



JOURNEY TO
easter

Encountering Jesus Together on
the Way to the Empty Tomb

GUIDE



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his story his story


**"It's only
when we fully
enter into His
story we can
begin to
understand
more of our
own."**



welcome to

JOURNEY TO easter

It seems to me that we often give so much effort towards planning and preparing for an event or a moment that lasts only a short time, but not as much time and effort as we should planning and preparing for the moments that last. As Christians, Easter Sunday is a day we mark on the calendar, look forward to, and celebrate every year with great joy. As a pastor, I know I have spent more hours praying and planning for Easter Sunday than for any other Sunday. This past year, however, everything changed. Suddenly that one Sunday that we plan so much for wasn't even happening—at least, not in the same way as it had in the past. We began to reimagine what it means for Christians to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and to follow Him every day. The events of 2020 changed everything, and I believe Jesus wants us to change everything.



Here is what I mean: It's not just about the sixty-minute Easter service where we celebrate that Jesus is alive. This year we asked, what would happen if we spent more time understanding and experiencing aspects of what life was like for Jesus and His followers during the final week before the cross and empty tomb, and allowed those experiences to form us as disciples of Jesus? What if this Easter was more meaningful than ever for each of us because we paused for a week, let our schedules be interrupted, and let God change us?

It's only when we fully enter into His story we can begin to understand more of our own. So let's go on a journey together and experience Jesus on our way to the empty tomb.



Pastor Michael



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JOURNEY TO easter

introduction

Holy Week is a week that followers of Jesus commemorate His final week on Earth from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday. The accounts of Holy Week are included in the four Gospels of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Holy Week contains some of the most important events of Jesus' ministry on Earth, including His death, burial, and resurrection.

The first Sunday began with the triumphant entry where Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey. On Monday and Tuesday, Jesus traveled back and forth from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, where He taught around the temple. On Wednesday, the Bible does not specify what Jesus did. Most scholars agree that He spent the day resting with some close friends in the town of Bethany. Thursday includes the account of the Passover meal which Jesus shared with His disciples. That night, Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, and later was arrested.



Early Friday morning, Jesus went through several unlawful trials before the authorities. He was then brutally crucified on a cross. On Friday evening, His body was buried in a tomb, where it was guarded by Roman soldiers throughout the day on Saturday. On Sunday, several followers of Jesus discovered that His tomb was empty—He was resurrected from the dead.

What we commemorate during Holy Week has meaning and significance for our lives. This week, we are seeking to understand, at a greater level, what Jesus has done for us so that we can grow deeper in our faith. We don't want to just go through the religious motions, but instead, we want to truly encounter God. Our journey this week will help give us a greater understanding of what Jesus did and why it has significance for us today. Let's encounter Jesus together on this journey from Palm Sunday to the empty tomb.

the gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the first four books of the New Testament and are referred to as The Gospels. These four books contain the accounts of Jesus' ministry while on the earth including the words of Jesus. As we walk along this journey to Easter, we can discover together even more of why we can trust the Bible as we will see how the four different writers of the Gospels highlight the same things, but each in their own way. As we go on this journey together, we encourage you to read each of the Scriptures for the corresponding day.



sunday

sunday



- **SCRIPTURES**

- The Triumphant Entry (Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–10, Luke 19:29–44)
- Jesus predicts His death (John 12:20–36).
- Jesus visits the temple (Matthew 21:14–17, Mark 11:11).

- **OVERVIEW**

- To followers of Jesus, the Sunday before Easter is known as Palm Sunday. This marks the beginning of Holy Week. The name is derived from the palm branches that were used for Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on the back of a borrowed donkey. This was to fulfill a prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9 that the Messiah would come to God's people riding on a donkey. Jesus' entrance into the city on a donkey was a massive demonstration of humility. Jesus is King and yet at the start of His final week, He demonstrated once again that His Kingdom would not look like the kingdoms of the world, but that He was a different kind of king.



- A large crowd welcomed Him into the city with palm branches and shouts of, “Hosanna!” This word “hosanna” means, “God please save (or deliver) us.” The crowds were acknowledging their need for a Savior and their hope that Jesus would deliver them from their political oppression.

- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- Read Matthew 21:1–11. Jesus’ disciples prepared for His triumphant entry. In what ways are you preparing your heart for God to move this week? In what specific ways do you want to grow?
- What are some things that you are asking God to deliver you from in this season?
- Read John 12:23–26. In what ways are you currently dying to yourself in order to produce fruit for God? What are some things “in this world” that keep you from experiencing all God has for you?
- How do you limit what God can and will do in your life?

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monday

monday



- **SCRIPTURES**

- Jesus curses a fig tree (Matthew 21:18–19, Mark 11:12–14).
- Jesus cleanses the temple (Matthew 21:12–13, Mark 11:15–18, Luke 19:45–48).

- **OVERVIEW**

- On the Monday before Easter, Jesus had spent Sunday night in a village called Bethany with His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Jesus spent time with many people while on the earth, though it seems that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were among those Jesus especially enjoyed the company of. Jesus spent this time on Monday with those He chose, knowing He would go to the cross in just a few days.
- On Monday morning, on His way back to Jerusalem, Jesus cursed a fig tree that had yet to bear fruit. His disciples later saw that the tree had withered, a moment where Jesus taught them the importance of faith in God's ability to do the impossible. On the same day, Jesus entered the temple and drove out those who were buying and selling goods in the temple. He overturned their tables where they had exchanged the goods. Jesus did this to show the importance of God's house being a house of prayer. Afterward, Jesus went back to spend time with His friends in Bethany.



- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- Read Mark 11:15–18. Why do you think Jesus reacted in this way?
- In what areas are you not the same on the inside as the outside? Are you pretending to be something you are not?
- What are some tables in your life that Jesus would turn over?
- Jesus quoted the Scripture, “My house shall be called a house of prayer.” How can you incorporate prayer more in your life? What are some things you need to move out so that you can focus on prayer?

- **Watch today’s devotional on the Community Church app.**

- **Tonight, plan to spend time with those close to you and have dinner together. Here are some discussion questions for dinner:**

- What are some of your favorite memories of us together?
- What are three things you are thankful for?
- What is one thing God is speaking to you in this season?
- What is one difficulty you are facing right now?
- What are a few things you are praying for in this season?



tuesday

tuesday



- **SCRIPTURES**

- The lesson from the fig tree (Matthew 21:20–22, Mark 11:20–26).
- Jesus teaches in the temple (Matthew 21:23–23:39, Mark 11:27–12:44, Luke 20:1–21:4).
- The Olivet discourse (Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, Luke 21:5–36).

- **OVERVIEW**

- On Tuesday, Jesus returned to the temple in Jerusalem to confront the religious leaders of His day. The religious leaders confronted Jesus with a number of theological issues, including authority, taxes, and marriage. Jesus was able to speak with such clarity and insight to the point where “no one dared to ask him any more questions.” (Mark 12:34). Later that day, Jesus traveled to the nearby Mount of Olives, where He taught His disciples about the future of Jerusalem and of His own second coming.

- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- What theological issues are you currently wrestling with?
- Read Matthew 21:20–22. What are some bold prayers you are asking God to answer in this season? Write them in your journal so you can see them.



- **SCRIPTURES**

- Do you live as though you are preparing and expecting Jesus to return one day?
- Read Luke 20:19–26. How does Jesus' answer on the role of the governing authorities impact your life today? What practical actions do you take to hold God as more important than your political views?

- **Watch today's devotional on the Community Church app.**



wednesday

wednesday



- **SCRIPTURES**

- Judas agrees to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14–16, Mark 14:10–11, Luke 22:3–6).

- **OVERVIEW**

- On the Wednesday of Holy Week, the Bible does not specify what Jesus did. Most scholars believe that Jesus spent the day resting with His disciples and friends in Bethany. Jesus modeled the importance of finding rest on this day, demonstrating that no matter what is happening in our lives, we need time to rest.
- This is believed to be the day Judas agreed to betray Jesus to the authorities.

- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- Do you think you are resting on a weekly basis? How?
- Think about Judas and his betrayal of Jesus. How do you diminish Jesus in your life in exchange for what the culture says will fulfill you and make you happy?
- Have you ever been betrayed by someone close to you? Have you forgiven them? If not, make today the day freedom comes to your life by releasing that offense and giving forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean you approve of the betrayal or that it didn't happen. Forgiveness means you are no longer going to allow the person(s) and/or the betrayal to have power over you.



- **Watch today's devotional on the Community Church app.**
- **Tonight, attend Midweek Service happening at all campuses at 7:00PM.**



MIDWEEK

PRAYER • WORSHIP • PROPHETIC • BIBLE

7:00PM



thursday

thursday



- **SCRIPTURES**

- The preparation for the Passover (Matthew 26:17–19, Mark 14:12–16, Luke 22:7–13).
- The Passover meal (Matthew 26:20–29, Mark 14:17–23, Luke 22:14–30, John 13–17).
- The hymn and departure (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26, Luke 22:39).
- Jesus predicts Peter's denial (Matthew 26:31–35, Mark 14:27–31, Luke 22:31–38).
- In the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46, Mark 14:32–42, Luke 22:40–46).

- **OVERVIEW**

- The Thursday before Easter is known as Maundy Thursday. The word, “maundy” comes from the Latin word for “command” and refers to the commandment Jesus gave to the disciples, on that day, to love one another (John 13:34). This Thursday was the Jewish day of Passover, so Jesus celebrated by having a meal with His disciples, known as the Last Supper. In this meal, Jesus instituted the practice of Communion. He also washed the disciples' feet and gave final instructions to His disciples, including the “Maundy.” Later that night, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane with a few of His disciples to pray. That night, He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, and was then arrested.



- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- In what ways are you loving others so that people know you are a disciple of Jesus?
- Think about the time you spend praying. Are you satisfied with your prayer times? Are they each the same or different?
- Are your prayers geared more towards God blessing your will being done or God's will being done in you?
- What specific things do you need to fully surrender to God?
- What temptations are in your life that you need to watch out for?

- **Watch today's devotional on the Community Church app.**

- **The Passover meal was a celebration. Plan your favorite meal as a family to enjoy tonight.**

A video will be released before meal times for you and your family to view before eating.



Below are a few discussion questions for your family to use while enjoying your meal.

Finish your meal time by taking communion as a family.



FINISH YOUR MEAL TIME BY TAKING COMMUNION AS A FAMILY.

- Watch the video together. What did you learn about the Last Supper and what it means to you today?
- Describe what you think it would have been like to sit at this meal?
- Where or how have you tried to fill the role of Jesus?
- Pray together.

COMMUNION INSTRUCTIONS:

- Prepare the elements.
 - Prepare by having any kind of bread or crackers and beverage ready.
- Read these Scriptures together:
 - Luke 22:14–16
 - Matthew 26:26–29
 - 1 Corinthians 11:26
- Pray thanking God for what Jesus has done for us.
- Take communion together.



friday

friday



• SCRIPTURES

- Jesus is arrested (Matthew 26:47–56, Mark 14:43–52, Luke 22:47–53, John 18:2–12).
- Jesus meets with the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57–68, Mark 14:53–65, Luke 22:63–71).
- Peter denies Jesus (Matthew 26:69–75, Mark 14:66–72, Luke 22:54–62, John 18:15–18, 25–27).
- Jesus delivered to Pilate (Matthew 27:1–2, Mark 15:1).
- Judas hangs himself (Matthew 27:3–10).
- Pilate questions Jesus (Matthew 27:11–14, Mark 15:2–5, Luke 23:1–7, John 18:28–38).
- Herod questions Jesus (Luke 23:8–12).
- Pilate condemns Jesus (Matthew 27:15–26, Mark 15:6–15, Luke 23:13–25, John 18:38–19:16).
- The crucifixion (Matthew 27:27–56, Mark 15:16–41, Luke 23:26–49, John 19:17–37).
- Jesus is buried (Matthew 27:57–61, Mark 15:42–47, Luke 23:50–56, John 19:38–42).

• OVERVIEW

- To followers of Jesus, the Friday before Easter is known as Good Friday. After being arrested by a mix of Jewish and Roman authorities early Friday morning, Jesus went through several trials before the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.



During these trials, Jesus was mocked and experienced painful beatings and whippings. Pilate attempted to convince the Jewish leaders to let Jesus go, but they continued to condemn Jesus until Pilate finally agreed to hand Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus hung on a cross for approximately six hours, until He died in the afternoon. On Friday evening, His body was buried in a tomb.

- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- How does the cross have meaning in your life today?
- Read Luke 23:34. Do you find it difficult to receive forgiveness from God or others? How are you extending forgiveness to someone else in your life?
- Read John 19:30. What is one thing you have seen God bring to completion in your life? Going forward, what is one thing to which you can say, “it is finished” because of Jesus’ victory?

- **Watch today’s devotional on the Community Church app.**

- **Tonight, attend Good Friday service happening at all campuses at 7:00PM.**





saturday

saturday



- **SCRIPTURES**

- Guards are placed at the tomb (Matthew 27:62–66).

- **OVERVIEW**

- On the Saturday of Holy Week, Jesus remained in the tomb for the entire day. The Jewish leaders convinced Pilate to place Roman soldiers to guard the tomb, fearing that His disciples would try to take His body. This was a somber day for His disciples. They were without hope and not aware that everything would change on Sunday.

- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- How would you describe the way Jesus' disciples were feeling on this day?
- When have you felt like God was silent in your life? What did you do?
- Think about a time when you trusted in God through a difficult situation. How did you grow through that circumstance? In what ways are you stronger now than before it?
- Take some time today to sit before God in silence.

- **Watch today's devotional on the Community Church app.**

- **Today, the auditoriums at Western Branch and Suffolk Campuses will be available from 8:00AM–10:00AM for silent prayer.**



easter



easter

- **SCRIPTURES**

- The resurrection (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20–21).

- **OVERVIEW**

- On Easter Sunday, followers of Jesus celebrate the resurrection of Christ. A few women who were followers of Jesus went to see the tomb, where an angel appeared to them and said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!” (Luke 24:5–6). They reported what they had seen and heard to Jesus’ disciples. They told the story of their experience. We all tell a story with our words and with our actions. The story always includes our history. Jesus’ resurrection is the institution of His story (history) becoming our story.

- **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

- What story are you telling?
- Whose history (His story) are you claiming as your history?
- How does the resurrection have meaning in your life today?
- How does the resurrection give you hope through your circumstances today?
- Oftentimes, the disciples didn’t immediately recognize Jesus. In what ways do we often fail to recognize Jesus and what He is doing in our lives?

Bring your friends and family
to Easter Service.



easter

WITH COMMUNITY

WESTERN BRANCH

8:00AM

9:30AM

11:15AM

SUFFOLK

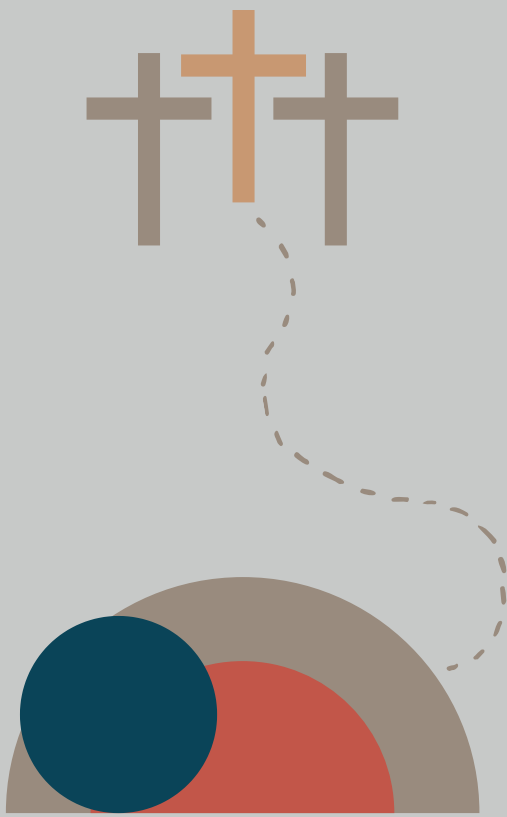
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11:15AM

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9:30AM

11:15AM



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