

Study Guide

Series: The Final Hours of Jesus' Life "Tortured and Crucified"

During this Holy Week we will read through the account of Jesus' crucifixion in all four Gospels, noting the differences and meditating upon the words of Jesus from the cross. On Thursday of this week you are encouraged to remember the Last Supper with our Maundy Thursday service. On Friday you're invited to join us for our Good Friday service commemorating Jesus' death and passion.

Monday – This week, as you read all four Gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, take a piece of paper, turn it sideways and make four columns, one for each Gospel. Each day make notes regarding the similarities and differences and your reflections on the last words and moments in Jesus' life. *Read Matthew 27:32-66.* Notice in your reading this week that even now the people surrounding the cross continue to deride Jesus. This moment represented the apex of evil in our world – God has come to walk among us and he is not only crucified, but the crowd, the soldiers, the priests, even the bandits on the crosses next to him hurl insults at him. What is Jesus feeling in verse 46? What difference does it make that God, in Jesus, experienced this? What does this mean for you when feel God forsaken? Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin – one of those who did not speak up when Jesus was on trial – what do you think he is feeling in vs. 57-60?

Tuesday – *Read Mark 15:21-47.* Looking down from the cross, what might it have felt like for Jesus to see soldiers casting lots (essentially throwing dice) for his clothing? The charge about destroying the temple was misconstrued by Jesus' hearers – this was hearsay – Jesus had referred to his own body as a temple, which would be destroyed and raised up in three days. In the temple in Jerusalem there was a large and heavy curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple where only the priest could go. What is the significance of the fact that at Jesus' death this curtain separating God's throne room from ordinary worshipers was torn in two? Notice which of Jesus' followers were at the cross.

Wednesday – *Read Luke 23:26-56.* Verses 28-31 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, which will occur 40 years after Jesus' crucifixion. It will occur because a "would-be-messiah" sought to deliver the Jews from the Romans by the power of the sword. The Romans crushed the revolt and one million Jews were killed while Jerusalem was destroyed. Notice Jesus' words from the cross in Luke's account. Here, even as he hangs on the cross, Jesus is still focused on his mission of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). Reflect for a few moments on the two persons who come to faith in this chapter – what do their stories tell you about Jesus, his mission, and salvation?

Maundy Thursday – *Read John 19:16b-42.* Only John tells us the sign was posted in three languages – this was likely his way of pointing to the fact that Jesus' death, and the Gospel, was not only for the Jews, but for the whole world. What do verses 25-27 tell you about Jesus? When Jesus says, "It is finished," what does he mean? What is verse 35 meant to convey? Notice in verse 39 that Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin,

joins Joseph. Join us tonight at 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary for the Living Lord's Supper service.

Good Friday – Jesus is meditating upon Psalm 22 as he hangs from the cross. Today we have the opportunity to read and reflect upon the very words Jesus was praying and thinking about as he was dying. *Read Psalm 22* and look for the connections between what was happening as Jesus was being crucified and this Psalm written hundreds of years before. Imagine Jesus praying this prayer from the cross (which is what he was in fact doing). What insight does this give you into Jesus? Beginning with verse 23 a narrator/commentator now speaks and summarizes what happens as a result of God's anointed experiencing suffering. Join us for the Good Friday service tonight at 6:00 pm and consider watching Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ".

Prayer Guide

As you begin your time of prayer each day, ask Jesus to speak to your heart about what it might mean for you to fully embrace the path God has laid before you, after the example of Jesus, regardless of where it might lead. Each day this week, our prayers will be guided by a rough chronology of the events of Jesus' life during his last week on earth as recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

Monday – Foretelling the Destruction of the Temple. Mark 13:1-8

Dear God, on Monday of this holiest of weeks, your son Jesus told his disciples of the coming destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and of its rebuilding in three days. He also cautioned them to beware of a coming time when they would encounter many different people falsely claiming to be the Messiah. O God, we come to you today confessing that we often hear and are persuaded by voices telling us that they offer the key to abundant and fulfilled living. We turn away from you and follow their direction. Forgive us, Lord. Help us to see and know that the only lasting foundation for our lives is your eternal word. AMEN.

Tuesday – The Lesson of the Fig Tree. Mark 13:28-31

O Gracious, guiding and ever-loving God, today we see Jesus pointing to a simple fig tree to teach his disciples a profound lesson about life. God, as the branches of the fig tree become tender, help my heart also become tender and open to the pains, joys, and needs of my neighbors. And dear God, as the fig tree puts out its new leaves, help me to live fully the new life to which you call me. As Jesus suffered and died on the cross, he continued to proclaim the message of the reality of your kingdom come here on earth. In it may I find a message of hope and renewal for this day. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus we pray. AMEN.

Wednesday – The Anointing at Bethany. Mark 14:3-9

Blessed and holy Jesus, we call you Christ, meaning anointed one. We remember today the woman who came to your side at Simon's house in Bethany and anointed your feet. Dear Jesus, in that act you were anointed both for your kingship and for your burial. God, help me to remember today the true cost of discipleship in the example of your son Jesus. Help my often reluctant, often self-centered, often world-weary heart to be renewed by the sacred oil of your love, not for my sake alone, but for the sake of the lives you will help me touch today. AMEN.

Thursday - The Passover with the Disciples. Mark 14:12-25.

Holy and Awesome God, we approach you today in awe and wonder, not fully comprehending the scope of your grace in our lives. We see Jesus in this story, his heart full with love for his disciples and with apprehension about his own personal fate. Knowing that he serves your will and not his own, Jesus breaks bread and institutes a new observance of the covenant made between you and humankind. In the days to follow, it will be a covenant marked by the shedding of his own blood and the breaking of his own body at the hands of sinners. Today God, my prayer is that by your Holy Spirit

you will help me never to consider lightly the depth of love displayed for me on that holy, fateful and redemptive night. AMEN.

Friday - The Crucifixion of Jesus. Mark 15:21-39

Living, loving, merciful God, today our hearts break when we consider the supreme act of suffering you mercifully undertook for our sakes. We are brought humbly to our knees as we consider our unworthiness to receive the gift of your ultimate sacrifice. Through our pain, through our heart-sickness, and through the tears we shed, we hear the voice of the Roman guard making his confession, saying, "Truly, this man is the son of God!" O God, as we see the evidence of one of the most alienated, the most hostile persons making this life-changing confession, so we pray today that your spirit guide us in making this same confession in our own hearts. For you, O Jesus, truly are the son of God and the Lord of life. AMEN.

This Prayer Guide was prepared by Rev. Russell Brown