

JOURNEY TO EASTER

HOLY WEEK 2024 • GLEN ALLEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Welcome to our Journey to Easter. Throughout Lent, we have invited you to consider the stories that lead to Easter Sunday. Some of these stories are so familiar that we can recite them from memory. Some of these stories are not so familiar because they get lost in the bigger stories of Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Yet each story reveals important truths about who Jesus was, what mattered to him, and why he did what he did. This week, you will have the opportunity to revisit the stories, reflect on their meaning, do an accompanying activity, and pray. We hope spending time with these stories each day will make Easter Sunday more meaningful and inspire a new way of living the truth of Easter.



Sunday, March 24

Palm Sunday - Read Mark 11:1-11

Reflect: On Palm Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem as crowds anticipate Jesus freeing them from the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire. Jesus *did* come to usher in a new kind of kingdom - but his kingdom is unlike any kingdom on earth: Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey; Pontius Pilate enters from the other side of town on a horse with a large entourage. Jesus' followers wave palm branches and sing "Hosanna;" Pontius Pilate reminds his crowds that Rome is in charge and his army keeps the peace. At the same time, the religious establishment is concerned that more and more people are following Jesus and his unorthodox teachings. This creates tension that leads to Jesus' arrest, but the people waving palm branches don't know that yet. They are excited to know that God is working to liberate them!

Activity: Join us at Glen Allen Baptist at 10:30 am for our Palm Sunday Service. If you can't join us, paint some paper green, trace your hand five times on the green paint (after it's dry), cut out the hand-prints, tape or glue them to a craft stick or paper towel roll, and have a parade around your house or yard. Not crafty? See if there are any small branches in your yard that you can use - and scarves work, too! Don't be afraid to sing at the top of your lungs and shout Hosanna!

Pray: Open our hearts to love as fully and wholeheartedly as Jesus loves. Open our mouths to sing and speak our love. Open our arms to embrace the world as Jesus does.

Monday, March 25

Cleansing the Temple - Read Mark 11:15-19

Reflect: We don't often think of Jesus as angry, but this is one time when He demonstrates his anger. Jesus quotes Isaiah 56 when he says the Temple should be a house of prayer for all people and accuses the Temple leaders of making it a den of thieves. We know from history that the temple had become a place to buy and sell things, and it was distracting people from the purpose of the Temple, which was to be a place of prayer, repentance, and reconciliation. It is so easy to let our stuff - and accumulating stuff - get in our way of spending time with God.

Activity: Find a closet or drawer, clean it, and organize it. Throw away the things you no longer need, or that distract you from doing what you need to do and create space for the important things. This also works on our calendars. What do we need to say "no" to in order to make space for the important things? Pay attention to how you feel after you accomplish this task!

Pray: Open our minds to understand what we don't need. Open our hands to let go of what gets in our way of living a healthy and productive life. Open our calendars and help us remove the things we worship instead of you.

Tuesday, March 26

The Anointing at Bethany - Read: Mark 14:3-9

Reflect: Throughout His ministry, Jesus spent hours around the table eating with his disciples and friends he met on his journeys. On this occasion, Jesus is eating with Simon the Leper, who is likely the man Jesus healed in Mark 1. Imagine the joy Simon felt eating in his own home surrounded by family, friends, and the one who healed him of the disease that isolated him from his community for years! An uninvited woman enters the scene and anoints Jesus' head with oil like you would anoint a King. This was her extravagant way of showing Jesus how much she loved him and that she recognized him as a special person.

Activity: Take some perfume, lotion, or baby oil, spread it on the hands of someone in your family, or make a cross on their forehead and say, "You are God's beloved, and God is pleased with you."

Pray: Open our hands so that we might bless others. When a scarcity mindset tempts us to hold back, help us to bring out the best we have to love and serve others.

Wednesday, March 27

The Last Supper - Read: Mark 14:10-26

Reflect: Jesus spent a lot of time eating and sharing meals with his friends. He attended wedding feasts, ate at the home of "sinners and tax collectors," fed thousands of people, and more. This time spent around the table was central to his ministry, nourishing the body and spirit of everyone he shared a table with. At the Last Supper, despite knowing his friends would betray him, Jesus still shared a meal with them and even washed their feet.

Activity: Join us for dinner tonight at 5:45 pm as we continue our reflection on Holy Week. If you cannot come to dinner, enjoy a meal with family and/or friends around the table at home. What can you do to serve someone at your table?

Pray: Open our mouths so that we might taste the fullness of God's love. Give us the grace to love our enemies with this kind of extravagant love.

Thursday, March 28

Garden of Gethsemane - Read: Mark 14:32-42

Reflect: One of the saddest parts of this story is how totally alone Jesus is. The people he loves and trusts most in the world have either betrayed or abandoned him, and we see his vulnerability and humanity. We see his fear, but we also see his deep courage, as he makes the hard choice, the right choice. Surely, his courage came from time spent with God.

Activity: Look at the world around you. What do you see that is wrong and needs to be fixed? What is one tangible thing you can do today to help fix what is wrong in our world? Spend time talking with God about what you are thinking and feeling and ask for what you need to do the next right thing. Now go do it—even if it's hard!

Pray: Open our eyes and awaken us from our slumber. Open our ears, so we hear the sounds of suffering around us. Move us from weariness to action so that we can join in God's redemptive work in the world.



Friday, March 29

Crucifixion Read: Mark 15:21-39

Reflect: One of the most remarkable aspects of Jesus' journey to the cross is that he never gave in to the human impulse of self-preservation. Although he could, he never used his power to escape all the terrible things he was facing. Everything Jesus did as he walked on this earth was rooted in love for the world, and Jesus never once compromised on love. And if Jesus was "God in skin" - "incarnate," as we churchy people like to say - then God's love is so great that God chose not to use God's power to avoid a terrible death.

Activity: We often center on ourselves instead of following Jesus' example. Consider how we focus so much on our own needs and desires that we are blind to others' needs. Today, let's turn our focus from ourselves to someone else—someone who lives in our house, a neighbor, a colleague, or a family member. How can we love them like Jesus loves?

Prayer: Open our eyes to see the lives of people around us. Reorient us to Jesus, who shows us what real love is. Open our hearts and our arms to receive your love. Open our hearts and our arms to love the world as you love the world.

Saturday, March 30

Holy Saturday Read: Mark 14:66-72

Reflect: One of the hardest days of the Christian Calendar is Holy Saturday because it appears that God is dead, and the hope of heaven on earth is gone. For the disciples, it is a day of grief because they lost their dear friend and the promise Jesus offered for a new world, and Peter's grief is compounded by shame because he knows he denied Jesus. Remember, no one in this story knows that resurrection is coming. For them, this is the end of Jesus' story.

Activity: Build a campfire or light a candle. Sit near the warmth, let the smoke wash over you, and scent your hair and clothes. Each of us grieves something today, so hold space inside you to feel that grief and sadness. Sometimes, our grief is the consequence of something we have done, or someone else has done to us. Cry if you need to. It's ok. The pain of this day is heavy.

Prayer: Open our hearts and spirits to feel our grief's sadness. Free us to weep for the things we have lost. Comfort us with your presence. Remind us that you are always working toward life, even when we think all is lost. Open our noses to smell the smoke and help us remember how we are like Peter. Let us leave this fire, knowing that we do not grieve alone.

Sunday, March 31

Easter Sunday - Read Mark 16:1-8

Reflect: There is an Easter tradition called Flowering the Cross, which is a powerful image of how God works to bring life out of death. The cross represents our broken world, and how powerful systems use death as a means of fear and control. The cross is painful to look at because of the brutality of the public execution it represents. In contrast, the flowers that cover the cross on Easter Sunday represent life and beauty. Flower seeds appear dead and buried; but in time, beautiful life emerges. The cross covered in flowers is a reminder that God is always working to bring forth life from death in every circumstance and situation.

Activity: Take a walk in your yard and pick some flowers to bring to flower the cross that sits in front of the church. You can bring your flowers any time today. You are welcome to join us for worship at 10:30 am. If you cannot go to church, enjoy a walk and observe how God brings life out of death through nature. Reflect on how God has brought life out of difficult situations in your own life. This is the wonderful message of Easter.

Prayer: Open our eyes to see the painful ugliness of the cross smothered in the beauty of your creation. Remind us, O God, that you are always at work bringing life out of death. Open our hearts to recognize this resurrection work in nature, in our lives, in our families, in our community, and in our world.

Monday, April 1

Easter Monday - Read John 21:12-19

Reflect: Before Jesus appeared to anyone else after his resurrection, he showed up on the beach, where he regularly spent time with his disciples. And Jesus cooks breakfast for them! These are the disciples who fell asleep when Jesus needed them most, who fled when Jesus was arrested, and who denied him. Yet, they are the first ones Jesus reached out to after his resurrection. Can you imagine Jesus cooking breakfast for you and inviting you to sit and eat with him? And can you imagine receiving Jesus' unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace after you had hurt him so deeply?

Activity: Enjoy breakfast with your family or friends. Reflect on the risen Jesus who appeared to the disciples after his death and ate breakfast with them. At the end of it, he gave them instructions to continue the work God began in the world. Think about what this might mean for your own life. How does the Easter story continue beyond Easter Sunday?

Prayer: Open our senses to take in the fullness of life. Help us to live in such a way that the living Christ overflows out of us. Help us to feed the sheep around us just as Jesus asked us to do.



Resurrection Rolls - A Fun Easter Sunday Treat!

Ingredients

1 can Pillsbury Crescent Dough
8 large marshmallows
water
cinnamon & sugar mixed together in a bowl

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375°F. Spray a cookie sheet with cooking spray or line with parchment paper.
Unroll crescent dough and separate each triangle.
Dip marshmallow in water. Roll in cinnamon and sugar mixture.
Place the marshmallow on the top of the crescent roll and roll it into a crescent roll shape, then secure the sides by tucking them under and pinching them closed. (Don't worry about how they look! They will be yummy!)

Place on a prepared cookie sheet and repeat with the remaining 7 rolls.
Bake in preheated oven for 8-10 minutes or until golden brown on the outside.
Let cool for a few minutes and then let the children pick a roll to open up. The marshmallow has disappeared!



You are always welcome at Glen Allen Baptist Church

Sundays

9:15 Sunday School for all ages

10:30 Worship

Wednesdays through May

5:45 Dinner

6:15 - Children and adult activities

7:30 Choir practice

Vacation Bible School June 10-13