

EASTER

9 DAY DEVOTIONAL



APRIL 2 / DAY 1 (PALM SUNDAY)

Humble Arrival

MATTHEW 21:1-9

Josh Ratzlaff

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the

donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

The people are excited for Jesus' coming, they lay down their cloaks to establish his path ahead of him. They have in their mind a clear enemy that needs to be conquered, Rome.

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They come shouting "Hosanna!",
literally meaning: "save, we pray."

But how will this coming king rule?
How will he save?

This is no new question. Genesis 10:8-12 states that Nimrod was a mighty warrior and hunter; a slayer of beasts and of people, a man of great violence. He comes to build Babylon and Nineveh, capitals of the future evil empires of Babylon and Assyria. Rulers like Nimrod were seen as sons of the gods. This theme of rulers in families and nations is continued throughout the entire Bible and highlights the question: how will humans choose to lead and use the power they come to possess?

Riding in on a donkey, Jesus has come, not with violence like Nimrod, but to humbly serve and lay down his life as a ransom for many. Matthew backs this up by quoting

Zechariah 9:9 - showing that Jesus is no mere earthly, so-called god-king, able to save from a human enemy, but that He is God, Yahweh Himself. Jesus is Yahweh come, not on a horse to conquer by force, but on a donkey, humbly, with salvation in hand.

Zechariah 9 speaks of "peace", but not of a Roman-style peace through war, nor a Maccabean rebellion, nor the calculated violence of a Hiroshima bomb. Instead, Zechariah speaks about taking away any chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem (Zech 9:10). That is, Jesus has come not to kick the Romans out, but speak peace to them. Matthew will go on to show that it is indeed through blood that this peace will come - though not by that of the Romans, but by the blood of the Messiah who willingly lays down his life as a ransom for all who trust in Him as Saviour, King and God.

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APRIL 3 / DAY 2

Humble Promise

JOHN 12:23-33

Joshua Scott

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it

again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

What would you say is the most glorious thing that God has ever done? What about Creation? The heavens declare the glory of God, right? Maybe one of those great events of history, like parting the red

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sea? Or raising Lazarus from the dead?

All of those are glorious, no doubt, but if I'm right, you're probably thinking of what God accomplished through sending His son Jesus, to live, die, and rise from the grave in order to save lost sinners. I mean that's the heart of our whole Christian faith, isn't it?

And Jesus would seem to agree. In John 12 He referred to His death on the cross as the hour "for the Son of Man to be glorified." (John 12:23) Meaning that His death would be the moment of history when God's glory would shine its brightest.

But let me ask you one more question. What made His death so glorious? Because by any worldly estimation, it wasn't all that magnificent. He was no Samson, pulling down the pillars of a temple on himself with superhuman strength to crush His enemies. He

didn't get carried off into heaven by a fiery chariot like Elijah. He didn't even die quietly in a palace like King David after ruling over Israel for 40 years. No, he was whipped, beaten, mocked, and nailed to a criminal's cross. Where's the glory in that?

Well, there's no mistake in Jesus saying that this would be where His glory would shine its brightest because God's glory is not like the human glory that you and I chase after. When we seek glory, we desire to make ourselves known, to be applauded and celebrated, to be thought highly of and treated well. But when God seeks His glory, He gives His life away. Where human glory is about taking and receiving, God's glory is about giving.

This is what makes our God so magnificently, radiantly, and shockingly good. Because where we, who have so little, try to make ourselves large by doing things that might make the world proud, God,

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who has all things and needs nothing, humbled Himself to become a human being and give His life away for others.

Let the glory of this God shine warmly in your hearts this Easter season, and may God's Spirit who lives in you send you out to give yourself away for the sake of others, so that you might live and die gloriously, just like your Saviour Jesus.

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APRIL 4 / DAY 3

Humble Heart

MARK 12:38-44

Jesse Wilson

And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 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. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

I often observe current events or trends and think: "I wonder what [insert trusted person's name] thinks about this" (I usually insert someone I consider wise or influential). This happens with controversial news articles, jokes made at televised awards shows, and also the actions of other Christians.

"I wonder what [insert trusted person's name] thinks about a

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storyline in that Disney+ series.”

“I wonder what [insert trusted person’s name] thinks about that social media post.”

“I wonder what [insert trusted person’s name] thinks about what that church is doing.”

But have you ever asked yourself: “I wonder what Jesus thinks about _____?”

In Mark 12:38-44, we hear what Jesus thinks based on what Jesus sees. There is an important contrast between the multiple practices of a group of scribes and the single action of one widow.

On the one hand, Jesus gives a warning: “Beware of the scribes...” He sees beneath appearances and actions and judges religious pride and abuse. The reality that God sees into the human heart should give us pause to consider our own “religious activity”.

On the other hand, Jesus points his disciples to consider the actions of a poor widow.

People don’t grasp the sacrifice she is making. They don’t know the internal struggles or joys she experienced before approaching the treasury or while walking away from it.

She places “everything she had, all she had to live on” into the offering box. Imagine the deep faith this required! This widow trusts in God to take care of the next need she had, and then the next needs after that. This conviction doesn’t always come naturally for me.

But then I consider Easter.

In a similar way that Jesus gave “all he had” out of trust in God’s word and God’s way, so too Jesus’ followers are pointed to this woman’s good example (contrasted with the bad example before it) and, in their own way, invited to respond with a humble and undivided heart.

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Think about the decisions you've been making. Perhaps there are things you're doing out of faithfulness to Jesus that no one grasps. Your sacrifice isn't noticed, your obedience isn't applauded, your humility isn't appreciated. Perhaps what you're doing appears worthless. Or, perhaps what you're doing isn't seen by anyone else at all.

God himself commends humble faith. God himself sees you.

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APRIL 5 / DAY 4

Humble Sacrifice

MATTHEW 26:1-2

David Adkins

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

The final chapters of Matthew tell us the final events leading up to the cross. The week approaching Christ's death and resurrection is the most important week in all of human history.

The setting for this beautiful act of love and sacrifice is Jesus' prediction of his death in this passage; in verse 1, Matthew alerts us that Jesus' public teaching

ministry has come to an end. Jesus now turns his attention fully to the cross. He tells the disciples the Passover is only two days away. They know that the Feast is near, but what they don't understand is that the true Passover is coming. The fulfillment of every Passover ever celebrated, over 1500 years, is now only two days away. Jesus, the Passover Lamb, will be sacrificed.

This is the fourth time Jesus has told the disciples he will suffer and die in Jerusalem, but for the first time, he gives them a specific time frame. With this statement Jesus shows his willingness to submit to the Father in going to his death. He embraces

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God's plan for his life. In effect, he tells the Father, "Lead me to the cross." Jesus willingly sacrificed himself for you. Ask yourself, are you willing to deny yourself, take up your cross, surrender your will to the Father?

Notice that Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. This was a messianic title from Daniel 7:13-14 where one like a son of man enters God's presence and is given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All people, nations, and men of every language worship him and he is given an everlasting kingdom.

Jesus is the Son of Man. He is sovereign. He is in full control of all that will take place over the next few days. He will be handed over to be crucified, but no one takes his life from him. He gives his life willingly. The road to glory runs straight through the cross, and Jesus does not waver. "Father, lead me to the cross."

The road to the cross is submission. Will you let go of control and put yourself under Jesus' authority? Jesus is sovereign - are you letting him be sovereign over every area of your life?

Use this song as a prayer for today:

*Saviour I come
Quiet my soul, remember
Redemption's hill
Where Your blood was spilled
For my ransom
Everything I once held dear
I count it all as lost
Lead me to the cross
Where Your love poured out
Bring me to my knees
Lord I lay me down
Rid me of myself
I belong to You
Oh, lead me, lead me to the cross*

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APRIL 6 / DAY 5 (MAUNDY THURSDAY)

Humble Fellowship

LUKE 22:14-20

Andrew Geddert

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is

poured out for you."

The Passover meal was perhaps one of the most important celebrations of the Jewish calendar. At the heart of this tradition was the retelling of the story of how God liberated His people from the slavery of Egypt and led them on a miraculous exodus from their captivity. The name comes from the story of how the Lord "passed over" all those Israelite homes marked with the blood of a lamb during the tenth and final plague upon Pharaoh's people. The judgment of God that fell on the firstborn children of Egypt was stayed by the blood of the lamb.

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In Luke 22, as Jesus and the disciples partake in the Passover meal, Jesus foreshadows his death and begins for his disciples what would become the meal of communion that followers of Jesus celebrate today. It is a meal of remembrance, no longer just for the Jewish people but for all who believe - a reminder that God's judgment has "passed over" our sin-stained lives in the new covenant of Christ.

It is also a meal of fellowship - where the perfect Son of God reclined with sinners in unity. Jesus, in fact, loved to eat with sinners of every kind. Tax collectors and prostitutes were among his company at the dinner table. In this particular meal, Jesus ate in the presence of some who would ultimately betray and deny even knowing him. He "eagerly desired" to eat with the very people whose sin made his anguish and sacrifice necessary. He did not begrudgingly slump to memorialize

his own demise. He, "for the joy set before him" (Heb. 12:2), gave thanks for the symbols of his own suffering in the presence of those who rightfully should have been his enemies.

This Easter season, consider the fellowship of Jesus with sinners. What opportunities do you have to seek communion with those you may, too often, caricature as your enemy? What steps of reconciliation can you take with that family member or friend to recline at the table in unity once again? What moments of fellowship can you seek with the lowest of society - the ones welcome at the table of Christ? If Jesus eagerly ate with his own betrayer, then surely we can reflect that same love and unity toward those we may not normally associate with or even who sin against us.

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APRIL 7 / DAY 6 (GOOD FRIDAY)

Humble King

JOHN 19:18b-22

Eric Heath

So they took Jesus, and He went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

In March 2016, it was reported that UN diplomats in New York had accumulated over \$16 million dollars in unpaid parking tickets. Despots and dictators don't often face earthly justice, and when they do, the process can take decades. The powerful people in the world are, it seems, rarely held to account for their actions.

Jesus, on the other hand, was held to account. Not for His own actions, but for ours. As Paul describes as a matter "of first importance" in 1 Corinthians 15, Jesus died for our sins. It is the greatest irony in redemptive history - Jesus took

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what we deserve.

This irony is underscored by the irony at work in this passage - Pilate is simply trying to poke a little fun at the Jews by permanently memorializing Jesus as their King - but he instead stumbles upon truth when he inscribes "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" on the cross. Yes, Jesus is the King! Today, tomorrow, and forevermore! Pilate does not know or believe it, but that doesn't make it less true. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

And yet, we are faced with the reality of the cross. In this passage we read the stark words "there they crucified Him." Jesus, though He is the true King, endures the punishment that was due to His people. What do we make of this?

We are Easter people. We live on this side of the empty tomb. But on Good Friday, as the humble King

hangs from the cross, we are called to remember that moment. And, when in our lives we find ourselves tempted to sin - we are to remember that same moment. Remember that the sin that we are entertaining is the very same sin that led to the Father turning His face from Jesus as he hung underneath that royal inscription.

We are Easter people. Praise God that we are Easter people! But as we live our lives, we are oft tempted to turn back the clock to Good Friday, to join again in the crucifixion of Christ by our own sin. Instead, let us remember the humble King who, upending all expectations, gave Himself up so that we may live for Him.

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APRIL 8 / DAY 7

Humble Freedom

MATTHEW 27:62-66

Eric Heath

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

We don't have a great deal of

information about what Jesus' disciples were up to the day after He was crucified and buried. Maybe this is because, as Luke records at the end of chapter 23, it was the Sabbath, and they were resting in accordance with the Law. Maybe it's because the Holy Spirit, in His wisdom, did not deem it fit to let us into the minds of His disciples on this day because the sense of hopelessness was overwhelming.

Jesus had told His disciples many times that He would be killed and raised again on the third day, but they either didn't, wouldn't or couldn't hear Him. However, as this text shows, the priests and

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Pharisees heard Him. And whether they believed it or not, they wanted to put an end to whatever Jesus had going on.

Jesus lay in the tomb, and they were going to keep it that way.

Or so they thought. And although we now know how the story ends, it is important to sit in this moment, because Jesus' burial - his secure burial - sets the stage for the most astonishing and unexpected redemptive reversal in history.

Maybe you have found yourself, at some point in your life, at the lowest of low points. Maybe you're there right now. Maybe it's a loved one of yours going through the dark night of the soul. If so, you may have some insight into the feelings that the disciples were going through on the day after Jesus was crucified.

But, because we know how the story ends, even if we are in a season of

darkness, we have hope. We have hope because we have a humble Saviour who knows the sting of (temporary) defeat. We have hope because we have a humble Saviour who knows the indignity of His enemies conspiring against Him. We have hope because our humble Saviour would rise from the dead so that all those who are spiritually dead in themselves can have life again in Him.

There will be Saturdays in our lives. Days where we are tempted to agree that the Christ was nothing but (as the leaders said) an "impostor" and a "fraud". But, take heart - Sunday is coming!

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APRIL 9 / DAY 8 (EASTER SUNDAY)

Humble Sight

JOHN 20:11-18

Kristal Toews

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him

away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

Almost twenty years ago, I had laser eye surgery to correct my vision. A few days after the surgery I removed the protective eye coverings and immediately could see most things

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more clearly than I had for years but then, slowly, over the next few weeks, everything came into focus.

The gradual way that I recovered my physical sight, after almost 30 years of relative blindness, parallels the way that Mary Magdalene slowly received spiritual sight as she encountered the resurrected Jesus.

We read in John 11:1 that “on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.” She ran to tell the disciples, assuming that someone had taken Jesus’ body. Peter and another disciple (likely John) ran to the tomb and saw Jesus’ linen clothes and then went home, not understanding that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Mary, however, stayed at the tomb weeping and began to see so much more:

As she wept, she stopped to look into the tomb ... and saw two angels

She spoke to them and, turning away, saw Jesus ... but thought he was a gardener.

She spoke to ‘the gardener’ and, turning away, heard him call her, “Mary!”

And, “she turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Through this gentle and gradual process of revelation, Mary’s spiritual eyes were opened to the truth that Jesus’ body had not been taken, but had instead been resurrected. Her saviour was alive and was standing before her!

After seeing him in the flesh, and understanding the significance of his appearance, Mary visited the disciples a second time. This time she was purposeful, not fearful. She

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had a message to deliver, and declared, "I have seen the Lord."

Today on Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of our humble savior! It is our prayer that your eyes would be opened to the truth that he is alive, and that this truth would anchor and fuel your faith. May you have confidence to declare with Mary, "I have seen the Lord."

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APRIL 10 / DAY 9 (EASTER MONDAY)

Humble Hope

LUKE 24:44-47

Eric Heath

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

"How do I hear God's voice?" It's a common question (18,600 Google results to that exact phrase, with a multitude of answers). But here we

stand, another Easter having come and passed, along with the 1,990 (give or take) that have taken place since that first Resurrection Sunday. Jesus has come, been crucified, risen to life, and now sits at the right hand of the Father. It can seem like He is distant, both in time and space. How, then, do we hear Him?

When Jesus met the disciples on the road to Emmaus after He had risen, He gave them, and us, the answer to this question. In His gentle rebuke, He tells them that the Scriptures (what we now know as the Old Testament) was all about Him: His life, death, and resurrection. More than that, though, God's written

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revelation taught of repentance, forgiveness, and the spreading of His name and fame.

How joyous, then, is it, that we exist at this moment of redemptive history? We benefit from God's further revelation in the New Testament, a collection of narratives, letters, and revelation that unfold and unpack the Old Testament's teaching about Christ, and shows us how we are called to live in light of the hope of His promises.

2 Peter 1:3-4a says, of Jesus, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature." He has ordained that this knowledge be preserved for our benefit in the Bible.

So, when you want to hear God's

voice - and be certain that it is His you are hearing - remember that by His Spirit, He can open up your mind to understand the Scriptures as well - to hear His words that he spoke to you - the humble words of a humble Saviour that promise a living, and eternal, hope.