “all” drank of the cup in the Lord’s Supper (Mark 14:23) and “all” agreed with Peter that they would die with Jesus and not deny Him (Mark 14:31). Yet, on the same night, “all” left Jesus and fled. On one hand, readers could ask the question, “where else were the disciples supposed to go? They could not join Him in jail.” That is true but Mark’s objective is to show that “all” deserted Him. This point is emphasized by Mark’s placement of the Greek word “all” at the end of the sentence.¹⁸ Those closest to Jesus left Him. Jesus was no longer among friends; He was among enemies and on the verge of crucifixion.

As you think about your life, is there any way that you are deserting Jesus? Are you passionate about Jesus on Sundays around other Christians but you desert Him during the week when you encounter co-workers who



FRIDAY

“And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, ‘Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.’ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.”

-Mark 15:3-5

On April 9, 1865, the McLean House in Appomattox, VA became known as a place of surrender. In the middle of the day, on that Palm Sunday, Confederate General Robert E. Lee entered the McLean House and shortly after, he was joined by Union General Ulysses S. Grant. Around 90 minutes later, the two men emerged from the house. Lee left and rode back to his army. Lee and the Confederates had surrendered and the Civil War was over. Many years earlier, we see a powerful moment of surrender not at the McLean House but where Christian tradition calls the Fortress of Antonia.¹⁹

This is the site where Jesus appeared before Pilate. The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. In verses 3-4 there are two different Greek words used for “many” implying that several different allegations were spoken instead of the repetition of one main accusation.²⁰ Yet, in spite of these charges against Him, Jesus remained silent. Pilate gave Jesus more than one opportunity to respond to these false charges but Jesus kept quiet to Pilate’s amazement. Why did Jesus remain silent?

Jesus remained silent because He was in complete surrender to the Father’s will. He had surrendered the night before in prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus’ surrender to the Father continued and was on display before Pilate. Jesus fulfilled the words of Isaiah 53:7, “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” Yet, Jesus’ surrender was not one of defeat but of victory. Jesus remained without sin His entire life and was about to finish



SATURDAY

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.”

-Mark 16:1

Carl Jackson understands devotion. He grew up in the needy Sand Hills area of Augusta, GA. There was a see-through fence close by separating the poverty of his neighborhood from the pleasure of a nearby Country Club. Carl often stood at this fence and gazed toward the golfers at Augusta Country Club and probably wondered what life was like on the other side. At age 11, Carl found out as he began working as a caddy at the Country Club. Two years later, he began work at Augusta National Golf Club and caddied his first Masters Tournament in 1961. Carl worked at Augusta National until 2015 when he caddied his 54th Masters Tournament. He was dedicated to Augusta National because many people there had helped him. Carl dropped out of school in the 9th grade so he could caddie full time and help his family financially. It was President Eisenhower, an Augusta member, who one day asked him why he was not in school and eventually helped him earn his GED. Others at Augusta National also stepped up to help Carl through gifts in the mail. But Carl was also dedicated to a person, namely, Ben Crenshaw. Carl caddied for Ben Crenshaw on 39 of his 54 Masters Tournaments. Crenshaw won two Masters Championships during this time. Carl remained caddy for Ben even after Ben passed out of his prime as a player. Carl could have moved on to other players, I am sure, but he stayed with Ben. Likewise, Carl later moved to Arkansas but he continued to travel back to Georgia and work the Masters tournament each year as long as he was physically able. Carl showed incredible devotion to a place and to a person who meant so much to him and helped him leave a life of poverty.

Three women are mentioned in Mark who demonstrated amazing devotion to Jesus. They followed Jesus and ministered to Him while He was alive (Mark 15:41) and even after His death their actions revealed their deep devotion. The Sabbath ended at sundown on Saturday. Once evening came, Mary

Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. It is interesting that the same term for "bought" spices in Mark 16:1 is also used in 1 Corinthians 6:20 referring to the great price that God paid for us; namely, the death of His Son Jesus.²¹ These ladies bought spices to anoint the body which had bought their salvation. Amazing. Notice whose name was mentioned first; it was Mary Magdalene. According to Luke 8:2, Jesus healed Mary by casting out seven demons from her. I believe that Mary never got over her deliverance. She was delivered from a life of torment and bondage to a life of freedom and joy in Christ. She was so grateful for Jesus that she sought ways to serve Him.

Once the Sabbath was over, these ladies had the chance to purchase spices so they would be ready to anoint His body on Sunday morning.²² The Jews did not embalm bodies like the Egyptians did but they did anointed bodies with perfume. The sacrifice of money and time to anoint Jesus' body revealed the deep devotion these ladies had for Him. But, to their surprise, when they went to the tomb on Sunday, Jesus' body was not inside.

APPLICATION POINT

List one way you can sacrifice time and resources today so you are ready to worship tomorrow.

PRAYER POINT

Father, please help me want to give sacrificially of my time and resources in order to show you how much I love and appreciate you, in Jesus name, Amen.



SUNDAY

“And he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.’” -Mark 16:6

The ladies had no idea it would be a life changing day. They simply wanted to show their love for Jesus by anointing his body with their newly purchased spices. Very early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome journeyed to Jesus’ tomb. On their way, they discussed a legitimate problem; “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” The verb for “were saying” in verse 3 is in the imperfect tense meaning they kept talking about this issue as they traveled.²³ They were concerned about the stone. However, the ladies traveled to the tomb in faith believing that someone would be there to help them move the stone. To their surprise, the stone, the object of their concern, had already been moved.²⁴

They entered and saw a heavenly being with a message for them; Jesus who was crucified has risen and was not there. The verbs used in Mark 16:6 display both sides of the Easter event; Jesus who was *crucified* has now *risen*.²⁵ Jesus who died is now alive. This heavenly being was the first one to preach the gospel and the location was the empty tomb.²⁶ The God-man who died physically arose from the dead physically, with visible wounds, in order that we might have forgiveness and eternal life. The object of the ladies’ concern had been removed because Jesus was alive. The tomb was vacant and the vacancy spelled victory. Victory over death and the power of sin for every follower of Jesus. So, what is it today that you are concerned about? What large stone is problematic in your life? Jesus is alive meaning that you can have victory over that stone. Whether it is an addiction, loneliness, marital conflict, financial problems or job security

APPENDIX

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3. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 334.
4. Thomas L. Constable, *John* (<https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/john.pdf>, 2019 edition), 319.
5. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 336.
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14. Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 367.
15. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 414.
16. *Ibid.*
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20. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 628-629.
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24. J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Mark* (Carlisle, PA: 1994, First Published in 1857), 355.
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