



Dearest Disciple,

We've begun our journey to Resurrection Sunday. Did its arrival surprise you or have you been expecting it? The busyness of our lives can often leave little room for reflection or preparation; a celebration of Easter beckons us to bring our imperfections, fears and brokenness to the feet of our resurrecting Savior.

However you arrived at this place, what matters is that you're *here*. Before you gather your family, prepare yourself with a moment of thoughtful reflection.

First, take a deep breath and ask the Spirit to lead you. How are you coming into this celebration of Holy Week? Whatever your physical, mental or emotional state, put a name to it. Jesus is welcoming you into this week with steadfast love.

Second, think back to last Easter and mentally walk through the big events of this past year. If you were to track everything that has happened from this time last year to today, would there be a common theme that describes the path you've walked? Take a moment to reflect on a word, phrase or feeling that comes over you as you think back on your journey.

Finally, meditate on this prayer from David:

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Scattered between the milestones of our spiritual journeys are countless moments of waiting and watching. While we look ahead and anticipate His resurrection, today we wait. We pray you hear hope in the silence, beauty in the ashes. As David wrote: *For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.*

The Lord is doing a beautiful, redeeming work in your life and, through the power of His resurrection, will transform you to His likeness as you seek His steadfast love.



Palm Sunday, March 28

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-10; Zechariah 9:9, 14:4, 9

What would it be like to join the very first "Palm Sunday" procession? It sounds exciting, like a party or celebration — although a strange one, with all the branches and coats covering the ground. But to the men, women, and children who joined in, this was not just a party, but a dangerous one. They knew the words of the prophets backwards and forwards.

They recognized the ancient symbols: Jesus riding from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem on a donkey as people wave branches and shout "*Hosanna!*" The prophets said this would be the sign that the Messiah had come, the king who would rule over all the earth; and there would be no other kings beside him.

That sounds wonderful, right? They had waited for the Messiah for centuries, crying out for God to save them.

But there was a major problem: These people already had a king. They were subjected to the all-powerful Roman Empire and Caesar, the Roman Emperor. *Caesar*, not Jesus, ruled over all the earth and demanded there be no king but him. Even a hint of rebellion was silenced through extreme violence and death.

And yet, here comes Jesus, riding from the Mount of Olives into the holy, royal city of Jerusalem, as the crowd declares with their shouts, bodies, and even their coats: *God has saved us! God has given us the new king as He promised!*

No wonder the entire city was stirred, asking "Who is this?!"

Wonder Together

- What do you know about the Roman Empire?
- How do you think it would feel to declare that Jesus was your king if your country already had a powerful king?
- The Roman Empire used violence to create "peace." How was Jesus' kingdom going to be different?
- How would you answer the question, "Who is this?"
- How can you follow Jesus as your king today, in your country?

Dig a little deeper

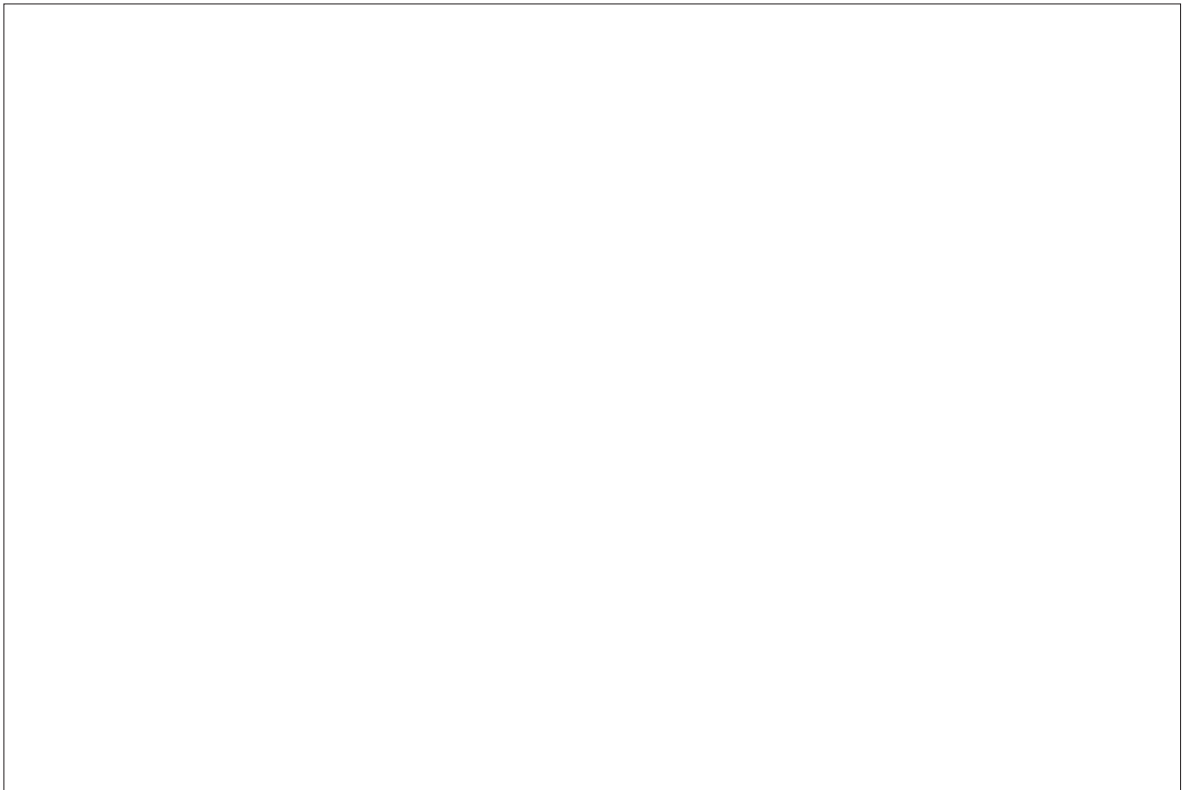
Hosanna: This Greek word means "save!" and is used as a cry for help. It is often used in prayer, pleading for God: "Please help us!" *Hosanna* can also be used in praise: "You saved us! Thank you!"

Caesar: The title given to the Roman emperors; a very powerful dictator/ruler. These emperors also went by the title "King of Kings" (sound familiar?).

Jesus, we raise our voices and shout Hosanna! We cry out for You to save us. We celebrate that You have saved us, that You are the true King over all the world, and that Your kingdom stands for justice, mercy, and compassion. Help us to serve Your kingdom and worship no one else. In your name we pray, Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Holy Monday, March 29

Scripture Reading: John 12:24-26, 35-36; Isaiah 49:5-6

Yesterday, Jesus and His disciples traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover in the holy city. But after Jesus' dramatic entrance there were still a few days before the celebration. Jesus spent these days teaching.

Jesus' words were a bit confusing. He spoke of a kernel of wheat falling. Before it falls, it is just one seed; but after it dies and sinks into the ground, it becomes an entire plant full of seeds. Then He spoke of light and warned the gathered crowd that they would soon be overtaken by darkness. Jesus implored His listeners to invest their lives in eternity, to become servants and follow Him, and to become children of the light.

It all seems very ... complicated. But Jesus is not speaking in riddles. Jesus is giving His friends and followers clues to help them understand what is about to happen.

Yesterday, we saw how the crowd declared Jesus to be the long-promised king over all the world. The prophet Isaiah also spoke of such a king, one who would gather up all of Israel and even be a light to the Gentiles, a light that would shine salvation over the entire earth.

If Jesus were to "fall to the ground" like a seed and die, would God produce through Him an abundance of new life? If the darkness were to overtake the light, would that light burst forth and shine across the entire world?

Wonder Together

- What seems confusing or clear to you about Jesus' teaching here?
- We know how this story ends! When you realize He's going to die soon, and that God will resurrect Him on the third day, how does that help you understand what Jesus means?
- How can you invest your life in Jesus' kingdom and become a servant and follower of the light? What do you think that could look like right now, this week or this month?

Dig a little deeper

Gentile: This means "Someone who is not a Jew."

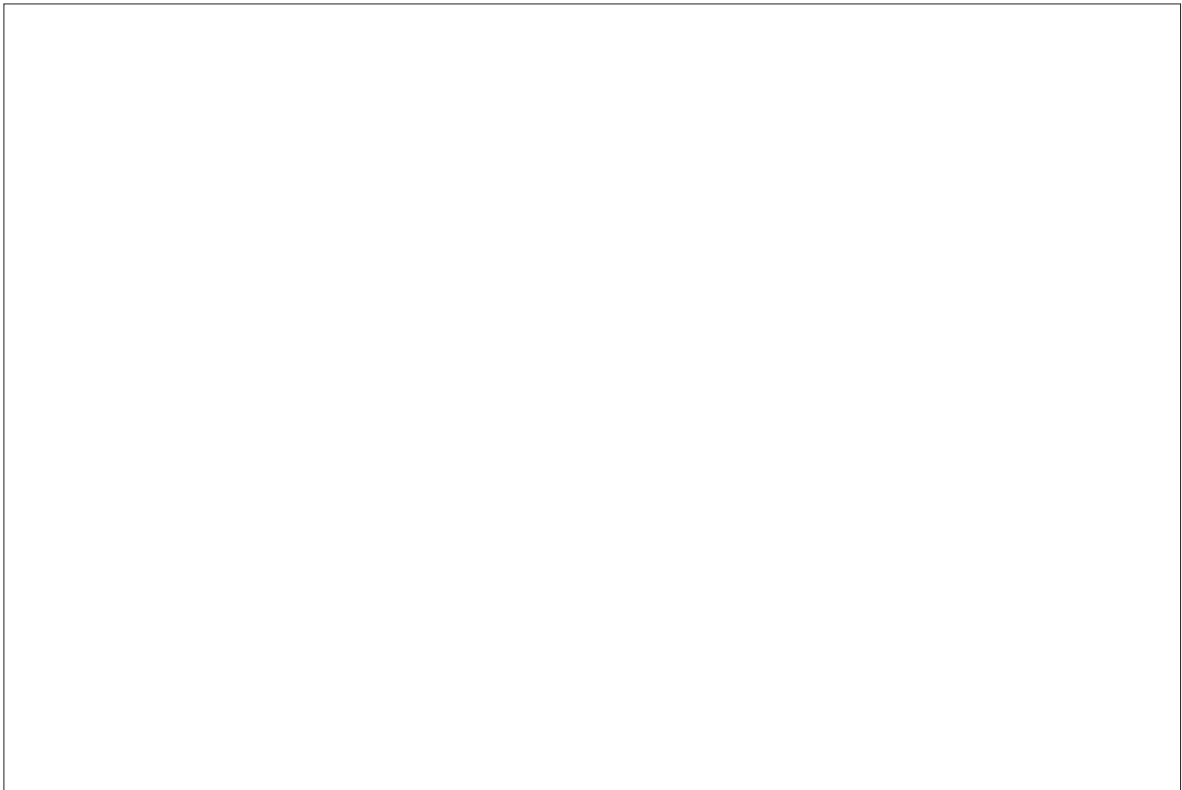
Holy City: The Jews considered Jerusalem the most sacred city in the world, because the temple where God was worshiped stood there.

Passover: An important Jewish holiday that celebrates God's liberation of the slaves from Egypt, when the angel of death "passed over" the houses of the Hebrews.

Jesus, You are the light of the world! We choose to follow You, to become Your servants, to spread Your life and light. Please give us strength as we follow You, together. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Holy Tuesday, March 30

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:12-18, Isaiah 56:6-8

Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree. There was no fruit on the tree because it wasn't in season. But Jesus didn't wait for fig season. He cursed the tree, declaring it shall never produce fruit again.

Then, after a long walk from the suburbs into the city, Jesus went into the temple. Instead of worshipping, He caused a major scene, overturning tables and driving everyone out. He shut the whole place down. The priests and teachers were so upset, they started looking for ways to have Him arrested and killed.

What's happening here? Is Jesus *hangry*? Is He being a jerk?

Actually, no; Jesus is teaching. Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Isaiah wrote beautifully about the true temple of God, a place where people from all over the world would joyfully come and worship. It would be a "house of prayer for all nations." All of Scripture is clear on one thing: If you praise God with your words while you mistreat other humans, God will not be pleased. The temple officials were using their power to extort money from the most vulnerable, and Jesus was rightly angry.

Worshipping God *must* go hand in hand with justice and compassion.

Jesus' encounter at the fig tree foreshadows what Jesus demonstrated in the temple: If our worship does not produce the fruit of compassion as God intends, it will be overturned. Jesus is saying, "God's house is My house," just as on Palm Sunday He said, "I am the true King."

Wonder Together

- What questions do you have about these two stories?
- We know Jesus did not sin. So, what do we learn about God's commitment to justice and compassion in what Jesus did?
- Why does God care so much if our worship is paired with treating others well?
- What fruit can you see in your family, and in your church? How is your worship nurturing the world around you with God's love and provision?

Dig a little deeper

Temple: The temple in Jerusalem was the primary dwelling place for God and a special place to worship Him.

Priest: In Judaism, the priests were descendants of Aaron, who had the sacred role of serving God and the people at the temple.

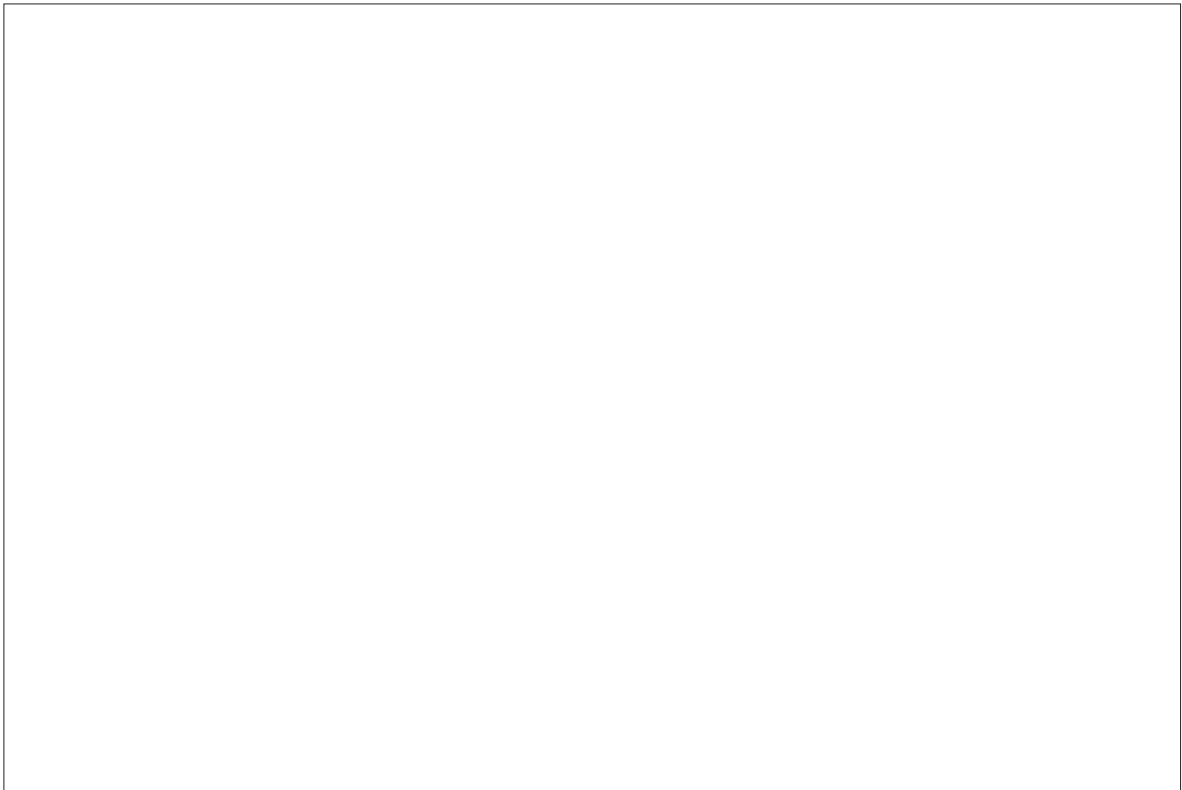
Justice: In the Bible, justice refers to a world where all is right, where people live in a right relationship with each other, with God, and with creation. Throughout the entire Bible, God is constantly reminding His people to live in this way!

Compassion: In the Bible, compassion is sometimes translated as *lovingkindness*, and is God's faithful, nurturing love for His people. We receive compassion from God and give compassion to each other.

Jesus, we praise You for Your justice and compassion! Please teach us how to follow You, how to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our family, church, and community. We worship You alone. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Holy Wednesday, March 31

Scripture Reading: Mark 12:28-31, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Leviticus 19:18

While Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem, one of the teachers came to Him with a question: Of all the commandments in the Scriptures (and there are hundreds!), which is the most important?

This sounds like a tough question. How does someone weigh so many commandments from God and decide which *one* is greatest?

The answer is simple to Jesus. Of all the commandments, these two summarize the whole: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. If you focus on these two commands, you will keep the spirit of all the rest."

This is what Moses taught and what the Jews believed. This is what Jesus taught and what the Christ-followers believed. In fact, this is what Jesus was teaching at the temple and the fig tree in yesterday's reading. We aren't loving God if we aren't loving our neighbor.

In the middle of Holy Week, between the *Hosanna* cries of Palm Sunday and the *Hosanna* cries of Easter, Jesus taught this message again and again: Love God. Love each other. The good news is so simple, yet it will take a lifetime of faithfully working together before we get the hang of it: Love God. Love each other.

Wonder Together

- What is the greatest commandment according to Jesus? Why do you think it comes in two parts?
- How do obeying these two parts together meet all the rest of the hundreds of commands?
- These commandments have been God's priority since Moses (about 5,000 years ago!), so we've had time to practice! How are we humans doing, do you think?
- How do *you* love God and your neighbor?

Dig a little deeper

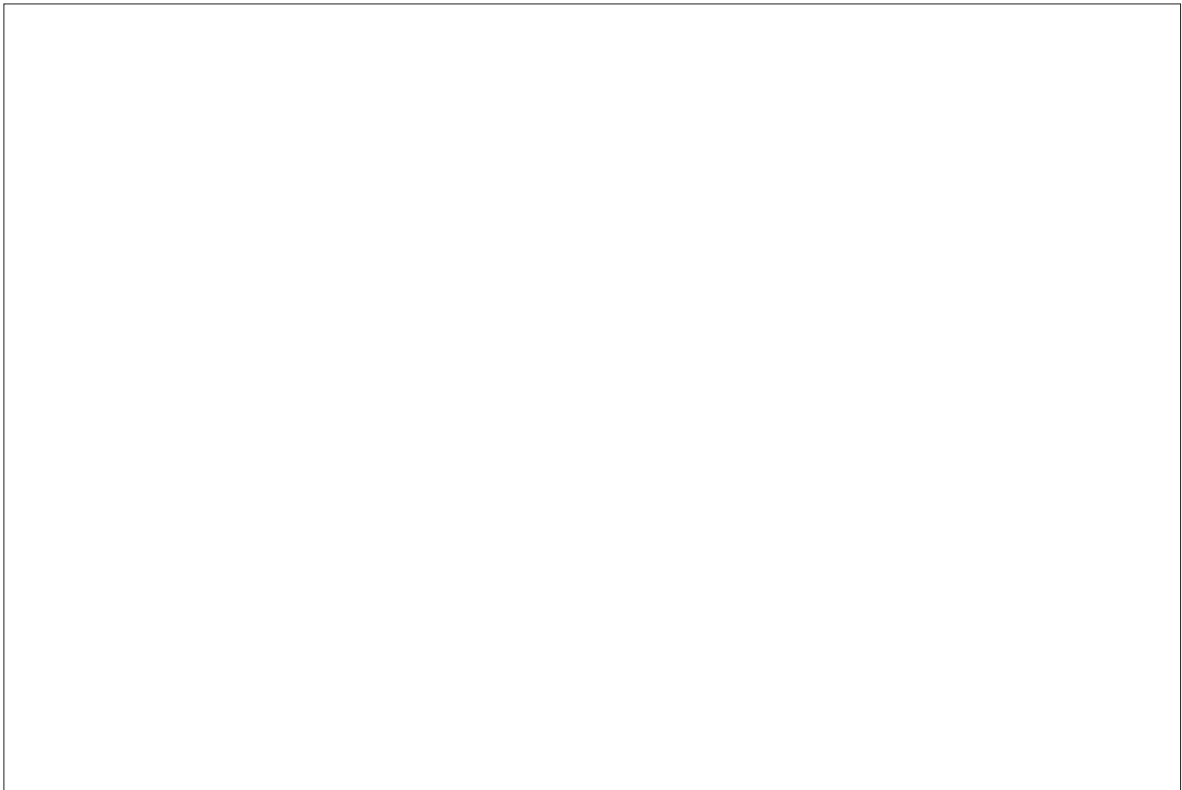
Neighbor: Jesus' teaching throughout His life clarifies that to him, "neighbor" doesn't only mean the guy next door, but anyone you encounter in need.

Commandments: When God liberated the people from Egypt, He gave them laws, commandments to ensure they would create a new society that pleased Him, a society of true worship founded on justice. The laws are summarized in the famous Ten Commandments God gave Moses.

*Dear God, what a wonderful invitation: to obey You through loving You, and loving the people around us with Your love. Help us as we learn and practice! Thank You for Your grace, forgiveness, and second chances when we get lost and need to start again ... and again.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Maundy Thursday, April 1

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-5, 12-15, 34-35

Yesterday, Jesus reminded His followers of the greatest commandment: to love God with all they are, and to love their neighbors as they love themselves. Today Jesus gave them a new commandment—and it's a big one!

In those days, people walked long distances on dusty roads while wearing sandals. It was customary for a lowly member of the household — a servant or child — to wash the guests' feet when they entered the house. But at this final meal together, Jesus once again did something shocking: He grabbed the towel and basin Himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet.

The disciples were scandalized.

Jesus explains "Do you understand what I'm doing? If I, who deserves honor as your Lord and Teacher, make myself a servant, then I expect you to serve each other. *This* is how you should live."

This is what Jesus had been trying to teach us all along. The Roman emperors and religious leaders may have gathered wealth and power for themselves, but they were false rulers presiding over false kingdoms.

Dig a little deeper

Maundy: This word comes from a Latin root that means "command." Today is called Maundy because on this day Jesus gave an important command: Love one another as I have loved you.

Religious Leaders: In the Bible, these were teachers and priests who led the people in worship and taught them about God. However, during Jesus' time some of them had become corrupt, cooperating with the Roman government to create suffering for the people in God's name.

God's true kingdom is opposite our greed and grasping. God pours Himself out. Jesus our Lord humbles Himself to serve us in the lowliest ways, in life and in death! God invites us to leave behind our sin, pride, and self-centeredness and join the true kingdom and true worship of the God who is love.

Wonder Together

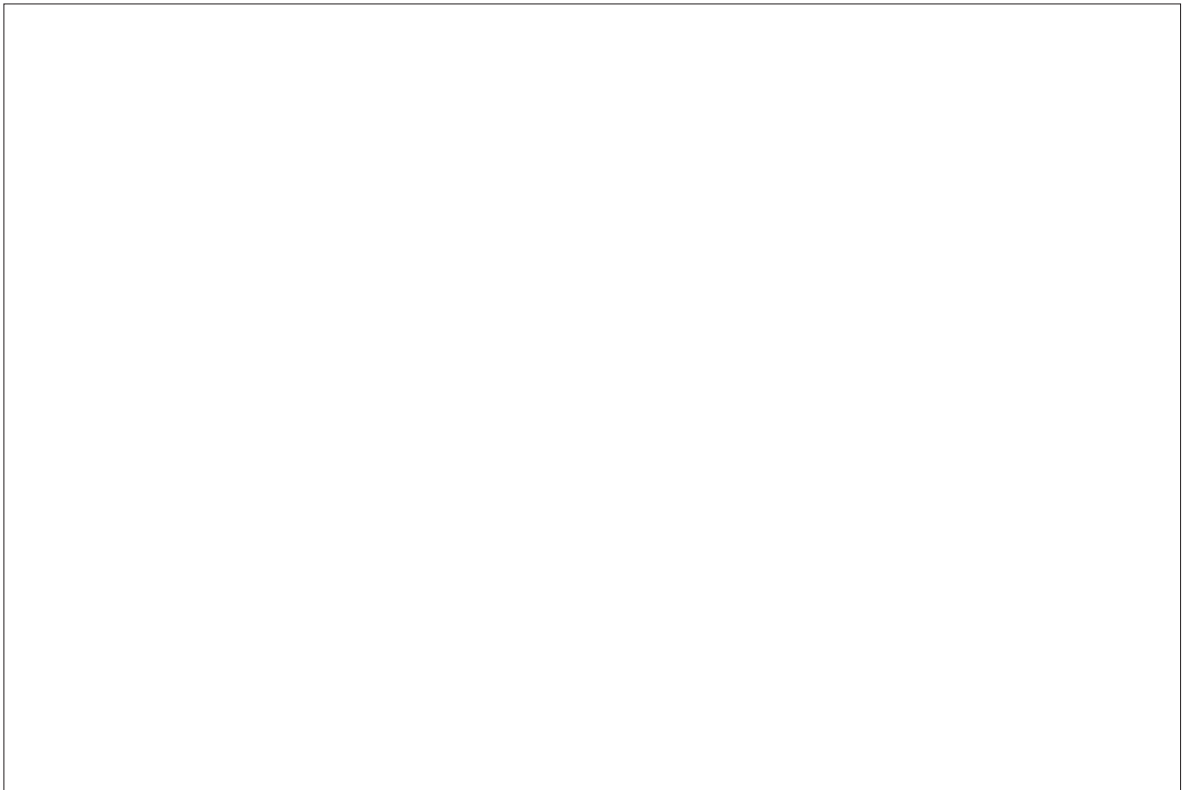
- When have you been attracted to power, wealth or success? How do these things make it hard to love and serve each other?
- How could Jesus' command to love God, love our neighbor, and serve each other guide our decisions in life?
- How will worshipping the God who serves change how we live in the world?
- Who could you serve today and this week?
- What do you think that could look like right now, this week or this month?

God's Kingdom: Where God is King and God's will is done! Though we live in earthly "kingdoms" now, we are invited to serve God's kingdom too, trusting that He will bring the kingdom to earth in fullness in his timing.

Lord Jesus, we are amazed at Your love! We have cried out Hosanna! and You have come to be among us, stooping even to wash our feet and serve us in such an intimate and humble way. Please teach us how to follow You by serving each other. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Good Friday, April 2

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:36–50, Psalm 130

After celebrating Passover with His friends and showing them His love and servant heart, Jesus went with His disciples to a garden called Gethsemane. He asked them to stay awake and wait while He prayed; they kept falling asleep. It was the middle of the night, after all.

Still Jesus prayed on.

I wonder if Jesus had Psalm 130 in his mind as he cried out to God that night, again and again: *Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.* The text says He felt overwhelmed by sorrow, that He fell with His face to the ground as He pleaded with God.

I wonder if Jesus wept the words *Hosanna! Save me!*, just as the people shouted a few days prior. But the hours passed — Jesus praying, His friends sleeping. Then soldiers arrived. Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest friends and arrested.

Before this day is out, Peter will deny knowing Jesus three times. Jesus will be brought to the authorities and sentenced to death.

Dig a little deeper

Gethsemane: A garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Could Jesus have passed by this garden on Palm Sunday, as he traveled to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives?

We've been following Jesus all week; we understand why they want to kill Him. Yet we also clearly see that what He has done was right in God's eyes.

This doesn't make it any easier when the one we hoped was God's Messiah, God's chosen, anointed King is crucified that afternoon.

Wonder Together

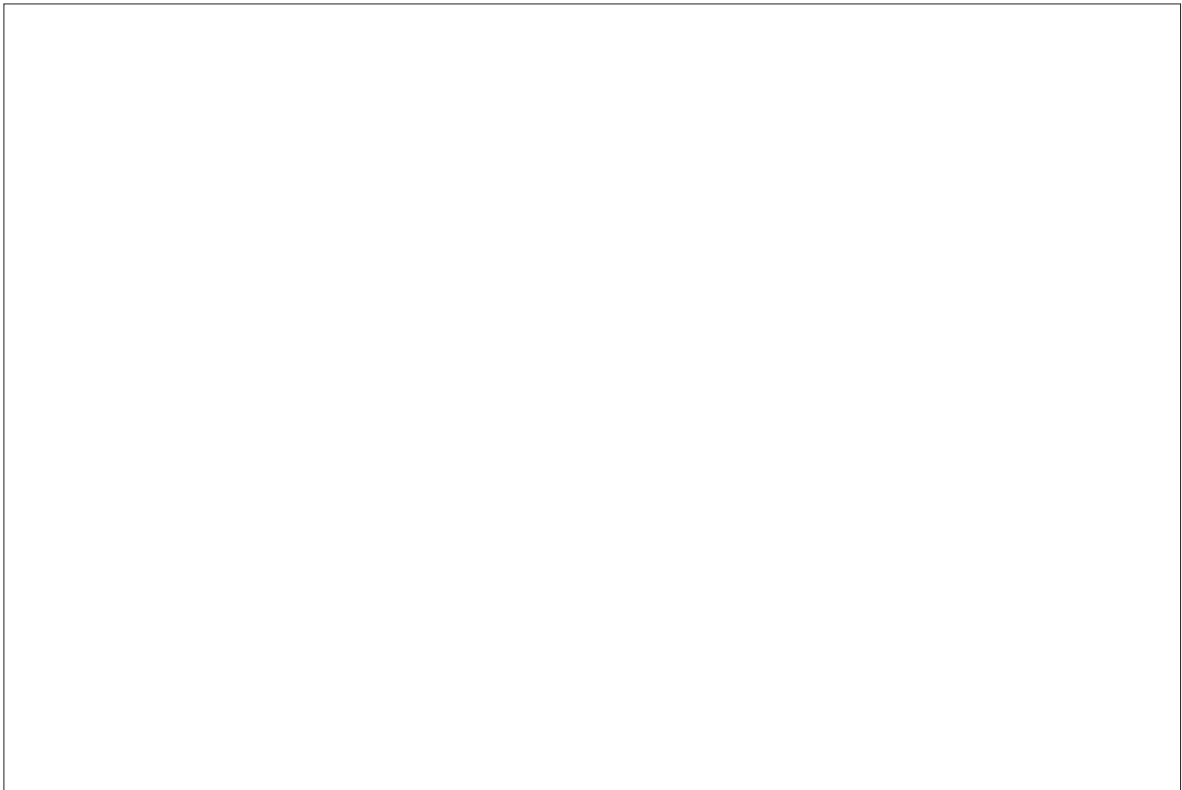
- Have you ever cried out to God, overwhelmed and on your face, as Jesus did that night? If so, how did you feel?
- How does it help you to know God has felt that depth of grief and pain?
- God doesn't seem to have given Jesus what He asked for; and yet, how does God show us that He is still in control, still working out a plan of love and redemption?
- How does this help you to trust God's love even when nothing is going as you hoped?

Messiah: Means "the one anointed with oil." In those days, a king who was taking the throne had oil placed on his head, "anointing" him king. God promised to send Israel a Messiah, *the anointed one*, who would be the true king of God's kingdom.

God, on this most sorrowful night, we lay with our faces on the ground before You. There is so much pain and suffering in the world; but we surrender ourselves to You who came to live among us, who carried our burdens and sorrows and lived as one of us in birth and in death. We point our eyes to You. We place our trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Holy Saturday, April 3

Scripture Reading: John 19:38-42 , Isaiah 40:6-8

What a horrible, horrible day. What words could possibly express the feelings filling a day like this? Jesus' family, friends, and followers loved Him — but now He was gone, dead, killed in the most horrific way. But also, they had *followed* Him. They took a risk, trusting that He was the Messiah, the king promised by God through the prophets, that God was on His side. Otherwise, why would they have joined the crowd declaring that He (and not the dangerously all-powerful Caesar) was king? Why would they have stood by Him when He overturned the temple, declaring that He (and not the corrupt religious leaders) spoke for God?

Those were dangerous words and acts. They believed God would intervene to save them all, but now Jesus was dead. What would happen to them now?

Anyway, nothing more can happen today. Today is the Sabbath, the day of rest. No work can be done. Jesus' body was hastily wrapped and placed in a garden, in a tomb.

On this terribly sad day, I wonder if anyone remembered what Jesus said on Monday: about the darkness overcoming, but only for a season; about the seed falling to the ground that, in death, becomes abundant life?

We are like the grass and flowers of the fields that wither and fall, but the word of God shall endure forever.

This horrible day ends with Jesus' body still lying dead in the ground, in a garden.

Wonder Together

- Take a moment to imagine the feelings of losing someone you loved *and* also trusted for the future. What are some feelings that come to mind?
- Today is the day after, the hard silence after the horrible news. When have you felt such crushing sorrow?
- Do you think there is symbolic significance that Jesus' body was laid in a garden?
- Talk about a time when God met you in the middle of sadness and led you to hope. What did you learn from that experience?

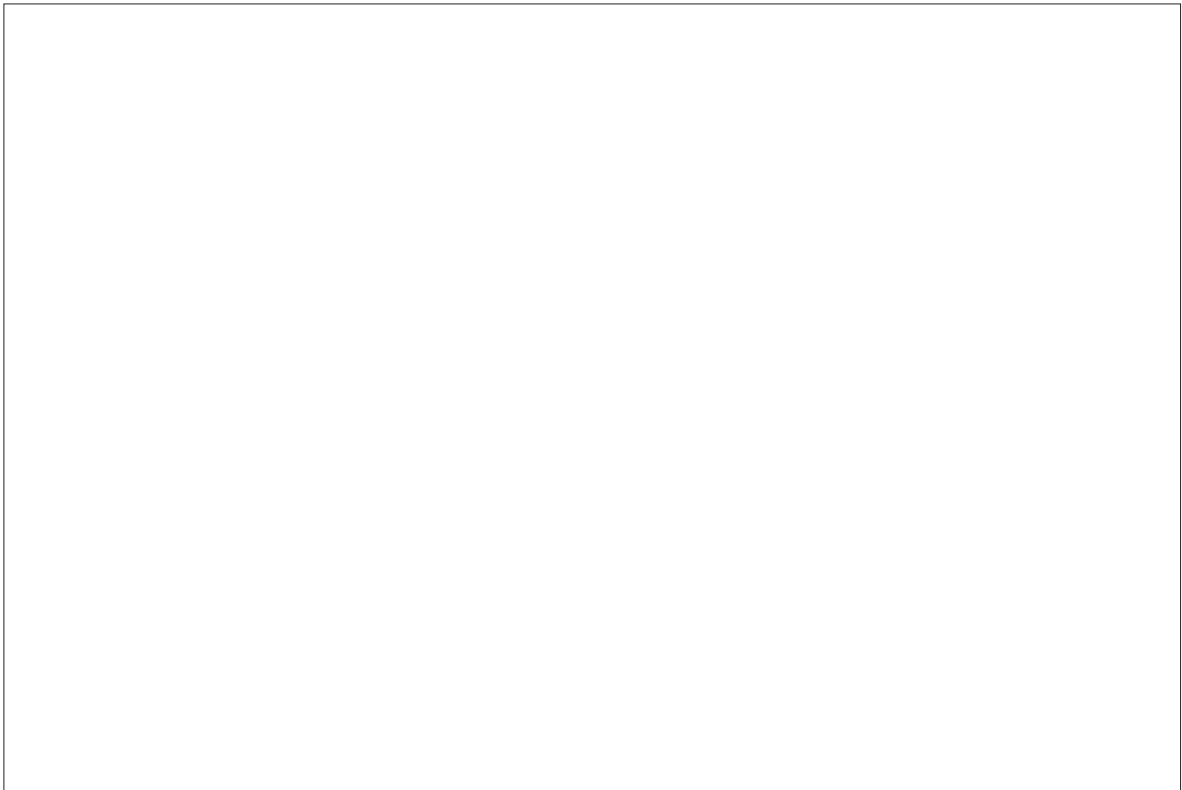
Dig a little deeper

Sabbath: The Jewish holy day set aside to worship and rest. The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday night and ends at sundown on Saturday night.

Lord Jesus Christ, on this sad, sorrowful day, we remember Your death. We cry Hosanna, save us! We acknowledge that we are like the grass and flowers of the field, and only You and Your word endure forever. We turn our eyes and hearts to You. We love You, Jesus. We trust You. Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK





Resurrection Sunday, April 4

Scripture Reading: John 20:1, 11-16

It's been a long, strange week since the procession into Jerusalem last Sunday. Jesus was killed on Friday, and His body has been lying in a tomb, in a garden, waiting until after the Sabbath when His grieving, frightened friends could finish preparing it for burial. Now, His friend Mary arrives early Sunday morning, even before dawn, to finish the sad, horrible task.

But Mary arrives to a shocking sight: The stone has been moved from the cave where Jesus' body lay, and He is not there. What would you make of that? Of course she didn't think He was alive; dead people don't suddenly become alive.

But who would steal the body? Could this week get any worse?

Then a man approaches and asks why she is crying. She assumes he is the gardener. After all, that's where they are, in the garden, where Jesus' body was left. But then He says her name, "Mary." And she knows.

Jesus is alive!

God resurrected Jesus. This means Jesus is God's Messiah, the world's one true King, the one who rules with justice and compassion, with love and mercy. This means God is not the one who puffs Himself up in power like earthly kings and powerful people, but who bends down to serve in love — and asks us to do the same.

Through Jesus, God has reversed the power of sin death. In following Jesus, we can find the path of life. Through Jesus, we can be saved! *Hosanna! Thank you God! You have saved us!*

Wonder Together

- What do you think Jesus' friends thought or felt when they discovered He was alive?!
- What do you think about Jesus being alive still today, here with you?
- What does it mean to follow Jesus as our living King?
- Have you received God's gift of salvation in Jesus? Would you like to?
- Raise your voice in *Hosanna!*, today! Jesus is alive!

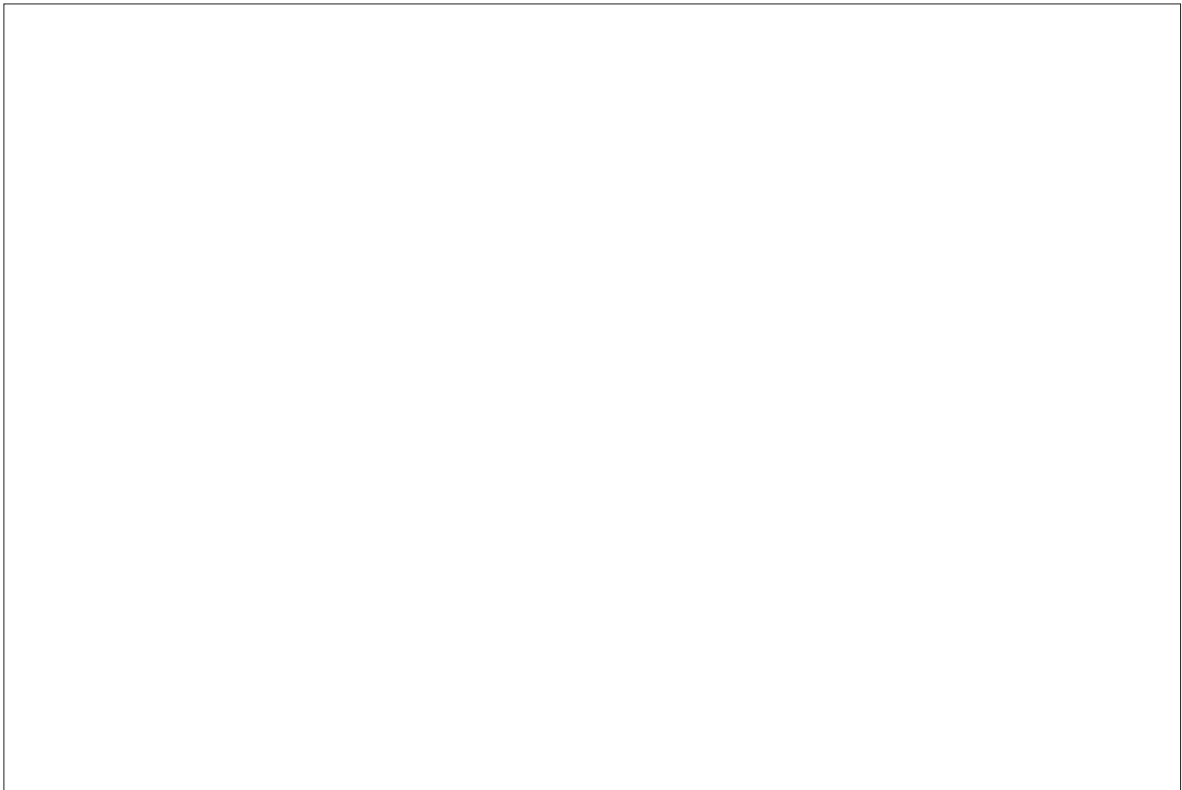
Dig a little deeper

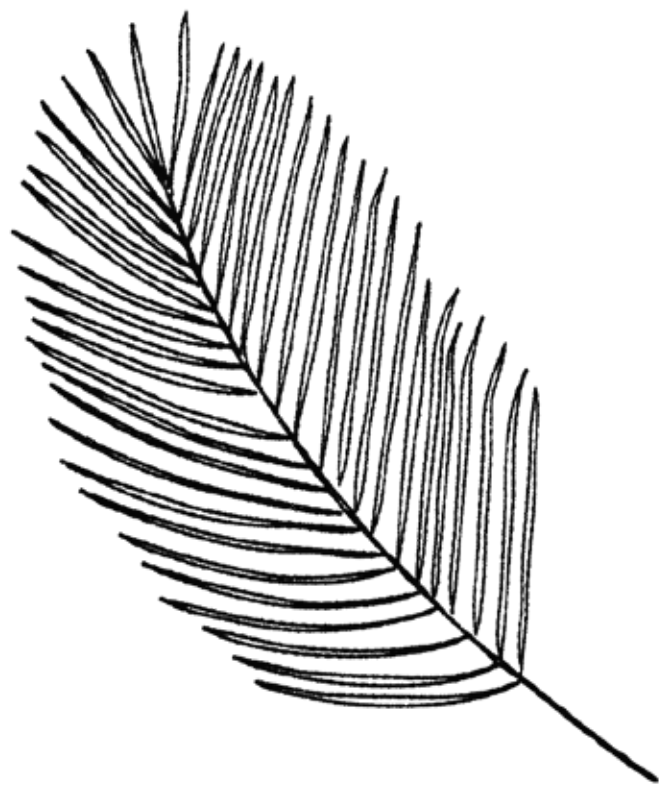
Resurrection: Different from simply coming back to life. A resurrected person will never die again!

Hosanna! Hallelujah! Jesus, You are alive, and we raise our voices and lift our hands to praise You, our King of kings and Lord of lords. Will You teach us to learn Your voice and seek Your face as we follow You through this life and into the next life? We give ourselves to You and worship You forever. In the name of the risen Jesus we pray, Amen.

Pray. Journal. Sketch.

JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK

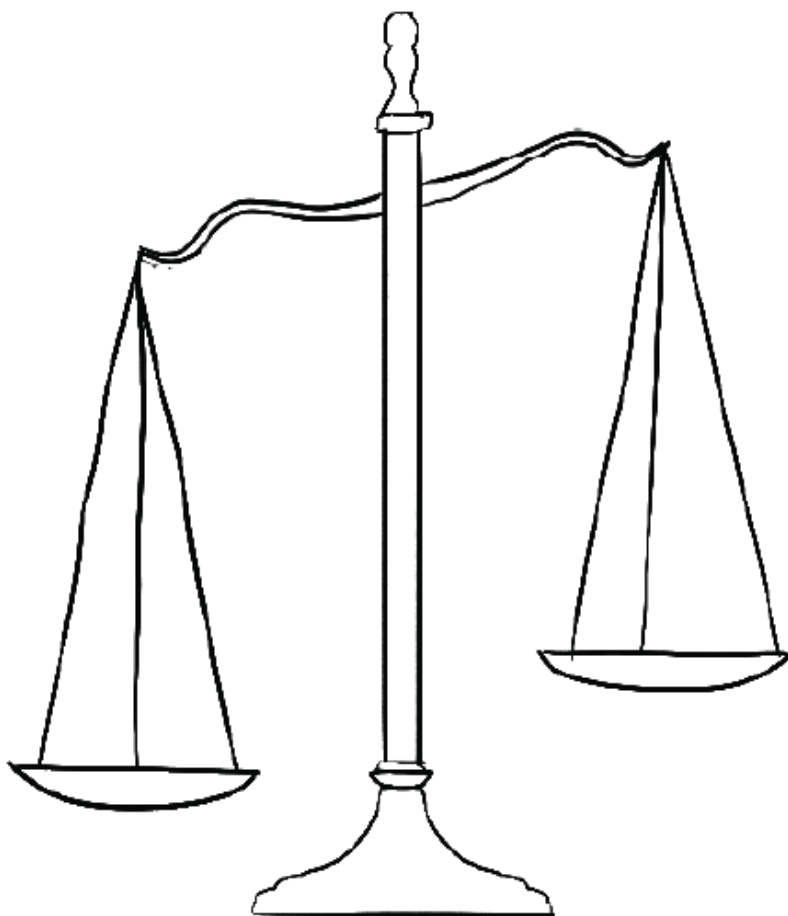




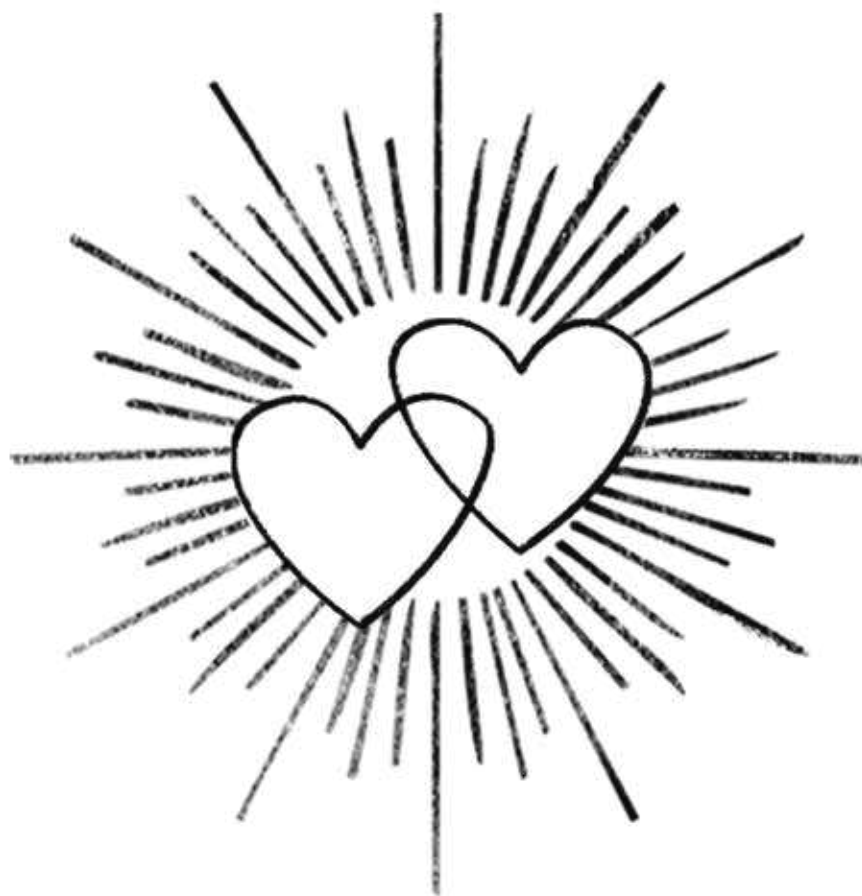
palm sunday



holy monday



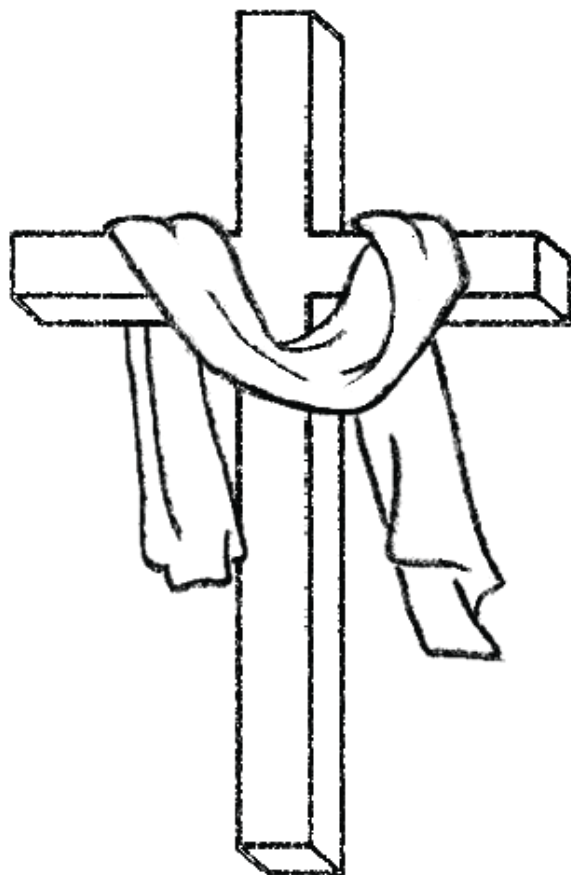
holy tuesday



holy wednesday



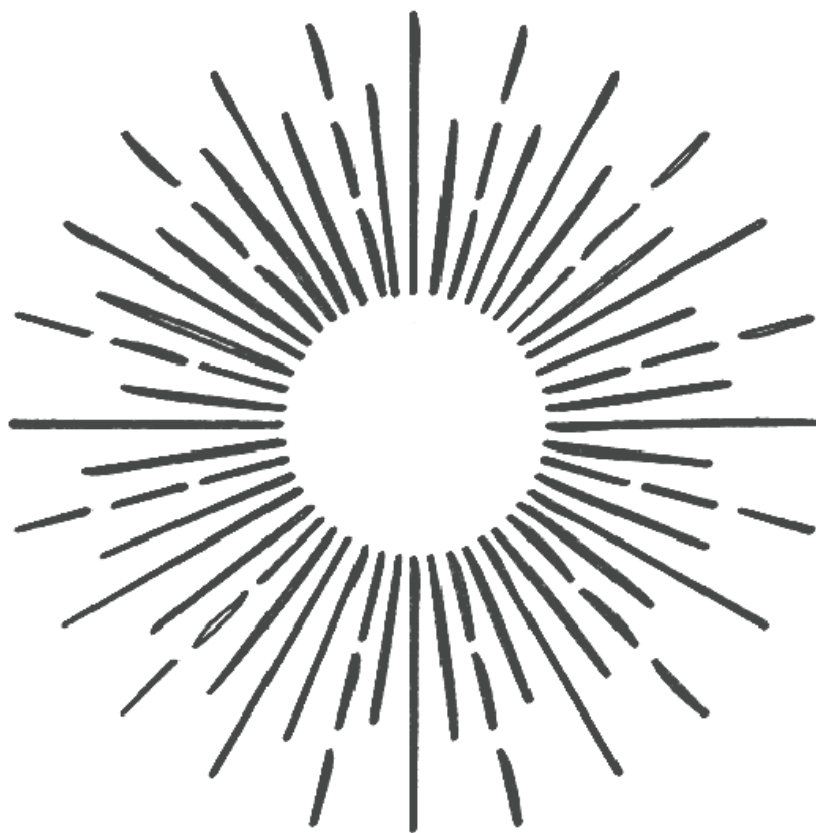
maundy thursday



good friday



holy saturday



resurrection sunday