

## Holy Week Study and Traditions

### **Prelude to Holy Week — The Raising of Lazarus and Mary's Anointing**

Although the raising of Lazarus happens prior to Palm Sunday, it is important to include in the Holy Week readings for what it teaches us about Jesus' wisdom, compassion, and power over death. It foreshadows Jesus' own resurrection and seems to be one of the events that leads to His arrest and eventual crucifixion. (John 11:46-51) Jesus' timing of this miracle is intentional. He does not immediately leave for Bethany to attend to Lazarus but abides two more days, explaining to His disciples, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there; to the intent ye may believe" (John 11:15). When Lazarus' sister, Martha, hears Jesus is coming, she runs out to meet Him, offering one of the most heartbreaking expressions of faith in all of scripture. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11: 20-22). Minutes later, Mary (Martha's sister) joins them and falls down at the Lord's feet, weeping. Her sentiment is the same, "If thou hadst been here Lord, my brother had not died" (John 11: 32).

One of the most instructive moments in this narrative is an intimate scene of compassion recorded only by John. Upon seeing the deep sorrow of His grieving friends, Jesus, the Creator of the world, divinely gifted with power to both give life and take it away, preaches an entire sermon with a handful of tears. John captures it in one verse. "Jesus wept" (John 11: 35). Destined to be the King of Kings, but connected so deeply to humanity, Jesus is not above grieving with His friends. He must have held Mary and Martha close, as tears stained His cheeks. His love for them (John 11:36) teaches us that godliness is more than divine power. It is empathy, compassion, authentic love, and the ability to "mourn with those that mourn" (Mosiah 18:9).

When the group arrives at the tomb, Lazarus has been in the grave four days. Jesus speaks with a loud voice and calls Lazarus forth. Lazarus is magnificently restored.

Jesus escapes to the city of Ephraim, about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem, to seek respite from his enemies who are actively plotting his death (John 11:53-54). On Saturday, He returns to Bethany to spend the Sabbath with some of His closest friends - Mary, Martha, and their resurrected brother, Lazarus. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with spikenard - a tender and extravagant gift, worth almost a year's wages - a sacred intimation of his burial, which would happen just one week later.

\* **Read** John 11:1-44 and John 12:1-8

\* **Consider:** Although Jesus knows He will raise Lazarus, He still grieves and weeps with Mary and Martha. What does this tell us about His empathy? When He calls into the darkness of the tomb for Lazarus, He calls in a loud voice. How might Jesus call for you in your own dark places?

\* **Consider:** When Mary anointed Jesus, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." What services have been done for you that filled your house or life with lingering joy and love?

\* **Watch** [Lazarus is Raised from the Dead](#) (lds bible videos) [Jesus' Feet Anointed by Mary](#) (youtube)

\* **Activity** - Look ahead and purchase or gather supplies you will need for the week.

### **Palm Sunday — Triumphal Entry**

Jesus journeys up the hill to Bethphage where His disciples obtain a donkey so He can enter Jerusalem "riding upon an ass" - fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (Zechariah 9:9). The donkey, a symbol of royalty, indicates that Jesus comes in peace. As He descends the Mount of Olives, He pauses on the

western slope at a place now called *Dominus Flevit*, which means “the Lord wept,” and laments both the present and future of Jerusalem (Luke 19: 41-44).

Jesus then continues down the mountain and across the Kidron Valley to enter the city through the East Gate, or Golden Gate, which is closest to the Temple Mount. This was the gate through which temple messengers passed to take the sacrificial lamb to the desert. It is Passover time and Jerusalem is full of people from all countries of the Mediterranean who will participate in High Holy Week. Despite the hustle and bustle of the city, something shifts when Jesus enters. Matthew writes that “all the city was moved” (Matthew 21:10).

Believers spread their garments before Jesus and wave palm branches, shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the Highest.” Hosanna is derived from two Hebrew words that mean “please save us” or “deliver us.” This shout of praise reveals that many identified Jesus as their Messiah and Deliverer, but instead of turning towards the Antonia Fortress to take on the Romans, Jesus enters the Temple Mount, signaling He is a King who will offer spiritual deliverance, not dominance over the vassal state. As the multitudes “praise God with a loud voice” the Pharisees ask Jesus to rebuke His followers. The Lord responds that if He did, even the stones would cry out their witness of Him (Luke 19:39-40).

On this day, Jewish families select and bring their unflawed Passover lambs into their homes. With symbolic reverence, Jesus enters His Father’s House as the final Passover Lamb – His forthcoming Atonement to be the sacrifice that will end all other sacrifices. In coming days, Jesus will more publicly proclaim the truth about His Kingdom and calling. As evening falls, He returns to Bethany with the Twelve to stay with Lazarus, Mary & Martha (Mark 11:11).

\* **Read** Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:37- 40

\* **Consider:** The word Messiah means “Anointed One.” In the Abrahamic religions, a Messiah was considered a Savior or Liberator. Who is Jesus to you? How has He saved or liberated you?

\* **Consider:** In the children’s song [“Tell Me the Stories of Jesus” by William H. Parker](#), there is a lesser known verse that reads, “*Into the city I’d follow, the children’s band. Waving a branch of the palm tree high in my hand; One of His heralds, yes, I would sing, Loudest Hosannas, ‘Jesus is King!’*” If you lived then, would you have stood on the roadside and shouted “Jesus is King?” Most of Jerusalem revered *Caesar* as King. Would you have proclaimed your faith as Pharisees glared and Roman soldiers held one hand on their sword? Jesus’ humble entry was in direct contrast to Pontius Pilate’s grand entry through another gate by chariot – an event of great pomp and circumstance. Those who shouted for Jesus did so with courage. In what ways has faith taken you out of your comfort zone?

\* **Watch** [Triumphal Entry](#)

\* **Create an [Easter Tree](#)** — Cut some tree branches to bloom inside (or palm branches if you have them), and put them in a large vase and decorate your Easter Tree with ribbons, egg ornaments, and small images of the Savior’s life. PDF in my “Good News – New Holy Week Guide” post for printable images.

## Monday — Second Cleansing of the Temple and Blighting of the Fig Tree

This second cleansing of the temple takes place three years after Jesus’ first cleansing when He referred to the temple as “**My Father’s house**” (John 2:16). Today He refers to the temple as, “**My house**” (Matthew 21:13), signifying His divine heritage as the literal Son of God. According to Jewish Law, the Temple was to be a place of holy worship and sacrifice, not an area of commerce. Moneychangers had set up their stores atop the Temple Mount with permission from Jewish authorities who sought financial

gain from ill-motivated and fraudulent profiteering. Jesus will not teach in this desecrated place so he overturns their tables and casts them all out, including those who sold doves. This act is more than the ousting of thieves, it is the deliberate overturning of an entire belief system that assumed blood sacrifice was all that appeased God. Old Testament prophets like Hosea, Isaiah, and King David had tried to teach Israel that God valued “mercy and the knowledge over burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6), that blood sacrifices were meaningless if the oppressed were not given relief and the widowed and fatherless not looked after (Isaiah 1:13-17), and that the real sacrifices of God were “a broken and contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17).

While Jesus cleanses the temple of all impurity, Jewish families cleanse their homes of all leavened bread, which they considered impure because leaven easily spoils. Once the Temple Mount is clear, Jesus heals the blind and lame who come looking for him (Matthew 21:14), demonstrating that compassion is greater than sacrifice, while the chief priests and scribes look on and are “sore displeased” (Matthew 21: 15).

During one of his morning walks from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus hungers and finds a fig tree, but to his disappointment, it bears no fruit. He curses the tree and in an instant, it withers and dies (Matthew 21:18-19). This blighting of the fig tree is symbolic of Christ’s detest for hypocrisy. It demonstrates his ability to renew and extinguish life, and is an illustration of what faith can accomplish (Mark 11: 21-24). Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, wrote “we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us” (Jacob 4:6).

Come evening, Jesus again returns to His usual lodging while in Jerusalem - the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Matthew 21:17). No small trek up and over the Mount of Olives.

\* **Read** Matthew 21:12-16, Mark 11:17, and Matthew 21:18-22

\* **Consider:** Christ could not tolerate hypocrisy. Examine your own house and heart today. What can you give up, change, or cleanse, to create a holier life and feel closer to the Savior?

\* **Consider:** Jesus also taught that great faith could remove a mountain and cast it into the sea. Tell your family a story of faith from your own life, family history, or someone you know.

\* **Watch** [Cleansing of the Temple](#)

\* **Easter Walk** — Go on a nature treasure hunt for items that represent parts of the Easter story.

Read or talk about the Easter story and find the following:

- Something thorny or sharp to represent the crown of thorns
- Something made of wood to represent the cross
- Something dead to represent the Savior’s death
- Something dark to represent the darkness at noon in Jerusalem and America
- Something hard and round to represent the stone placed in front of the tomb
- Something alive to represent that Jesus lived again

(You can also use Deborah Rowley’s picture book, [Easter Walk](#).)

## Tuesday — Questioning at the Temple/Teachings and Parables

Jesus is questioned at the temple mount by the Temple hierarchy (Scribes and Sanhedrin), as well as the Herodians (Hellenistic Jews who worked to bring down any leadership beyond Herod), the Sadducees (a faction of Jews that disagreed with the Pharisees - particularly on the doctrine of Resurrection and believed only in the written law - not the oral law), and finally by the Pharisees (self-assumed teachers who practiced strict observance of the written and oral law). All of them challenge Jesus’ authority and are determined to entrap him with their questioning, but Jesus counters them with his own questions, and in turn, *they* are the ones trapped, responding, “We cannot tell.” This moment of humiliation is a blow to the Jewish leaders’ pretentious discernment. These men were appointed interpreters of the Law.

Ignorance was inexcusable, and yet they could not say if Jesus was divine messenger or imposter. It was an embarrassment they would not forget or forgive.

As the Jewish Hierarchy retreats to the background, Jesus continues his instruction to the people. He teaches many parables, and to some Christians, this day is known as the “Day of Parables.” Jesus’ stories are steeped in meaning that both the multitude *and* the Sanhedrin (who stood within earshot) would understand. He teaches parables such as *The Two Sons*, *The Wicked Husbandman*, *The Wedding of a King’s Son*, points out the nobility of *The Widow’s Mite*, answers that they should *Render unto Caesar* what is Caesar’s, and reminds them of the *Two Great Commandments*. After hearing these hard truths, the chief priests are angered and send spies to watch Jesus so they might apprehend him and bring him to the governor (Luke 20:20).

Jesus then departs from the temple mount and walks with his disciples part way up the Mount of Olives, where they can view the temple buildings and the city. He laments over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39), instructs His disciples regarding his second coming (Matthew 24: 1-51), and gives what is known as the Olivet Discourse. He warns His apostles to beware, watch, endure, and pray. A message both immediate for His devoted band of followers, and prophetic for future generations. Jesus again returns with his apostles to Bethany. This small town has become a second Nazareth for him. He is walking towards those who loved him, where he can prepare for the grueling events ahead.

\* **Tuesday:** Read Luke 20: 1-26, Mark 12: 28-34, Mark 12: 41-44, Matthew 23: 23-33 (note JST) and Matthew 24 (Olivet Discourse/Signs of Second Coming – reference Mark 13 and D&C 45).

Jesus also teaches the parables of *The Ten Virgins*, *The Talents*, and *the Sheep and the Goats* (Matthew 25). These parables could be read on Wednesday.

\* **Watch** [Christ’s Authority is Questioned](#), [Render unto Caesar](#), and [The Greatest Commandment](#).

\* **Consider:** Jesus taught that the two great commandments were first, to love God with all your heart, and second, to love people, just as you love yourself (Mark 12: 28-31). What daily spiritual practices have you built into your life that help you express your love for God?

\* **Consider:** What practices can you build into your life to regularly show love for others? Think especially of those within your circles who have not always been easy to love.

\* **Attend the Temple** – walk the Temple grounds, or visit another holy sanctuary of your choice.

## Good Wednesday – Day of Seclusion and Preparation

While Jesus is staying with Simon the leper, a woman of Bethany, who is a sinner, washes the Lord’s feet with her tears and anoints Him with oil. Based on differing accounts in the synoptic gospels, the timing of this event is unsure, but the act itself is one of tender gratitude – an exquisite outpouring of adulation for a Savior who truly saves.

Gospel writers are quiet about what Jesus did on Wednesday. However, this day is sometimes called “Spy Wednesday,” because it is during these hours that Judas Iscariot clandestinely chooses to betray Jesus. The word *spy*, in this context, means *to ambush* or *snare*. Judas does this by covenant with the chief priests who promise him thirty pieces of silver – a reward equal to four month’s wages. We don’t know if Judas returned to Bethany with the blood-money on his person, but we do know that from that point on, he was eagerly and suspiciously seeking an opportunity to betray the Lord (Matthew 26: 16).

As for Jesus, most scholars believe He spent this day in deep seclusion, prayer, and rest, to prepare for the awfulness of His coming struggle. In *The Life of Christ*, Frederic William Farrar writes these haunting words about Jesus’ Good Wednesday.

“It may be that He wandered alone to the hilly uplands above and around the quiet village, and there, under the vernal sunshine, held high communing with His Father in Heaven. But how the day was passed by Him, we do not know. A veil of holy silence falls over it. He was surrounded by the few who loved Him and believed in Him. To them He may have spoken, but His work as a teacher on earth was done. On that night, He lay down for the last time on earth. On the Thursday morning, He woke never to sleep again” (372).

\* **Read** Luke 7:37-50, Matthew 26: 14-16, John 11: 53-57

\* **Watch** [The Widow's Mite](#), [Ten Virgins](#), [Parable of Talents](#), and [Ye Have Done it Unto Me](#) (stories from Tuesday's teachings).

\* **Consider:** Jesus often retreated to mountains or places of solitude to pray, learn from His Father, and find strength. How do you commune with God in preparation for difficult things to come? Is there a challenging event coming soon in your future? How can you best prepare?

\* **Pray in Private Today.** Set aside adequate time for this prayer. Find a quiet place in nature or at home. Remove anything that could distract you and, if possible, pray aloud. Talk with God about your concerns, your struggles, your future. Ask what you can do to better partner with Him. Ask Him to bless your efforts, and give you strength, power, and discernment.

## Holy or Maundy Thursday — Last Supper, Gethsemane, and Betrayal

### The Last Supper

Maundy comes from the Latin word, *Mandatum*, which means *commandment*. It references the scripture, “A new commandment I give unto you” (John 13:34). Thursday morning, Jesus sends Peter and John to Jerusalem to meet a servant bearing a pitcher of water. They follow the servant and find a house with an upper room, ready with the necessary tables and couches. Here they “make ready the Passover.” Come evening, Jesus and his remaining apostles walk that familiar road over Mount Olivet, down into the city. In a large upper room, they find the meal ready, the table spread, and the triclinium laid with cushions for each guest. (A “triclinium” was a table with three sides that rested low to the ground. The seat of honor was occupied by the Lord and each guest would recline on their left elbow, so they could eat freely with their right hand.)

The men’s feet, covered with dust from the hot walk down the mountainside, would have typically been washed by a servant, after their sandals were removed. Washing feet was the work of slaves, but no slaves were present. So deliberately, and with humility, Jesus rises from the table to perform this menial task, which none of His apostles had offered to do for Him. As he begins the washings, shame keeps His apostles silent for a time, and then Peter asks, “Lord, dost *Thou* seek to wash *my* feet?” Yes. The Son of God, King of Israel, would kneel below each of them (including Judas, the traitor) and do the work of a slave, teaching them a most visible lesson of unselfishness and charity. He tells them they will have no part with Him if they refuse this cleansing, sanctifying act of love.

The Last Supper begins as a Passover meal in remembrance of the God who “passed over” or delivered the Hebrews from Egypt, but ends as The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, a new ordinance intended to help Jesus’ followers remember that the same God who delivered Israel would, in a matter of days, deliver the world from both spiritual and physical death. Jesus institutes the Sacrament and describes the emblems of bread and wine as tokens of His body and blood. Then the Lord remarks that one of them will betray him. A deep and unspeakable sadness falls over the sacred meal, and the apostles question the Lord, “Is it I?” Judas is revealed as the betrayer, and John writes that Satan entered into Judas and he went immediately out into the night (John 13: 27-30).

With Judas gone, Jesus offers the high priestly or intercessory prayer (John 17). They sing a hymn – a song of thanks known to Jews as *The Hallel* (See Psalms 113-118), and they leave the upper room for the Mount of Olives. The mood must have been somber as they crossed the Kidron valley, knowing treachery was afoot. Jesus warns them that this night “all ye shall be offended because of me” (Matthew 26: 31) and he specifically warns the overzealous Peter that before the cock crows, Peter will deny Him not once, but three times.

### Garden of Gethsemane

Together, they enter the Garden of Gethsemane, a place of solace next to the brook Kidron that Jesus and his followers had frequented before. *Gethsemane* in Hebrew means “oil press” and the work of pressing olives for oil solemnly alludes to the crushing and pressing weight about to fall on our Savior’s shoulders. Here, in shadows flung by the great branches of ancient olive trees, Jesus parts with his friends, excepting Peter, James, and John, who go with him into the grove of trees. Jesus finds a secluded spot where he can pray a “stone’s throw away” from His apostles and asks them to keep watch, but despite his admonition, they cannot keep sleep from their eyes. During the hours in which Jesus prays, He takes upon himself the sins of all mankind, bleeds from every pore, and begins the culminating, all-important process upon which God’s eternal plan hinged – The Atonement.

Frederic Farrar writes, “*Jesus knew that the awful hour of His deepest humiliation had arrived – that from this moment till the utterance of that great cry with which He expired, nothing remained for him on earth but the torture of physical pain and the poignancy of mental anguish. All that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body; every misery that cruel and crushing insult can inflict was to weigh heavy on His soul; and in this torment of body and agony of soul, even the high and radiant serenity of His divine spirit was to suffer a short but terrible eclipse. Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of the sin and mystery of man's existence in its apostasy and fall – this was what He must now face in all its most inexplicable accumulation*” (*The Life of Christ*, 391).

One of the most striking visuals of Jesus in Gethsemane is found in Matthew 26:39 – “and He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed.” While this was customary for Jewish prayer, the image of a broken Lord with His face in the dust, is rending. As He begins the excruciating process of absorbing all the sins, sorrows, pains, sicknesses, and temptations of every human life (Alma 7:11), Jesus calls out to the Father, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” but He seems to already know the answer. It was placed in him the moment He volunteered himself for God’s plan, saying, “Here am I. Send me” (Isaiah 16:8). There would be no other way. To whom else would He pass the cup? After momentarily pausing on the possibility of not continuing, our Savior quickly acquiesces, and with the heartbreaking sublimity, pivots into complete submission, crying, “nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

At some point during these horrific hours, Jesus is strengthened by an angel (Luke 22:43). When His suffering is finished, He returns to his sleeping apostles and wakes them, explaining, “It is enough, the hour is come” (Mark 14: 41).

### Betrayal and Peter’s Denial

Seeing the flickering light of torches in the dark, and hearing the sound of disgruntled men, Jesus knows His betrayer is coming. Judas Iscariot draws near to Jesus and greets Him with a kiss on the cheek that must have stung of hypocrisy. What was once a sign of friendship, signals to Jewish leaders that this man was the blasphemer they sought. In an impulsive moment of retaliation, Peter cuts off one of the soldier’s

ears with a sword, but Jesus immediately heals the ear. This miracle does nothing to deter the men from their objective and Jesus is arrested, bound, and taken for trial. The apostles flee, but Peter follows Jesus at a distance. When they enter the palace of the high priest Caiaphas, Peter lingers outside, hoping for a glimpse of the Lord. As he waits, he is approached by multiple individuals who insinuate his connection to Jesus of Nazareth. They say they have seen him with Jesus and his speech indicates he is a Galilean. To this, Peter quickly retorts, "I know not this man of whom you speak" (Mark 14:71). As a third denial leaves Peter's lips, Jesus, who is being led out of the palace, turns and looks at Peter. Like an arrow through the heart, the sound of the cock crows, and Peter recalls the Lord's words to him. He leaves the palace and weeps bitterly.

\* **Read** Mark 14: 12-26 note JST, Luke 22: 19-39, John 13 - 17 (specifically John 13: 4-17)/ Matthew 26: 36-56, Mark 14: 32-50, Luke 22: 41-46 / Luke 22: 47-62

\* **Watch** [The Last Supper](#), [Intercessory Prayer](#), and [Gethsemane](#)

\* **Consider:** The gift of Christ's Atonement is individual and very personal. It is a healing balm, lasting peace, comfort that eases a burden or sorrow, the chance to be forgiven of our sins, a way forward, and the greatest opportunity for change. How has Jesus changed you? How can you more fully access the blessings of His Atonement?

1. President Russell M. Nelson recently encouraged believers to find joy in daily repentance. Experiment with the act of repenting every single day.

2. The bible dictionary describes grace as "*an enabling power that allows individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ, to receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means.*"

What does this mean for you? Are you already receiving His enabling power?

Is it something you could ask for to accomplish hard things ahead of you?

\* **Consider:** Offering comfort to others is a godly and divine act. Consider this thought by Catholic writer, Richard F. Rohr, "*Almost all people are carrying a great and secret hurt, even when they don't know it. This realization softens the space around our overly defended hearts. It makes it hard to be cruel to anyone. It somehow makes us one – in a way that easy comfort and entertainment never can.*" When Christ suffered in Gethsemane, His sorrows mingled with our sorrows. Think of someone in your life that may be suffering. How can you lift them? Or mourn with them? Small gifts of compassion can repattern a day, and sometimes a life.

\* **Prepare and eat a [Passover Meal](#)** — (see link for script to follow. Other modified or traditional versions of Seder available online). Discuss the symbolism of each food item. Light candles and sing a hymn at the table. Encourage a conversation about God's many forms of deliverance.

\* **Service** - Offer some kind of selfless service, reminiscent of the Savior washing His apostles' feet and His great love evidenced through His suffering. Jesus taught, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13: 14-17).

## Good Friday — Trial and Crucifixion

### Trial and Condemnation

Jesus endures an illegal trial before Caiaphas (the high priest in charge of all temple sacrifices). He is accused of sedition, or rebelling against authority. Later, He is charged with blasphemy, the most serious charge in Jewish law. Next, Jesus is delivered to Pilate, the Roman Governor, so an official decree of death can be issued. (The ability to declare capital punishment had been taken away from the Sanhedrin.) Pilate, upon finding no fault in Jesus, pawns him off to Herod, using the logic that Jesus was a Galilean and Herod was the vassal over the Galilean province. (Both Herod and Pilate are in Jerusalem for the Passover.) Jesus refuses to answer Herod, one of the most powerful responses to evil in all of human

history, and as a result, is returned to Pilate. Pilate is willing to let Jesus go free since it is the custom to release one prisoner during Passover, but the people call for Barrabas to be released, saying, "His blood be upon us and our children." Pilate is convinced to move ahead with the crucifixion. Jesus is beaten and scourged and made to walk the long path to Golgotha carrying His own cross. *Golgotha* in Aramaic, or *Calvary* in Latin, means "skull," signifying this prominent location as a place of death. The road to the hill of crucifixion is known as the *Way of the Cross* or *Via Dolorosa*, and Jesus completes the grueling walk with aid from Simon of Cyrene.

### Crucifixion

At the third hour (around 9AM), Jesus is crucified. Nails are driven into His hands, wrists, and feet, and his body is lifted up upon the cross. Crucifixion was a horrific and intentionally prolonged process - a death that included dizziness, thirst, sleeplessness, fever, torment, and shame. Kent P. Jackson writes, "By the time Jesus was taken to the cross, He had already been subjected to hours of extreme physical and emotional trauma. Following His intense suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, He had undergone a night of humiliation, beating, apparently total deprivation of sleep, and perhaps denial of food and drink" (*From the Last Supper through the Resurrection*, 322).

Two thieves are also led to their execution and Jesus is crucified between them (Mark 15:28). An inscription is placed above His head that reads, "The King of the Jews." While this was meant to be a mockery, the statement was ironically and absolutely true. Farrar writes, "Even on His cross, He reigned." Soldiers cast lots to divide Jesus' garments among themselves and He is subjected to all kinds of ridicule. Passersby use his own words against him. Only a few of Jesus' followers are with him at the cross. His Mother Mary, her sister, Mary (wife of Cleophas), Mary Magdalene, and John. The others watch from "afar off" (Matthew 23:49).

### Suffering on the Cross

It is important to pause here in the Passion narrative and be present with our Jesus on the cross. We cannot move quickly past His shocking agony. Temple worship repeatedly directs our minds to this moment. Jesus taught His disciples to "take up their cross daily" and follow Him, and Paul taught that "the preaching of the cross was the power of God" (Galatians 6:14 and 1 Corinthians 1:18). Christ's hours on the cross teach us kindness in extremity, forgiveness, faith in God's plan, and absolute humility. At the climax of His suffering, Jesus calls out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) and we feel not only His intense pain, but His sense of abandonment. Both the cross and Gethsemane held what must have felt like eternal minutes when Jesus was truly and utterly alone.

James E. Talmage writes, "In that bittersweet hour, the dying Christ was alone, alone in the most terrible reality. That the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fullness, the Father seems to have withdrawn the support of His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men, the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death" (*Jesus the Christ*, 661).

When we carry with us the *death* of Jesus, the *life* of Jesus has greater meaning and He can heal us with His perfect understanding and love. We cannot have the empty tomb without the hours on the cross. The Resurrected Lord later says of his moments on the cross, "My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross, and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me" (3 Nephi 27:14).



About noon there is a great earthquake that rends the veil of the temple and for the next three hours, darkness covers the land. Around 3PM, after hanging on the cross for nearly six hours, Jesus says to His Father, “It is finished. . . into thy hands I commend my spirit” and according to Luke, He gives up the ghost (Luke 23: 46). His last breath is drawn at the exact time the Passover lambs in the city are being slaughtered, but unlike the lambs on the altar, Jesus’ expiration is the result of His own submission to death, not death’s power over Him. In John’s words, Jesus Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Joseph of Arimathea petitions Pilate for Jesus’ body and takes it down from the cross before the Sabbath. With the help of other disciples, they incompletely prepare Jesus’ body for burial, wrap it in linen, and lay it in a sepulchre belonging to Joseph of Arimathea.

\* **Read** Matthew 26: 57 -68, John 18: 28-40, Matthew 27: 17-30 / Mark 15:15-22, Luke 23: 20-33/ Matthew 27: 1-8, Mark 15: 23 -47, Luke 23: 34, 39-45, 46-49, John 19: 25 - 30 / Matthew 27: 57-60, John 19: 31 -42

\* **Watch** [Jesus is tried by Caiaphas, Condemned before Pilate, Scourged and Crucified,](#) and [Laid in a Tomb](#)

\* **Consider:** Jesus experienced what it was like to be left utterly and completely alone. When have you felt misunderstood, looked over, rejected, or alone? Christ knew you would experience these parts of mortality and He promised He would not leave you comfortless (John 14: 18). How can you share your burdens with Jesus? He felt every pain, sickness, and temptation you have felt. He is perfectly qualified to help you through your own personal sufferings, to be your Savior.

\* **Consider:** Artist Brian Kershisnik painted a stunning piece called *Descent from the Cross*. The scene depicts Jesus’ followers taking His body down from the cross. Reflecting on this moment, Kershisnik wrote, “*It is the obligation of a disciple to work tragedies into things that shape us; into something good. To say, No. I will turn this into more life.*” What do you think it means to take up your own private cross each day? To turn death or tragedy into more life?

\* **Make** [Hot Cross Buns](#) — We love the [Pioneer Woman recipe](#). English folklore says that Hot Cross Buns baked on Good Friday never spoil. Some sailors took Hot Cross Buns on their voyages to ensure their ships wouldn’t sink. Friends who gift one another Hot Cross Buns are said to remain friends for life. Deliver some buns to neighbors or friends!

## Saturday — Jewish Sabbath Observance/Day of Waiting

On this day, the Nephite people in America hear the Lord’s voice. He does not appear, but they hear His voice (3 Nephi 9:13-17). He also preaches to the spirits in Spirit Prison (D&C 138). None of Jesus’ disciples or followers come to the tomb this day, but guards are placed nearby to prevent anyone from disturbing the tomb. Jesus’ followers observe the Sabbath and the women anticipate returning at first morning light to finish caring for His body. This day is a day of waiting for the risen Lord.

\* **Read** Matthew 27: 62-66, Luke 23: 54-46

\* **Consider:** The prophet Isaiah taught, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). Waiting on the Lord looks different for everyone. What does it mean for you right now? Why is He worth waiting for?

\* **Color** Easter eggs

\* **Easter Vigil** — Make lanterns out of mason jars (any size). Fill jars with dry beans and a votive candle. Wrap a light gauge wire around the top of the jar then thread more wire through both sides to create a handle so it can be hung. Tie pastel ribbon to the jar. Light your lanterns at dusk

and hang them from a tree or set them on your porch — a symbol of waiting for the Light of the World to rise (John 8:12). This can be your quiet expression of gratitude for His gift of resurrection that will come to all of God's children - your own silent witness of Jesus Christ.

### Easter Sunday — Resurrection and Appearances of Jesus

In the quiet of early dawn, Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James), Joanna and other women, walk out of the city gate towards the tomb. The sun is rising, (Mark 16:2) and they have come to complete Jesus' anointing and burial. The women expect to find a sealed sepulchre and a standing guard. Instead, they find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Two angels greet them (see Mark 16:3-6 JST) and declare that "Jesus is not here, He is risen." The women run to tell the apostles. Hurrying back through the city streets, they find a weary band of men whose world suddenly collapsed with the death of their Master and friend. The apostles are skeptical of the women's report and wonder how the Lord's body can be missing! Peter and John must see for themselves. Together, they run to the tomb, the faster of the two (John) arrives before Peter. John pauses by the entrance of the tomb and looks in. Peter enters the sepulchre and finds the linen clothes wrapped carefully in a place by themselves, a signal from the carpenter that His work, indeed, is finished.

Peter and John depart, but Mary lingers at the tomb, weeping. Stooping down, she looks inside the tomb and sees two angels again. They ask her why she weeps. This time, instead of referring to Jesus as "*the* Lord" as she did when telling the apostles the news of the empty tomb, she says, "They have taken away *my* Lord" (John 20:13), revealing the very personal loss she experienced during Jesus' trial and death. Sensing someone is behind her, Mary turns to see a man she assumes to be the gardener. He asks her the same question, "Why weepest thou?" and her answer is similar. "Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away" (John 20:15). Her longing to find Jesus is palpable. Then He speaks her name, "Mary." And in that moment, she knows exactly who the gardener is. "Rabboni," she replies, which means "Master." She moves to embrace Him, but Jesus stops her, saying He has not yet ascended to His Father. This beautiful moment reminds us of Jesus' earlier teachings: "The Shepherd calleth his sheep by name. . . for they know His voice" (John 10: 3-4). Mary knew His voice, and is the first witness of the Resurrection.

Jesus is resurrected at the exact time the First Fruits of the Festival are being offered at the temple. Thus, he is the "First Fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Additional sightings of the Resurrected Lord: Jesus appears to two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. He appears to His Apostles and dispels Thomas' doubt. He appears to the Apostles in Galilee, eats with them, redeems Peter, and commands them to feed His sheep. Finally, He makes His Ascension from the Mount of Olives.

*"To all who will listen He still speaks. He promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world, and we have not found His promise to fail. It was but for thirty-three short years of a short lifetime that He lived on earth; it was but for three broken and troubled years that He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom; but for ever, even until all the aeons have been closed, and the earth itself, with the heavens that now are, have passed away, shall every one of His true and faithful children find peace and hope and forgiveness in His name, and that name shall be called Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, 'God with us.'"*

- Frederic William Farrar (*The Life of Christ*, 463-464)

\* **Read** Matthew 28: 1-8 (note JST), Mark 16: 1-13, Luke 24: 1-12 , John 20: 11-18 /  
Luke 24: 13-35 (Road to Emmaus), Luke 24: 36 -48 (Apostles), John 20: 24- 29 (Thomas) /

John 21: 1-18 (Tiberias, Feed My Sheep), Mark 16: 19-20 and Luke 24: 50-53 (Ascension)

\* **Consider:** Luke describes Christ as the “dayspring from on high that has visited us” (Luke 1: 78). Jesus has many names. He is known as The Light of the World, Emmanuel (God with us), The Bread of Life, The Way, The Resurrection and the Life, King of Kings, The Holy One of Israel, Creator, Master, Son of God, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Advocate, Lord, The Great High Priest, Messiah, Redeemer, and Savior. Which of these names resonate with you today and why? How will you celebrate Christ’s life today? How can you show your gratitude and appreciation for the myriad of gifts He has given you?

\* Watch - [Jesus is Resurrected, To This End was I Born, My Kingdom is Not of this World, He is Risen, Christ Appears on Road to Emmaus, The Risen Lord Appears to the Apostles, Blessed are They that Have Not Seen, Feed My Sheep](#)

\* **Make a [Resurrection Garden](#)** by using rocks and flowers from your yard to build a small garden tomb.

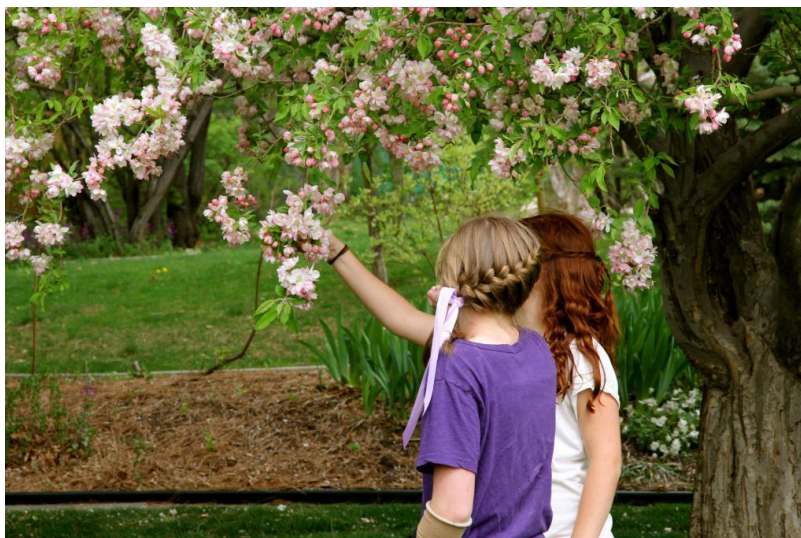
\* **Fill Easter Baskets. Attend Church Service. Hold a Family Brunch or Dinner.**

\* **Get up early for a Sunrise Walk or hike.**

## Easter Tree



## Easter Walk



Passover Meal (see link above for script to follow)



Hot Cross Buns (link to recipe above)



*Descent from the Cross*, by Brian Kershisnik



Easter Vigil Lanterns



Resurrection Garden

