

Celebrate Holy Week

Join our family as we try to reconnect Jesus to Easter

I do not know about you, but Easter has always been a challenging holiday for me. I always knew it was important but I felt like the true significance was lost on me.

This year I have experienced an awakening. It is like the scales have fallen away from my eyes. I have realized Easter is not just about the resurrection. It is about Jesus getting into the face of the elders, going into Jerusalem knowing he was slated to die, and most importantly establishing a new covenant between God and humanity.

Inspired, I set out to create a week-long celebration where every day my family and I highlight a significant event in the final week of Jesus' life, all culminating in Easter Sunday. If you, like me, feel aware of the importance of this holiday and want to honor it in a new way this year, I invite you to go on this Holy Week journey with us.

The Petkoff's



Sunday

The first Sunday of Holy Week is Palm Sunday. On this day Jesus went into Jerusalem, through a crowd of people waving palm branches and singing Hosanna, Hebrew for "Save us, we pray." After spending much of his ministry telling those around him "Do not tell anybody who I am," (Mt 10:30, Mt 16:20), the triumphant entry signifies Jesus letting the elders know he is here and he is ready for them.

To signify this day I have planned a triumphant walk around our neighborhood. With a little help from Amazon, I have procured 5 palm branches, and we will take to the streets, my kids on their scooters and the baby in the stroller.

If you have older children and you feel like you could never get them to run around waving greenery, then instead take the palm branches and create a centerpiece. Display it in a place where you can go back to it in your worship this week. As you create this discuss why Jesus rode on a donkey in his triumphal entry.



Monday

After making a bold entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus continued this theme as he made his way to the temple. There he found a marketplace set up. As this was Passover week, people from all over the region were coming into Jerusalem to celebrate. Instead of setting up shops and money changing stations outside in the city square, greed drove vendors into the sacred place of worship.

To signify this day my family is clearing our personal spaces. Anything that does not serve us anymore must go. This is to remind us that God has blessed us with overwhelming abundance and also signifies that, just as greed crept into the temple, the desire to cling to material things can creep into us as well.

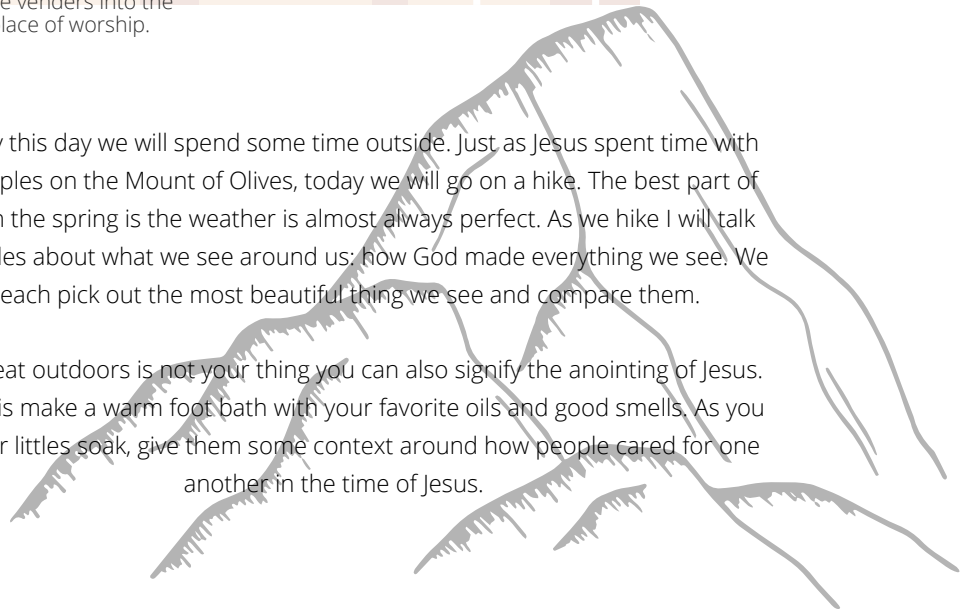
Tuesday

Jesus spent Tuesday teaching about the kingdom of God. He did this in the newly cleared temple and also at the Mount of Olives. From letting his people know what the greatest commandment was (Mk 12:32, Mt 22:37), to describing the end of the age (Mt 24, Mk 13, Lk 21:5-28), it is clear that teaching was his mission on this day.

This is also the day Jesus was anointed by Mary in Bethany (Mt 26:6-13, Mk 14:1-9). In preparation for his death, Mary poured a bottle of perfume on Jesus' head and feet.

To signify this day we will spend some time outside. Just as Jesus spent time with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, today we will go on a hike. The best part of Texas in the spring is the weather is almost always perfect. As we hike I will talk to my littles about what we see around us; how God made everything we see. We will each pick out the most beautiful thing we see and compare them.

If the great outdoors is not your thing you can also signify the anointing of Jesus. To do this make a warm foot bath with your favorite oils and good smells. As you and your littles soak, give them some context around how people cared for one another in the time of Jesus.



wednesday

There is no record of what Jesus did on Wednesday of Holy week. This is significant. As God rested on the seventh day after creating the cosmos, Jesus had a day of rest before his final battle with humanity.

Rest, quiet, calm...these are words (and sensations) that are hard to come by in a house of littles. On this day I encourage you to *shabbat*, to cease from work in some capacity. Allow for the kids to watch a movie, order pizza, stay in your pjs, something that allows rejuvenation. While you do this talk with your children about rest: how our bodies need to heal if we do too much.

thursday

Today, we will have our own Last Supper. It can be as elaborate or simple as you would like. For our family, we will keep it contemporary with some hints of tradition. Candles, communion, and washing of the feet will all make an appearance at our evening meal.

Adding friends and family to your celebration is a great idea, too. Eventually I want to have a huge meal with many families celebrating the covenant we have though Jesus.

On Thursday, Jesus celebrated Passover. After washing the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:1-17), Jesus sat down to the last supper he would share with people before his death. It is here that Jesus articulated the new covenant between God and humanity. The bread is his body that is broken and the wine is his blood that is shed so that all people will have forgiveness for their sins. (Mt 26-28, Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:19-20)

friday

Good Friday is the most solemn day in our Christian tradition. After being arrested, tried and convicted, Jesus was put to death on the cross. In doing so he fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Finding a way to honor the death of Jesus-yet save my littles from the discussion of the extreme violence he endured-took some quiet contemplation.

For this day we are focusing on the cross. I ordered three wooden crosses and a paschal candle. We will set them up next to our palm vase, made earlier this week. As we do we will discuss what Jesus did for us by sacrificing his life. At 3pm we will light paschal candle and keep it lit all day.

saturday

It is hard for me to imagine how heartbroken the disciples must have been on this day. We are only told that they observed the sabbath as was their custom (Lk 24:55-56).

In addition to keeping the paschal candle lit today, I encourage you to practice a day of fasting to recognize the terrible grief felt by the disciples. This can be fasting from food, media, coffee, sugar, whatever you decide. As we do, discuss with your littles why we are fasting. What must it have been like to lose Jesus and not understand that he would be resurrected?

sunday

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb
Lk 24:1.

There they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Two men appeared to them...and said to them *Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen!*
Lk 24:5-6.

The resurrection signifies the final fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. Because of the miracle of the resurrection we celebrate and worship a living God.

I am very excited for Easter morning this year. My kids love a good fort, so before they wake up I will build their favorite fort to signify the empty tomb. Inside we will put their Easter baskets. Together we celebrate the empty tomb and the abundant blessings God has filled our lives with.

This is an addition to our previous traditions of church and spending all day surrounded by family. My goal for this day is to feel engulfed in God's love. After all, we know *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* Jn 3:16