



***Holy Week  
Daily Devotionals***

*Reflections by Staff Members  
for  
March 28 - April 3, 2020*

**Starmount**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



**March 28, 2021**

**Palm Sunday**

**Reflections by Rev. Dr. Kate Guthrie**

"Remember, we're not in Greensboro," I say to my husband as he reflexively speeds up at the sight of a yellow light. When I first moved to Greensboro, I was shocked by the number of people who ran red lights. Someone once honked aggressively at me as I slowed to a stop at an intersection whose light was yellow. The Honker went as far to pass me as they rushed through the light that by that point had moved all the way to red.

Though it still shocks me to see cars zip through a red light, I have developed the same yellow-light-must-go-faster-hit-the-gas reflex. I am not proud to say that I realize that I risk creating an accident and break the law multiple times a week as I give into this reflex. And for what? Do I really think that avoiding sitting at a red light for two minutes is going to make my day that much better? What is this desire to get things done faster, to not "waste" any time? To hurry up at "get there." This Lent my practice has been to retrain my reflex, to slow down and create more space in my life. Trusting that space comes not by getting there faster, but placing myself in situations where I am forced to slow down.

On this Palm Sunday we can be tempted to "hurry up and get there" in terms of Holy Week. Let's get to Easter already, we think. We find it hard to fully immerse ourselves in the familiar story as it unfolds because we already know the ending. Perhaps an invitation for us this week is to retrain our reflexes. Rather than think, "I know how this ends," lean into wondering what it might have been like to live through Jesus' journey in real time. Linger in each scene, using our imagination to wonder what we would sense, what we would hear, what we would smell, what would we feel. Particularly when it feels uncomfortable. What might creating space for this discomfort have to teach us?

*Breath prayer for the week:*

*Inhale: Christ give me the grace*

*Exhale: To go at your pace*

**March 29, 2021**

**Reflections by Sheila Beane**

I love the word of God. I have found every single book of the Bible can speak to me. Okay, I admit, Leviticus and Numbers can be a bit of a challenge, but you have to agree, one of the most beautiful blessings ever written is found in the sixth chapter of Numbers. And who doesn't love a good book of rules? I thoroughly enjoy tackling a complicated passage or digging in with a Bible study, but if you have known me for more than five minutes, you know I have a very "busy" mind. Because of that, I have times where I just can't quiet my thoughts long enough to seriously study a passage of scripture. But here is the thing - God made this busy mind, so of course he knows exactly what I need and when I need it. I have discovered when my brain will just not hush, I am always gifted with a verse, - just one verse - to "soak" in.

This past week, I have found the chaos of 2020 and 2021 has left me distracted and unfocused, struggling to prepare my heart for the celebration of my Lord's resurrection. But guess what? Yesterday God gifted me with my verse. I did read the text that surrounds the verse to better understand the who, what, and why, but I centered my heart and mind on that one verse.

Part of my soaking process is to read a verse in different versions, paraphrases, and language because it is so beautiful. I hope you find Hosea 12:6 as encouraging and relevant as I do for this season in our lives:

**NIV:** But you must return to your God;  
maintain love and justice,  
and wait for your God always.

**ESV:** “So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.”

**ICB:** Like Jacob you must return to him.  
You must be loyal and true to him.  
You must do what is honest and just.  
You must always trust in him as your God.

**The Message:** What are you waiting for? Return to your God!  
Commit yourself in love, in justice! Wait for your God,  
and don't give up on him—ever!

**CJB:** <sup>(5)</sup> Adonai ELOHEI-Tzva'ot;  
ADONAI is his name!

#### **호세아 12:6**

그런즉 너의 하나님께로 돌아와서 인애와 공의를 지키며 항상 너의 하나님  
을 바라볼지니라 **Oseas 12:6**

#### **Nueva Versión Internacional**

<sup>6</sup> Pero tú debes volverte a tu Dios,  
practicar el amor y la justicia,  
y confiar siempre en él.

**March 30, 2021**  
**Reflections by Cindy Lee**

When asked to reflect on Easter memories, my childhood ones came rushing back to me. For me, those memories were not of going to church, they were of the special times we shared as a family. My siblings and I were all taught the reason we celebrate Easter; however, it just was not our focus. It seemed to be more about family and spending time together.

As I reflect back and look forward to this Easter, I would like to challenge all of us to find some new ways to make Easter more about Jesus. Let us try to be more intentional this year to bring Him into our celebrations. As I thought of some ways we could put this goal into action, I got curious about what others did so I turned to some different readings and several blogs. I was blown away with some of the super simple, but meaningful ways I found, so I wanted to share a few with you all:

- If you are planning your annual egg hunt- share the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1-10 and explain how Jesus comes looking for us just like we search eggs; "...For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost" (Verse 10).
- Watch a video, movie, or tv show that shares the true Easter story. Some examples are *The Passion of the Christ* for older crowds, *Veggie Tales: An Easter Carol*, and *The Greatest Adventure of the Bible*.
- Read the Easter Story together from the Bible (Matthew 27:1-28:10, Mark 14:1-16:13, Luke 22:39-24:12, and John 18:1-20:31)
- Read "God Gave us Easter" by Lisa Tawn Bergen
- Pull out your baking pan, and make resurrection rolls together to share a visual of the tomb being empty. All you will need are crescent rolls, marshmallows, melted butter, and cinnamon sugar- specific directions can be found online!

*Prayer: Dear God,  
Thank you for the reminders of why we celebrate Easter. Help us to pause and to intentionally bring Jesus more into our celebration this year, and the years to follow. In your name we pray, Amen.*

**March 31, 2021**

**Reflections by Rev. Dr. Charlie Lee**

On this Holy Wednesday, I have been thinking about preparations. Tomorrow, we will celebrate Maundy Thursday, in which Jesus will sit at table with his friends and share a meal. It is the same meal that we reenact every time we share in the sacrament of Communion. I wonder what preparations were taking place on this day over 2,000 years ago? I can imagine bakers shifting flour and kneading dough. I can imagine farmers collecting their produce from the fields and bringing it to market to be purchased. I can imagine wine makers pressing grapes and filling bottles. I can imagine all those whose energy and toil was dedicated to making preparations, not only for the meal that would occur tomorrow, but for the meals that occurred each and every day.

In this week, may our eyes and hearts be opened to all those involved that make the preparation of our spirits possible. May we be awakened to the interconnectedness of our communities and the body of Christ all around us. During this Holy Week, may we see as Holy the work that is often unseen or unheralded. For the work of these quiet saints, we give thanks, O God. In humility, may we prepare our hearts for the days to come...

Phil. 2:5-11

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

7 but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

8 he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**April 1, 2021**  
**Maundy Thursday**  
**Reflections by Laura Roberson**

The Last Supper  
by Rainer Maria Rilke  
Translated by Albert Ernest Flemming

They are assembled, astonished and disturbed  
round him, who like a sage resolved his fate,  
and now leaves those to whom he most belonged,  
leaving and passing by them like a stranger.  
The loneliness of old comes over him  
which helped mature him for his deepest acts;  
now will he once again walk through the olive grove,  
and those who love him still will flee before his sight.

To this last supper he has summoned them,  
and (like a shot that scatters birds from trees)  
their hands draw back from reaching for the loaves  
upon his word: they fly across to him;  
they flutter, frightened, round the supper table  
searching for an escape. But he is present  
everywhere like an all-pervading twilight-hour.

[On seeing Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper", Milan 1904]

There are two images that come to meet us on Maundy Thursday. This poem points us to the last supper between Jesus and his friends and some churches will focus here in the telling of the passion story. But the lectionary points us to another important piece of Jesus' final moments with his friends. In John 13: 1-17, 31b-35 Jesus washes the disciple's feet. In both of these stories we see Jesus entering an intimate moment with his friends, those he loved, those to whom he "most belonged". Both of these moments are times of teaching, serving and sending between the men. In both, Jesus is *showing* the disciples what love is and how to do it and he then tells them to go and do likewise! But there's a humanness to Jesus that we shouldn't miss here. He knows the betrayal is coming. He feels the "loneliness" looming. Sometimes the times where we are being called to love are tied up with moments of deep sadness. In those moments, it feels easier for our faith to live within us, but it does not spill out into our relationships and our actions. On this Maundy Thursday there's a reminder that Jesus is calling us to a lived-out faith. Take these words, from art and from scripture, and hear God's word to you today. How can your faith move from a reflection to an action?

**April 2, 2021**  
**Good Friday**  
**Reflections by Bob Overman**

Since I was a child, I've ruminated on why the Friday before Easter is called "Good Friday". After all, it marks the day of Christ's crucifixion. It's a curious paradox, and while I am no theologian, I will share my musings.

God's plan for us could not be fulfilled without Jesus' suffering and dying on the cross. As sad and distressful as this is for us today, imagine how devastating it was for his loved ones and followers then. The darkness descended and with it, Jesus took his last breath. We know the end of the story is quite different, full of triumph and revelation of the power of God. Still, is this occasion "good"?

Perhaps what is good is that mankind was given a gift so precious and costly that this man, this Son of God, willingly paid the ultimate price for the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of all. The death of Christ was horrific; the willingness to sacrifice himself for us was miraculous.

At Starmount, we've had a tradition for the past 14 years of commemorating Good Friday with a service of music. Often the music gives us a foretaste of the glory to come, but its focus is always on the path that Christ followed to the last supper and the day of darkness. There is sorrow, there is regret, but there is beauty in the love that guided and compelled Christ to this sacrificial act. Music is often able to capture the emotion of the occasion of Good Friday more profoundly than mere words.

On April 2, 2021, this coming Good Friday, I hope you'll continue the journey with Christ through music by experiencing "The Way of the Cross Leads Home", by Mary McDonald, beautifully presented by the Starmount Ensemble with moving and descriptive scripture readings by our trio of pastors: Rev. Dr. Charlie Lee, Rev. Dr. Kate Guthrie and Rev. Nate Sell.

One of my favorite excerpts from this work comes from an old hymn entitled, "One Day" and the words that lift me up are:

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;  
buried, He carried my sins far away;  
rising, He justified freely forever;  
one day He's coming, O glorious day!

May these words and all of the message through music lift you up this Good Friday, and even in the darkest moments may you have a glimpse of the Light that is coming!

**April 3, 2021**  
**Holy Saturday**  
**Reflections by Rev. Nate Sell**

I've been thinking about the Harrowing of Hell recently. "The what?" you ask. The Harrowing of Hell. It's something we don't talk much about in the church, and probably for good reason. But you know the line in the Apostle's Creed where we proclaim, "He descended into hell?" We say that we believe that after Jesus was crucified, he descended into hell before he rose again from the dead. And on Holy Saturday, we find ourselves situated in the time where Christ has been crucified but not yet raised. This is the time where He descended into hell.

Most modern theologians don't spend a lot of mental gasoline on the subject, but medieval theologians and artists certainly did. They pictured Christ bursting through the doors of Hades into a ghoulish scene of monsters and the damned, covered in light, there to rescue those who had known Him not. Some medieval theologies pictured this as the time when the patriarchs of the faith, like Adam himself, were saved. Check out Bosch's *Christ Breaking Down the Gates of Hell* if you want to see one such work. Then show it to your children when they don't eat their vegetables and remind them that sin has consequences. (Just kidding!)

What do we make of all this? The idea that those who didn't or don't know Christ would be punished to eternal torment doesn't jive with the loving God we know in Jesus Christ. Something doesn't add up, and that's a discussion for another day.

One thing does ring true of this "Harrowing of Hell" theology, however. Author and theologian Kate Bowler puts it best when she says this: "For me, the message is far too powerful to be ignored. It is a simple message: there is no place you can go where God will not find you and lead you home."<sup>1</sup>

***There is no place you can go where God will not find you and lead you home.*** God loves us no matter what. Even unto death on a Cross. Even to go to Hell and back for us. "What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul?" the old hymn goes. What wondrous love indeed. Such a love cannot be understood. It can only be received.

*Prayer: Holy God, in this quiet space between Good Friday and Easter, remind us that you are still at work in the world, even in the times it isn't readily apparent. Help us to remember that there is no place your love cannot enter, no darkness your light cannot overcome. Teach us to love like you. Teach us to share light like you. Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://katebowler.com/the-harrowing-of-hell/>



***Experience Holy Week  
with Starmount***

**Palm Sunday, March 28**

Virtual Worship

Outdoor Service at 10am followed  
by *Palm to Passion* activities

**Maundy Thursday, April 1**

Zoom Communion at 7pm

**Good Friday, April 2**

Virtual Cantata

*Music Service featuring Starmount  
and Jamestown Presbyterian Choirs*

**Easter Sunday, April 4**

Virtual Worship

Outdoor Service at 10am

**CALLED TO WORSHIP, EMPOWERED TO SERVE**