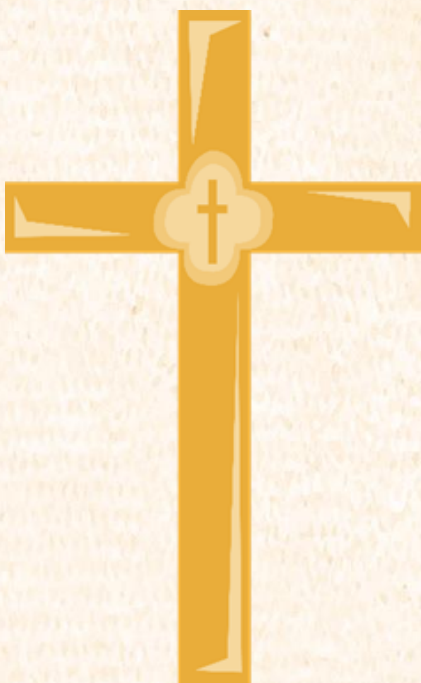


MMBC Holy Week Reflections



March 29th- April 4th, 2021



INTRODUCTION

The week between Palm Sunday (*March 28th*) and Resurrection Sunday (*April 4th*) is considered Holy Week. This marks the journey that Jesus took from his celebratory entrance into Jerusalem (*Palm Sunday*), to Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples (*Maundy Thursday*), the cross (*Good Friday*) and finally the resurrection (*Easter Sunday*).

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Holy Week provides an opportunity for Christians to experience the journey of Jesus' death and resurrection. Aside from attending worship services, we can experience this journey through reflection and prayer.

Throughout our study of the Book of Luke we have been challenged to observe Sabbath Moments. These moments provide the opportunity for us to Stop, Allow for Interruptions, Evaluate our Circumstances and Life, *and then* Glorify God. My prayer is that the readings below will provide a structure for you to create a Sabbath Moment each day through Holy Week.

The Book of Luke records a story, after Jesus' resurrection, of two disciples that were traveling along a road toward a village named Emmaus. They were discussing the events that led up to Jesus' crucifixion. They were confused and overwhelmed. Luke 24:15-16 says, "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him." The experience that these two disciples had on their journey to Emmaus describes how many of us feel as we travel the road of life. Life can seem confusing and overwhelming at times, and God may seem absent or distant.

It wasn't until Jesus broke bread (communion) with these disciples that they recognized that Jesus was in their presence. Sometimes it takes Sabbath Moments for us to reflect upon our lives and the journey that Jesus took to the cross in order for us to realize just how near God is in our lives. It might not always make sense, but God has a plan for each of our lives if only we will take the time to stop and communion with Him.

I want to encourage you to take a Sabbath Moment each day of Holy Week to reflect upon the readings and scriptures on the following pages. On Maundy Thursday, April 1st at 6pm we will share communion together in the church parking lot. We will conclude our observance of Holy Week with worship, Sunday April 4th at 10:45am in the church parking lot.

In Christ,
Pastor Seth

All Bible references are from the ESV Bible, Published by Crossway, 2001.

Monday, March 29th

Throughout our study of the Book of Luke we have been challenged to observe Sabbath Moments. These moments provide the opportunity for us to Stop, Allow for Interruptions, Evaluate our Circumstances and Life, *and then* Glorify God.

Even Jesus took time for Sabbath Moments. Two times in Luke chapters 5 (vs. 16) and 6 (vs. 12) Jesus walked away from the crowds to pray. One of the most significant Sabbath Moments Jesus observed was right before He was arrested. In this particular moment (Luke 22:39-46), Jesus confronted His human fear of the cross by surrendering His will to God the Father and embracing God's purpose for His life. Jesus' Sabbath Moments provide an example for how all of us should approach God in prayer.

God offers each of us Sabbath Moments. For example, in Luke 7:36-50 a sinful woman interrupted a meal between a religious leader and Jesus. While the religious leader wanted to cast the woman off because of her sin, Jesus challenged the religious leader, "Do you see this woman (vs. 44)?" Jesus wanted the religious leader to see the woman for her faith, not her sin.

While we desire to glorify God with our lives, we must first: Stop, Allow for interruptions, and Evaluate our circumstances and life. Sabbath Moments are challenging, but they are also life-giving. The more Sabbath Moments become a part of our lives, the more we can glorify God.

Take a moment today to re-read the passages referenced above. How is God speaking to you today? Is there something or someone that God wants you to take notice of? Is there a fear or sin that you need to confess and submit to God's will for your life?

Tuesday, March 30th

We encounter people, circumstances, and temptations every day that challenge our patience, faith, and compassion. When we encounter these challenges we can choose to respond in one of two ways. We can choose to respond with humility which leads to repentance. Or, we can choose to respond with arrogance which leads to self-justification.

A lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor (Luke 10:29)?" prompted Jesus to tell the Parable of the Good Samaritan. While the lawyer attempted to test Jesus by justifying himself in accordance with keeping the religious law, the lawyer discovered that Jesus was actually testing him! After Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan, He flipped the lawyer's question from "Who is my neighbor?" to "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor (Luke 10:36)?"

Sabbath Moments allow for God to challenge our motives as we encounter God's Word. If we respond humbly to the challenges we encounter, we can confess our sins, our faith can be strengthened, and we can be transformed.

One of the core truths of Jesus' identity is that He is both *human* and *divine*. Jesus exercised balance between human weakness and divine power. He was able to achieve this balance through self-awareness. Sabbath Moments provide the opportunity for us to listen to the divine voice of God while reflecting on the weakness and brokenness of our lives.

Consider the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. In what ways have you attempted to justify yourself before God and others? What challenges have you encountered (people, circumstances, or temptations) that you may have responded to through human weakness, rather than with patience, faith, or compassion? How might establishing Sabbath Moments make you become more aware of God's divine role in your life?

Wednesday, March 31st

Easter reminds us of the love that God extends to each of us and also of the call to love others as God has so loved us. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 15:11-32), the youngest son “squandered his (inheritance) in reckless living (vs. 13).” As a result, he found himself “longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything (vs. 16)”. At rock-bottom, “he came to himself (vs. 17),” returned to his father, and repented of his sins. The father graciously welcomed his lost son home with a banquet celebration.

The parable offers an example of how God, the Father, responds when we return home to Him through the repentance of our sins. However, Jesus told the Parable in response to the religious leaders who were grumbling because tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Jesus (Luke 15:1-2). The Parable of the Prodigal Son doesn’t end with the celebration of the younger son’s return home. Instead, the father encounters his older son’s anger and jealousy. The older son questioned his father’s gracious embrace of the prodigal son. The older son had remained faithful to his father and a good steward of his inheritance, and yet the father had never thrown the older son a party!

The Parable of the Prodigal Son not only reminds us of the love that God extends to each of us, but of the call to love others as God has so loved us. If we aren’t careful (or self-aware) we can find ourselves *grumbling rather than celebrating*. Sabbath Moments remind us of God’s love and provide the opportunity to evaluate our hearts.

Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Consider how the religious leaders grumbled instead of celebrating those who were drawing near to Jesus (Luke 15:1-2). How does the grumbling of the religious leaders compare to the older brother’s anger and jealousy (Luke 15:28-30)? Reflect upon the people, circumstances, and temptations you have encountered recently. Have you approached these challenges with a grumbling attitude or with grace? Like the prodigal son, what areas of your life might you need to repent? Like the father, how can you show compassion to those who challenge your faith? Like the older brother, how might you celebrate the inheritance you have received from God, the Father?

Maundy Thursday, April 1st

What does it mean to follow Jesus? In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." The statement is simple, but not as simple to put into practice. Jesus' call to discipleship is actually the second call He gives to His disciples. The first call is recorded in Luke 5:1-11. While His soon to be disciples are casting their nets without any catch of fish, Jesus suggests that they cast out again. This time, the catch is so big that their nets begin to break. At this point these fisherman (soon to be Jesus' first disciples) realize that Jesus is no ordinary man. Humbled by his own sin, Peter falls at Jesus' feet. He acknowledges Jesus' authority as God. As a result, Jesus calls the fisherman to become fishers of men (Luke 5:10). Each of the men respond by docking their boats and leaving everything behind to follow Jesus.

Peter plays a significant role in each of Jesus' three calls to discipleship. Right before Jesus provides a definition of discipleship (Luke 9:23), Peter proclaims Jesus to be "The Christ of God (Luke 9:20)." Peter's faith is displayed throughout Jesus' ministry, and yet so are Peter's failures. One of Peter's greatest failures was when Jesus was being led away by the servants of the high priest. Three different people recognized Peter as one of Jesus' disciples, but each time Peter denied knowing Jesus (Luke 22:54-62). Instead of denying himself as Jesus clearly stated in Luke 9:23, Peter denied Jesus!

How often have we been warned of Peter's denial, and yet when encountered with a similar challenge we too have denied Jesus rather than ourselves? The truth of this human weakness occurs more than we would probably like to admit. However, there is a redeeming factor in Peter's denial. This would not be the last time that Jesus would call Peter to discipleship.

Despite the joy of seeing Jesus alive, Peter's denial still loomed after Jesus' resurrection. John 21:15-20 records an encounter that Peter had with Jesus. Jesus approached Peter and asked him three times (the irony in Peter's three denials and Jesus asking the same question three times should not be lost here!) "Do you love me more than these?" Each time Peter responded, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." John's Gospel tells us that when asked the third time, "Peter was grieved (John 21:17b)."

Although confronting his sin was difficult, Jesus offered grace in this Sabbath Moment. Jesus wanted Peter to move from guilt to forgiveness. The call that Jesus first gave to Peter on the fishing boat had not changed. Even though Peter had sinned, Peter had grown in his relationship with Jesus. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ was not lost. After the third time of questioning Peter, Jesus responded, "Truly, Truly I say to you, when you were young you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go (John 21:18)." Now, Peter knew the extent of Jesus' call to follow Him.

Following Jesus isn't easy. It is important for us to remember people like Peter who often stumbled as they attempted to follow Jesus. It is also important for us to remember the grace that Jesus offers as displayed through His death on the cross. We are not unlike Peter. The important thing to remember about Peter is that he didn't allow his failures to keep him from following Jesus.

As we prepare to remember Jesus through communion, how do you see yourself in Peter's story? How might Peter's story encourage you in your journey to follow Jesus?

Maundy Thursday Communion Service Tonight in the Church Parking Lot at 6pm!

Good Friday, April 2nd

Good Friday? What is so good about celebrating someone's death? Well, Jesus' death on the cross paid the debt of our sin. Like Peter's confession in Jesus as the Christ, our confession of our sin and faith in Jesus' death allow God's grace to forgive our sin. Just as Jesus called Peter to follow him after Peter denied knowing Jesus, Jesus calls us to participate in God's redemptive story.

One of the main questions we have asked throughout our study of the Book of Luke is: What is our role in God's Redemptive Story? We have witnessed several characters who played "supporting roles." For example, in Luke 1 we learned about Zechariah and Elizabeth. They were the parents of John the Baptist. Although they were unable to have children until later in life, they believed the vision that Zechariah had received while praying in the temple. John the Baptist would prepare the way for Jesus' ministry.

Luke 2 tells the story of Mary and Joseph. They were the parents of Jesus. Mary was young and conceived Jesus as a virgin through the Holy Spirit. She and Joseph were only engaged when the angel Gabriel revealed God's plan to Mary. Both Mary and Joseph were fearful of what this might mean for their life, especially considering that they were not married. Despite their fear, they both chose faith over fear. As a result, God used them to be Jesus' earthly parents.

Luke 5 tells the story of Jesus calling his first disciples. At the time, they were fisherman, however Jesus called them to fish for men. In an incredible act of faith, these men left everything to follow Jesus. In Thursday's devotion, Peter's growth as a disciple was detailed. We should be reassured from Peter's example that being a disciple does not require us to be perfect, however we must continue to follow Jesus despite our failures.

Another story from Luke 5 is Jesus healing a paralytic. While the crowds packed a house to hear Jesus teach. The paralytic was unable to get into the house. His friends tried to enter the front door, but the size of the crowd kept them from getting to Jesus. As a last resort, the friends climbed the roof and lowered their paralytic friend down to Jesus. It was an incredible display of faith! Jesus used their faith to not only heal the paralytic but to challenge the faith of the crowd.

These are just a few of the examples that we have studied thus far in the Book of Luke. Although each of their stories are unique, each of them played a role in God's Redemptive Story. Jesus calls each of us, just like He did His disciples; to follow Him. As you take the time this week to experience Sabbath Moments, is there an area of your life that God has made you aware of His presence? Where do you feel God challenging your faith? Is there a specific action that God is asking you to take? Which of the characters above can you relate to the story of your life?

Saturday, April 3rd

Holy Week is about a journey. We take time this week to remember the journey that Jesus took to the cross. His journey paved the way for our salvation. Not only do we reflect upon Jesus' journey, but Holy Week challenges us to consider our own journey in life. The call to follow Jesus is not easy. There are days when we feel like the entire world is against us, or that we have failed miserably. The hope that comes from taking this journey with Jesus is that our failures and weaknesses don't have to define us. Three days after Jesus' death, He rose from the dead! As we prepare for Resurrection Sunday, consider the following excerpt from the introduction of this devotional:

"The Book of Luke records a story, after Jesus' resurrection, of two disciples that were traveling along a road toward a village named Emmaus. They were discussing the events that led up to Jesus' crucifixion. They were confused and overwhelmed. Luke 24:15-16 says, "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him." The experience that these two disciples had on their journey to Emmaus describes how many of us feel as we travel the road of life. Life can seem confusing and overwhelming at times, and God may seem absent or distant.

It wasn't until Jesus broke bread (communion) with these disciples that they recognized that Jesus was in their presence. Sometimes it takes Sabbath Moments for us to reflect upon our lives and the journey that Jesus took to the cross in order for us to realize just how near God is in our lives. It might not always make sense, but God has a plan for each of our lives if only we will take the time to stop and communion with Him."

Read the complete story of the disciples' journey to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. How have you become more aware of God's presence in your life through Holy Week? How has your faith been strengthened this week? What are some practices from this week that you can continue in the weeks to come?

**Join Us Easter Sunday for Worship
@ 10:45 a.m. in the church parking lot**