

THEME: The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus
“The Final Week: Jerusalem”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber – based on a sermon series by Adam Hamilton
March 24-25, 2013 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

Mark 11:7-10

7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it, and he sat on it. 8 Many in the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others spread leafy branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, “Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessings on the coming Kingdom of our ancestor David! Praise God in highest heaven!” 11 So Jesus came to Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After looking around carefully at everything, he left because it was late in the afternoon. Then he returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

VIDEO Sermon Starter – The Final Week

SLIDE The Final Week: Jerusalem

For the last six weeks we have been going to the Holy Land to get a clear idea of what it would mean to walk in the footsteps of Jesus during this season of Lent, which is the 40 days and seven Sundays before Easter. We have been trying to figure out who Jesus is and what he's really like by looking at some video footage from the holy land as well as other images to help make the story come to life that we read about in the Scriptures. We really have been wrestling with what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus today in our own lives as we seek to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

Today we come to the final week of the life of Jesus. We started this series at the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized and then looked at the wilderness area where he was tempted. We then moved up to the northern part of the Holy Land to the Sea of Galilee and town of Capernaum where he taught and healed the sick. We remembered how he won on the mountain tops to teach and to heal and to reinterpret the Law of Moses with the Sermon on the Mount. We look at how Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee and how he calmed the storm and what

that means for us when we experience storms in our lives. Last week we looked at the region of Samaria where Jesus reached out to the outcasts and the nobodies and the poor. We recognize that this was an invitation for us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as we serve the poor and care for those who have yet to hear about the gospel or who live without hope.

Today we come to the last week of the life of Jesus where he is being hailed as King as he enters into this city of Jerusalem, having traveled back down to the southern portion of the country in the area of Judea. We are going to wrestle with the question, "What kind of King is Jesus?"

I want to invite you to take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and your Meditation Moments which is a sheet of paper folded in half. You will find the Scripture passage for today listed at the top and some blank spaces for you to take notes and write down the things you would like to remember and reflect upon concerning Jesus and what it means to follow him. You then will find our Meditation Moments which are daily readings of Scripture which encourages you to spend some time with God each day in prayer and reflecting upon what the Scriptures might mean for you. This is Holy Week and you will have a chance to follow Jesus through the last week of his life. We hope you will join us for our Living Last Supper on Thursday at 7 PM and then we have two Good Friday worship services. The first is at noon at St. Mark's Episcopal Church down on Third Avenue. We'll have an evening service at 7:30 PM here in our sanctuary that I promise you will be powerful as we take the Christmas story and look at it in reverse.

Today we are going to take you to Jerusalem so you can see some of the places that tens of thousands of people will visit this week as they retrace the footsteps of Jesus. We also will look at several events in the last week of the life of Jesus which give us a picture of what it means to have Jesus as our King.

VIDEO Map with Mount of Olives

SLIDE Map – Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus

Let's begin with the map that you find in your bulletin this week. Each week we have been giving you a map and this week you have a map of Jerusalem from the time of Jesus. We think that Jerusalem had a population of approximately 40,000 people during the day of Jesus.

You will see the Mount of Olives on the right side of your map and then there is a valley which separates the Mount of Olives from the main city area of Jerusalem that you see is marked as the Kidron Valley. Jesus spent the last week of his life in this area as he begins a week on the backside of the Mount of Olives in a town called Bethany. You see the road leading the map on the right which would take you to that town.

On Palm Sunday he rides his donkey from the top of the Mount of Olives down the hill and across the Kidron Valley to the Temple Mount. He teaches in the Temple courts and possibly on the steps that you see leading up to the Temple every day that week. When he goes to pray on the last night of his life he goes over here to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. He is then taken back into Jerusalem to the house of Caiaphas which you see in the lower left part of your map in the Upper City Area. He is tried by the Sanhedrin and found guilty and sentenced to death.

Early the next morning he's taken through town to the Fortress Antonia, that you see at the top of the map just above the Temple Mount. It is there that he is sentenced by Pontius Pilate to die. He is taken from their outside the city walls to what we believe is the traditional site of Golgatha where Jesus is crucified on the left side of your map.

VIDEO Mount of Olives Journey (no audio—Jeff will narrate)

In this photo you can see a picture of the Mount of Olives taken from the Temple Mount. Jesus begins his journey from the top of the Mount of Olives in that area circled in red. He traveled down this way past what today is the chapel where remembered that Jesus wept overlooking the city of Jerusalem. He comes down the road and ends up here in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is praying when he is arrested. This is called the Church of his Agony which is adjacent to the garden. He then comes across the Kidron Valley and up the Temple Mount. The Temple is behind us in this photograph.

SLIDE Mount of Olives from Temple Mount (picture)

Remember that when Jesus is on the Mount of Olives and coming down the week before his death people are waving palm branches. Today there will be thousands of Christians on this hillside that you see in the video screen and they will be waving their palm branches as a way of remembering how the children cried out when Jesus came down the Mount of Olives shouting praises to the son

of David. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

SLIDE Temple Mount Panorama (picture)

On the video screen you will see a panorama picture of the city of Jerusalem as it looks today. The gold dome that we will get a close-up of here is the Muslim shrine that is the dome of the rock built on top of the place where the Temple used to be located.

SLIDE Dome of the Rock (picture)

Jesus taught in the Temple courts adjacent to this area Sunday night through Wednesday. On Thursday, after Jesus has supper with his disciples, he goes to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prays awaiting his arrest. You can see a picture of that place today on the video screen.

SLIDE Garden of Gethsemane (picture)

It is in this place that he agonizes and prays, "Father, take this cup from me, yet not my will but thy will be done." What you see in this picture are the olive trees which are part of the Grove at the Garden of Gethsemane. The giant tree that you see in this photo is over 2000 years old. It is possible that these olive trees were standing when Jesus was praying in that garden 2000 years ago. Next to this garden you will find the Church of Christ Agony.

SLIDE Church of Christ's Agony Exterior (picture)

SLIDE Church of Christ's Agony Ceiling (picture)

These two pictures will show you the Church of Christ's Agony, both the exterior and interior. The inside of the church is meant to take you in that moment when Christ is in agony the night before his arrest. The ceiling is filled with stars and the room is relatively dark. It is meant to feel like you are being taken back to that night. We are going to zoom in a little bit closer into the mosaic on the back wall which has a picture of Jesus kneeling on a rock.

SLIDE Church of Christ's Agony Mosaic (picture)

You can see at the bottom of this photograph Jesus kneeling and in prayer, agonizing over what is about to happen. Beneath this mosaic and in front of the altar is a rock outcropping.

SLIDE Church of Christ's Agony Interior (picture)

You can see the Rock of Agony in the foreground of the inside of the church. This is where Christians have gone since the earliest of times in the Christian faith to remember this event. Christians come to kneel around this place and touched the rock and connected himself with that story.

SLIDE Via-Dolorosa (picture)

On Friday, Jesus was taken before Pontius Pilate and he was sentenced to death. He was beaten and tortured and then he carried his cross down what is called the Via-Dolorosa to Calvary, the place where the cross was erected and Jesus was crucified, hanging there for six hours before he died. I thought you might see some video footage we have used in the past of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which is built on top of the place where they believe Jesus was crucified.

VIDEO Church of the Holy Sepulcher

This church was first built in the 300s and then rebuilt in the 500s. It was burned and rebuilt in the 1500s. When this church was destroyed it is one of the things that launched the Crusades from the Christians in Europe. As you come inside you walk up a series of steps to get to the top of what is Mount Calvary. You come to a place which was the top of the rock outcropping. This is an Orthodox chapel and here you can see the story lived out on the walls; Mary who was agonizing at her son's death, with Mary Magdalena on the right and Jesus hanging on the cross.

In the glass cases you can see the rocks on the top of Calvary and an altar has been built over the central place in the rock where it is thought that the cross was placed. People kneel underneath the altar so they can get the opening in the floor where you can put your hand down inside the circle. There you can touch the rock upon which it was said that the blood of Christ fell as he was hanging from the cross.

SLIDE Via Dolorosa Mosaic (picture)

We don't know if it happened right there or 15 yards away but it was very near this spot. When you visit these places this story becomes more than a myth and more than just stories that you learned as a child in Sunday school. This is why we are inviting you to join us on a trip to the holy land next year and why so many people pilgrimage there every year. That's what you would see if you are visiting the holy land this week.

All of these events point to one major theme and that is that Jesus was God's long-awaited King come to rule over his people. He was like any other King who might rule for 30 years or 40 if they were lucky. It was God's intention that Jesus would rule over the human race for all of humankind history and for eternity. He was a different kind of King and every part of the story was meant to point you towards his royalty and the kind of King that he would be. Let's recount a few of the events of that last week so we can see how Jesus was living out what it meant to be King, and how the people who came along his path would reinforce the idea that Jesus was King. We really want to ask an important question.

SLIDE What kind of King was Jesus?

What does it mean to follow Jesus as our King today? Let's first look at what was happening on that Palm Sunday which was really the Jewish Monday because it was the first day of the week. Their Sabbath was on Saturday and so people were already getting busy for work. This was an important week because it was the week of the Passover when 200,000 Jews would descend upon the holy city of Jerusalem to remember the Passover Seder. That means the population of the city grew by 500% during that week.

Jesus is in Bethany which is 2 miles from Jerusalem and he tells his disciples to go ahead to the town on the top of the Mount of Olives and find a donkey that is waiting there. This was a donkey that was a cold and had never been written and Jesus clearly had this animal ready for the disciples to bring him. The disciples go on ahead to find a donkey and this story is made to make us scratch our head a bit and wonder, "Why is Jesus riding a donkey?"

The truth is that Jesus never rode a donkey, at least not anywhere else in the Gospels. Jesus walked everywhere they went and doesn't ride a donkey until this moment. He has walked 90 miles from Galilee to Jerusalem so why did you want a donkey for the last half-mile? Why is he insisting on a donkey now in this place?

This was a political statement that Jesus was making and a theological statement as well. He was letting people know, "I am the Messiah. If you've wondered and you didn't know and you are uncertain or you never heard of me before, I want you to know here and now, today, that I am the long-awaited King that you have been waiting for."

Remember that Jesus has been preaching about the Kingdom of God for his entire ministry. He did preach about salvation and accepting him into our hearts. That's an important part of being a Christian, but trusting in Christ was not the central message of Jesus' teaching. His message was simple.

SLIDE The kingdom of God is at hand!

The kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God is within you. This is what the kingdom of God is like. Jesus invited people to repent and to follow God as their King. The earthly Kings in the day of Jesus were simply meant to be God's instrument, God's earthly physical presence, but God was always ultimately the King. Jesus comes as the crowned Prince, the Son of God, to proclaim that he is the King and to invite people to follow him.

Jesus asks for donkey because it was the animal that King David rode. King David was the greatest King Israel has ever known and he rode a donkey. He didn't ride a stallion but he rode a donkey because they were surefooted in the mountains and wilderness areas where he would do battle. Donkeys had more stamina than horses, but it also was meant to reflect humility since David was originally a Shepherd boy. Even King David's sons rode donkeys or mules. Everyone knew this in the first century, that all the King's the line of David rode a donkey or a mule.

The Jewish prophet Zachariah would foretell the day that a new King who was the Messiah would lead the people back into Jerusalem after the exile and he wrote these words. These words were written 500 years before the birth of Jesus in Zechariah 9:9.

SLIDE *9 Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt.*

So when Jesus asks for a donkey, everyone who was there to see Jesus who was the preacher, teacher and miracle worker from Nazareth, knew what this meant. He was claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah.

They responded as you would expect. They hailed him as the coming Messiah because they wanted someone to overthrow the Romans. They threw their cloaks on the ground in front of them, which is exactly what happened in the Old Testament when the king would come into Jerusalem. They began taking

Palm branches which they had in Jerusalem for the Passover feast when they swept out their homes. They brought their palms with them because the Palm was a sign of royalty and the sign of victory. The Romans and the Jews recognize this because they put on the back of their coins. Waving the Palm branch in the air was a sign of victory and so they did that and began shouting the words of Psalm 118 which every Jew had memorized and was used at the Feast of the Tabernacles and the Passover feast.

SLIDE ***9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" (NRSV)***

This Psalm was originally used in the Old Testament when the King would arrive back from a victorious battle. The people would cry out these words as an acclamation of victory over their enemies. Hosanna means, "Save us now," blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

The people are shouting this out and the Pharisees who were present, to Jesus and tell him that he should tell the people to be quiet. "Don't you know the Romans are here? If they see this then they will come and kill all of us."

Then Jesus says this to the Pharisees.

SLIDE ***"If these people were silent, the very rocks would cry out."***

The King of glory, the Son of God, was in their midst. They had to cry out, even if they didn't understand. People wave their Palm branches as Jesus rides into town because this is a royal procession and the return of the King.

The interesting backdrop is that on the very same day their most likely were two other triumphal entries into Jerusalem. Herod Antipas was the son of King Herod the Great and he ruled over the northern area which contained Galilee and the area today east known as Perea. He was coming into town for the Passover and he would have his soldiers and his chariot. He would have a crowd that would gather to watch them come in the town for the Royal Parade. People were excited to see the son of King Herod the Great and a whole group of people called the Herodians who believed that he should be King of the entire region. This parade would come from the North.

From the West would come Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman governor and ruler of Judea. He was coming from the southern part of the Holy Land with

1000 Roman troops that day. They were marching from his Palace in Caesarea to Jerusalem to keep the peace during the Passover. The Passover was a time when people remembered that they were once slaves and God set them free out of Egypt. They were praying that God would do it again and that God would set them free from the dreaded Romans, so the Romans would come in showing how strong they were and how futile it was to resist them. They would arrive with their chariots and horses and banners. As they rode through Jerusalem their message was very clear, "If you dare rebel against us, you will be crushed."

So on this same day, or within a day, you would have Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist riding into Jerusalem with his soldiers from one direction and then Pontius Pilate riding with his soldiers from another direction. Then you have Jesus, with a ragtag band of misfits riding on a donkey. They are waiving their Palm branches as Jesus is coming down from the Mount of Olives, claiming to be the King.

Jesus is claiming to be King not just for the people of his day, but for us today as well. This whole story is about that and the question that we are meant to ask as people of faith some 2000 years later is this.

SLIDE Who's King in your life?

My first roommate in college was a huge Bob Dylan fan and he sang this in a song,

*You may be an ambassador to England or France
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls
But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody*

Jesus makes a claim on this day that he is our King and we are his people, the ones who seek to be his presence in the world. We see what kind of King Jesus is on this ride down into Jerusalem because as he comes about halfway down the Mount of Olives, he stops and he begins to weep. Everybody is excited and happy and waiting Palm branches, so why is Jesus weeping? Why are you crying Jesus?

Luke records this in chapter 19 and tells us what Jesus says when he is crying as he looked over the city of Jerusalem.

SLIDE ***1 But as they came closer to Jerusalem and Jesus saw the city ahead, he began to weep. 42 "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. 43 Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. 44 They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation."***

Jesus is saying that he has come to show us God's way and how we can be a part of God's kingdom. He showed them that you don't fight against the Romans with the sword because they will crush you. You love them. You love your enemies and you seek to be faithful in the confines of this occupied territory. One day you will wear them down by your capacity to suffer and love.

That's what the Rev. Martin Luther King Junior said when he talked about loving those who oppressed African-Americans in this country in the 1950s and 1960s. "We are going to love you and keep on loving you and we are going to wear you down by our capacity to suffer. You can bomb our churches and kill our children and we will still love you because one day we will win the battle. Your hearts will be changed by our suffering and our capacity to love. We will have won a double victory, for us and for you as you become our friends and are changed from the inside out."

This is exactly what Jesus was saying in telling people to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. Jesus knew that they were not going to follow his way and they would reject him as their King. They were going to reject the kingdom that he offered and he knew it. Because they rejected the kingdom that he offered, over the next 36 years, there would be rebel after rebel who would rise up to lead a Jewish army against the Romans. They tried to fight the Romans with violence until the great revolt in 66 A.D. when the Jews took over a Roman garrison. They had some meaningful victories early on with two would be messiahs, but then Rome fought back.

The Romans sent the fifth Roman legion and then the tenth Roman legion and the 12th Roman legion and the 15th Roman legion. They sent 60,000 troops

and for the next 3 1/2 years they destroyed the Holy Land. They couldn't get in the city of Jerusalem right away and so they created ramparts around the walls of the city. They kept food and water from getting in and they slaughtered anyone who tried to escape.

Finally, in August of 70 A.D. they penetrated the city walls and they killed 1 million Jews. As a percentage of the Jewish population there were more people slaughtered in that onslaught than under Hitler and Nazi Germany in the 1940s. 90,000 of them were taken back his slaves to Rome and the words that Jesus foretold as he wept over Jerusalem came true. He could see that this was coming because they would follow his path and he wept for them.

It's interesting because the world hasn't changed really that much as it? We have to decide which kind of King we are going to follow. There is always a Pontius Pilate somewhere and there is always a Herod Antipas and there is always a Caesar. We commit acts of violence against one another on every continent and it doesn't seem like any community is safe when you see a gang rape in a small Ohio town and slaughter of innocent children in a suburban Connecticut village. We have been reading about tension in North Korea and escalations in Syria. I saw the young man who killed three of his friends at his high school was sentenced to life in prison without parole and he proudly wore a shirt that said, "Killer."

Do you see what kind of world we live in? As we have been planning this trip to the Holy Land, some of you have wondered if it is safe to go and I can't say that I haven't thought about safety, especially with two younger children. Seems like most days we read about tension between Israel and one of its bordering countries such as Iran. As the tension mounted between these two countries over the past year there have been attempts by citizens in each country to reach out. Maybe you have seen some of these like this man from Israel.

VIDEO Ronny Edry – We Love You

SLIDE Who's King in your life?

You could look at this and say, "He's just a naïve man really. There is an existential threat against our people. This is a naïve approach and not very realistic." The realists will tell you why you need to respond differently. The reality is that I believe there are times when we need to use force to protect somebody in order to keep them safe. But most of the time that we take up arms or use force it's because we have convinced ourselves that we need to do that.

Afterwards we sometimes say, "Maybe we didn't need to do that. Maybe there was another way." There is no doubt in my mind that many lives have been lost and many resources have been spent they didn't need to be in our past.

I guess Jesus was just one of those naïve people because he said that for the human race to survive, we have to figure out how to love our enemies. Sometimes we will suffer, but eventually you will defeat them by the power of love. That was Jesus' message as King as he was coming down the mountain that day. Once again I ask, "Who's King of your life?"

Let's quickly look at the rest of the week. Mark tells us that on Monday Jesus went back to the temple to preach. He showed us that he was a King who hated bad religion. The court of the Gentiles which was the outer court of the Temple and was the place where you and I would go to pray since we are not Jewish was filled with shopkeepers. They were exchanging money and selling stuff. People ask me if that was like the bookstore or the bake sale that we do out in our atrium sometimes, but it wasn't like that at all.

When you came to the city of Jerusalem and to the Temple you were supposed to pay the Temple tax. The Temple tax had to be paid with the Temple Shekel and most people didn't carry that which meant they needed to change their money when they came to the Temple courts. In the place where people were supposed to be able to pray, there were people changing money so that people could bring in their Temple tax. The problem wasn't the exchange but the fact that the exchange rate was a very good and those moneychangers were making a hefty profit.

You also were supposed to bring a sacrifice when he came to the Temple and if you are poorer than you would bring a pigeon. The pigeons should've been sold for one day's wages outside of the Temple courts but William Barclay suggests that those within the Temple courts were charging 20 days wages for pigeon. So why would anybody buy a pigeon in the Temple courts if they cost so much? The reason was because the priest said that the sacrifice had to be perfect and without blemish and the only place you could get a perfect pigeon was within the Temple courts and so once again they were making a hefty profit. The priest would literally not receive an offering of a pigeon or a Shekel unless it was exchanged within the Temple courts. You had to buy a certified pigeon and it was the poor who were paying the most and getting ripped off as they enter into the Temple courts.

Not only were the merchants making lots of money but they had to pay the high priest to supervise all of this and so Caiaphas was also getting wealthy on the backs of the poor because of what was happening in the Temple courts. Jesus walks in and he is so angry with this bad religion that he takes a whip and he begins to drive out the moneychangers and those who were selling pigeons. This is one of the few times in the Gospels that you find Jesus angry and he literally screams in rage because these moneychangers are pushing away the least and the poor from God. They are ripping people off in the name of God and Jesus hates bad religion.

Bad religion didn't just exist in first century Judaism. It also exists in 21st-century Christianity and sometimes we are a part of it. On Tuesday Jesus goes on to condemn hypocrisy in the scribes and the Pharisees, because they are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the outside but on the inside they are full of filth and dead man's bones. Even in our own lives we have to ask this question. Are we modeling the kind of Christianity that Jesus wanted us to model or is our Christianity so filled with hypocrisy that people are pushed away?

We pastors make our money preaching the gospel and in some ways we are making money off of this story. I struggle with this which is why our family makes a commitment to tithe, so I can keep my head on straight and not practice that religion. I don't do what I do because I get money for it, but I do it because Christ calls me and so I have to make sure that money is the right place in my life. Sometimes that is a hard thing for all of us.

Integrity is about the outside in the inside matching up and that's difficult for all of us. I think of pastors and priests who have abused others in the name of God and said to women and children that it's God's will for them to have this strange and twisted relationship. I think of televangelists who promised to work a miracle in your life if you will send them enough money. The prayer request cards come in and they go in the trash and the money is deposited in the bank and they get to drive big cars and live in big houses.

Jesus is the kind of King who hates bad religion, because he wants to bring people to God and not push them away. Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom of God which he represents and he longs to invite others into that.

Wednesday evening Jesus is going to have his last meal that is a freebie. On Thursday the menu is set because it is the Passover meal but on Wednesday he

can go wherever he wants. If you had one last supper to eat, where would you go? I would go to PF Chang's Chinese bistro and have lettuce wraps with spicy chicken and chocolate molten cake for dessert. I would want my family to come with me and I would want to be with my best friends. Even if it was my second to last meal I would want that.

But what do you think Jesus does? He goes two miles into the town of Bethany and eats with a man named Simon who was a leper. You might remember that last week we learned that lepers were outcasts and they were considered unclean. They were nobodies and Jesus chooses to eat with a nobody who was untouchable for the last free meal that he got to eat. At that meal, while he is eating, a woman walks into the room. Matthew and Mark don't tell us her name but John tells us that she is the sister of Lazarus, who was raised from the dead by Jesus. She is carrying a tiny alabaster flask and what is inside of it is alabaster oil which is probably worth a year's wages. This is a peasant woman who brings the most valuable thing that she has, maybe thinking she was even going to save it for her own wedding. She opens up the jar and she pours the scented oil on the head of Jesus. In the first century, that would've been considered a beautiful gift.

Some of those gathered turn to Jesus and said, "Why did you let her do that? You could've sold that jar and had the money given to the poor."

Jesus tells them, "Don't take away from the beautiful thing that she is doing. She has prepared me for my burial. You always have the poor with you that you can help and serve, but this was something beautiful she did for me on this day. Don't cheat her out of that gift."

In the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament, when someone was made King, God would send the prophet to the person that God had chosen and they would open up a flask of oil and pour that on the head of the one who is being chosen by God. This was a sign that God had chosen this person.

SLIDE Christ = "Anointed One" = Messiah

The word Christ in the Greek means "anointed one," as does the word Messiah in Hebrew. Typically the King would be anointed by the high priest or the prophet who were all men, but when Jesus is anointed king by God, notice who God sends. God sends a woman who might have been a prostitute and certainly was a peasant. She gives her very best to anoint Jesus as King. Jesus comes in as

King on the donkey. He is anointed in this place with oil by a woman who was a nobody in a leper's house.

On Thursday, Jesus eats the Passover Seder with his disciples. At this meal we learn a bit more about what kind of King Jesus is going to be. While he is eating the Passover Seder with his disciples, he takes the bread and breaks it and says, "The unleavened bread that we eat to celebrate our freedom from slavery in Egypt is now my body broken for you. Whenever you eat this remember the life that I have sacrificed for you."

Jesus then takes one of the 4 cups from the Seder meal and he lifts it and says, "This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of your sins."

What kind of King is Jesus? He is a King who forgives sins and gives himself. Also remember that he gets down on his knees at that supper and he washes his disciple's feet. The lowest slaves in any house were the ones who washed the feet of those who came in the front door and Jesus was taking that position as he takes the feet of his disciples in his hands and washes the dust from them.

What kind of King is Jesus? He is the kind of King who teaches that the great will become servants. To be truly great doesn't mean that you are the best and he didn't stand up in front of everyone, but instead you always see yourself in humility, serving other people. This is what it means to be authentically human and to be one of his followers.

Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane and he is honest about not wanting to go through the agony and suffering any praise, "Father, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but thy will be done." In this moment he teaches us what it means to be fully human and fully a follower of Jesus Christ. We have taught you the Wesley version of this prayer and we give you these cards to carry around in your wallet or your purse in which we pray,

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

This is how John Wesley captured that prayer that Jesus was praying in that last week of his life. This is the prayer of a Christian every morning when we wake up and say, "Not my will but thy will be done. Do with me what you want oh God today."

After his friend betrays him for 30 pieces of silver, Jesus is arrested. He is tried by the Sanhedrin which is headed up by Caiaphas, the high priest. He wants to make sure he continues to make his money off of what is happening in the Temple courts. They have to have Jesus killed before the next day, when the Passover formally begins. That date is like the three weeks before Christmas in the United States when everybody comes to buy their last-minute Christmas gifts and he determines whether or not you have a good year as a retailer. Caiaphas and his other priests may lose hundreds of thousands of dollars if Jesus keeps people out of the Temple courts and keeps making a scene by turning over tables.

Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate whose job it is to guarantee that justice is done in the land and that the peace is, even though he knows that Jesus is innocent. He pronounces a sentence upon Jesus and tell the guards to torture him and then kill them, like we do the other common criminals in the Roman Empire.

Jesus is beaten nearly to death and you might remember that the whips have bone and metal attached to the end of them, so when they whip him and tears off pieces of flesh. They put a purple garment around him which is the color of the King. They coronate him with a crown of thorns.

What is this King like? This is a King who suffers for his people. He is mocked by those who don't understand and by those who rebel against him. With the crown of thorns on his brow, they tell him to carry his cross. It is a half a mile from the place where he is sentenced to the place where he will be crucified on Calvary.

I have taught you before that the Roman crosses in the first century were actually made of two beams. The vertical beam is called the *stipes* in the horizontal beam is called the *tibulum*. The criminals were required to carry the tibulum which weighed around 75 pounds. Jesus, who is been beaten nearly to death, carried it as long as he could until he couldn't carry it anymore because he was weak from the beating he taken. Simon of Cyrene, a man in the crowd, was forced to carry it for in the rest of the way. They finally arrive at Calvary.

The cross was then assembled by the Roman soldiers. They would lash the tibulum to the stipes and there was a sign at the top of this cross which told everyone that this was, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." This was a crime that he committed, claiming to be the King of the Jews.

His hands would've been nailed into the cross and as we learned in the past, his feet would've been nailed into the sides, one on either side of the cross. They hoisted the cross up into the air and with the cross only being six or 7 feet tall, you could look into the face in the eyes of the person who is being crucified. It was positioned into the rock outcropping and in those moments Jesus would feel the weight of his own body pulling upon his wounds. They put this block of wood in the middle of the upright section of the cross to tempt the victim to sit on it and rest and in so doing it would cause excruciating pain. You see, the Romans had this form of torture perfected.

Jesus hung in this position for six hours, our Lord crucified.

When I look at the cross, this is what I see. Some people see a mathematical equation. They talk about the death of Jesus, minus my sin, equals salvation. Some people look at it as economics at how Jesus paid the price for our sin. All of those are ways of thinking about the cross, but when I look at the cross I see a divine drama, in which God is acting out for us the truth about who we are and about who God is and what God offers to us. It is a drama in which Jesus is not play acting, because it is real blood which is shed on the cross.

When I look at the cross, the first thing I see is a mirror which is held up to us as human beings. It's an indictment upon the human race that tells us that when God, the King of the universe, walked among us, this is what we did. The most religious and pious people participated in this and who's to say that you wouldn't have been in the crowd as well shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him"? I'm certain that I probably would have been because we all get caught up in the mob mentality.

We are meant to look at this and recognize that in our own lives there is something that is broken, which is why we hurt other people. It is why we get caught up in materialism and greed. It is why we are in regular need of God's grace and forgiveness. The cross is first a mirror into our own souls.

Finally, the cross is a profound statement from God who says, "I am willing to suffer for you. I am the kind of King who will take upon myself the pain of the

sins of this world in order to offer you grace and mercy, forgiveness, freedom and salvation."

When I look at the cross what I see is the love of God that is meant to wash over us and hit us like an emotional storm, especially in those moments where we feel most alone and isolated. The cross is meant to remind us that the worst thing in our lives will never be the last thing in our lives, even death. I can't help but say, ***"What wondrous love is this, who caused the Lord of bliss, to lay aside his crown, for my soul."***

I can't look at the cross this week without recognizing that it's for me. I look at the cross and I hear the grace and love of Jesus Christ, and I am moved to recommit my life to him. That's what I want to invite you to do now as we close in prayer.

I would like to lead you in a prayer and I don't want you to close your eyes. I want you to look at the cross. As we together look at the cross, if these words reflect what you were feeling today, I would invite you to simply say them quietly to the Lord under your breath. As you look at the cross and you remember the King who was crucified, you might say these words.

SLIDE Prayer (picture of cross for this prayer time)

Thank you oh God for loving me.

Thank you Jesus Christ, for bearing the cross for me.

Forgive me and heal me.

Help me to follow you as my King, to live as you lived, to love as you love.

Jesus, I hail you as my King.

Save us.

In your holy name. Amen.

“The Final Week in Jerusalem”

Theme: The Way: Walking In the Footsteps of Jesus

Scripture: Mark 11:7-10

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

Meditation Moments for Monday, March 25 – Read Luke 19:28-20:8 – Most of us see donkeys as nothing special, even a bit comical. In Jesus' day, a donkey was a royal mount. Kings or generals only rode horses in war; when they came in peace, they rode a donkey. Jesus' ride into Jerusalem used symbols from Israel's history (see 1 Kings 1:38-40, Psalm 118:19-29) and from prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures (see Zechariah 9:9-17).

- Jesus' followers rejoiced, but Luke wrote that Jesus wept for Jerusalem. He said the city's people were blind to what would bring them peace. The attitudes driving the leaders to plot his death would lead to Rome's brutal destruction of the city. Like them we live in a world of cause and effect. Open your heart to God and ask, "What attitudes do I have that will keep me from having your peace if I don't change them?"
- The religious leaders tried to discredit Jesus by asking about authority. Their authority was based on human credentials and contacts. If Jesus came today, from a small town with no significant degree or denominational credentials, would you listen to and accept him? Without devaluing human learning or belonging, what does it take to let the Holy Spirit be the final authority and guide in your heart?

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, what joy it must have been to wave palms and dream of a good life with you as king! Give me a heart that sings your praises and prizes your rule in my life. Amen*

Tuesday, March 26 – Read Matthew 21:28-46 – Jesus told two “vineyard” stories to challenge his listeners' thinking about their submission to God. In the first, a father told two sons to work in the vineyard. He got a “no” that became yes, and a “yes” that became no. In the second story, a vineyard owner rented his vineyard to tenants and took a trip. When it was time to pay what they owed, the tenants refused to submit to the owner's authority. They beat and killed his messengers—and finally the owner's son. Matthew said the religious leaders “knew Jesus was talking about them.”

- Jesus' first story contrasted a son who talked a good game, saying he'd work but then not doing so, with a son who eventually did what his father asked. In what areas, if any, are you aware of a need to grow toward greater authenticity in your spiritual life? Ask God for the courage to be honest about your life with yourself, others, and God.
- 2000 years later, it is easy to look down on the religious leaders of Jesus' time—they refused to submit even in the presence of God in the flesh. What have the authority figures in your life been like? How have your experiences with them affected your ability to trust and submit to Jesus? How are you responding to, or resisting, Jesus' call on your life?

Prayer: *Loving Lord, help me to always believe and trust in you. Amen*

Wednesday, March 20 – Read Mark 14:1-9, John 12:1-9 – Though some details in these two stories differ, their essence is the same: in the last week of his life, a grateful woman anointed Jesus with very expensive perfume. Some

criticized her extravagant act of gratitude, but Jesus staunchly defended her. He knew the cross waited at the end of the week, and said Mary had anointed him in advance of his burial.

- Imagine the deep love and gratitude that led Mary to give Jesus this extravagant gift. What does Jesus' response tell you about how much her fervent love meant to him as he faced death? How can you show your love for Jesus, both in your inner "sacred space" and outwardly, with Mary's beautiful spontaneity and urgency?
- "Leave her alone," Jesus said to those who criticized Mary's act of worship. Are you ever tempted to criticize the way someone else praises or serves God? How can this story help you move beyond a critical spirit, and to value the uniqueness of each giver and each heartfelt gift?

Prayer: O Lord, grow in me a heart like Mary's, pouring out devotion and gratitude to you. Replace any critical, selfish corners in my spirit. I love you. I thank you for the gift of new life in you. Amen

Thursday, March 27 – Read Mark 14:10-50 – Jesus hope-filled words changed that Passover into the Lord's Supper we still observe. As he prayed after the meal he struggled with the awful suffering just ahead. Crucially, he prayed, "Not what I want but what you want."

- **How can Jesus' example, and the Holy Spirit's presence, help you look beyond the often painful facts of this life to the greater reality of God's world? How can that kind of hope give you more strength and energy for today's challenges?**
- **We all face situations in life that seems unbearable. What do Jesus' prayers as he faced the cross teach you about the value of honestly facing and voicing your feelings in those times of anguish? What is helping you learn to say, "Not what I want but what you want"? Be sure to join as at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary for a powerful "Living Last Supper" Maundy Thursday Service.**

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you held firm hope, and you also pleaded with God for a different way. Help me trust that even in my darkest, most painful moments you are listening, and offering me hope. Amen

Friday, March 28 – Read John 19:4-37 – On the cross Jesus tenderly gave his mother to the care of "the disciple whom he loved." He said he was thirsty, and John noted that a hyssop branch (a Passover symbol) carried the red sour wine (or vinegar) drink. Then Jesus said, with spiritual as well as physical significance, "It is completed"—and it was.

- How does Jesus and Pilate's dialogue contrast external power with inner spiritual strength? How did Jesus nurture and build up the inner strength that upheld him on that awful Friday? Like Pilate, we have to choose between pleasing a human power (even social or family pressure) and doing what's right. What gives you the moral strength to do the right thing?
- If a spiritually unresolved friend asked, "What was completed when Jesus died?" how would you answer? In what ways do you internalize the meaning of Jesus' death for you? If you can, join in the **Good Friday Reverse Advent service tonight at 7:30 p.m.** and spend some quiet time reflecting on how Jesus' death on the cross affects your life today.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you faced the worst of human betrayal and hypocrisy, yet you didn't become a victim. You forgave. Change my heart, and grow in me your ability to love and forgive. Amen.

Saturday, March 29 – Read Matthew 27:57-66, John 19:38 –Matthew listed the futile steps the religious leaders and Pilate took to keep Jesus in his tomb. John 18 links this story to Genesis 2 by focusing on the "garden" Jesus prayed in. John 19 returns to that image. In Genesis 2, human life began in a garden. John said Jesus' (and our) resurrection life would also begin in a garden—this was humanity made new, creation corrected.

- Luke 23:50-52 named Joseph of Arimathea as one Jerusalem leader who did not agree to killing Jesus. John added a last glimpse of Nicodemus, who met Jesus in John 3. As you see how God used even the timid loyalty of Joseph and Nicodemus, can you trust that God can use whatever you have to offer to God's service? The men's fear looks very different to us than it did to them on that Saturday—because we know what came next. How can hope based on Jesus' resurrection alter your view of even the most heart-breaking situations?

Prayer: Dear God, it's been hard to read the descriptions of Jesus' last hours. As we move to Easter worship, help me to fully grasp the joy of the resurrection because I have felt the sorrow of the crucifixion. Amen.

Family Activity: Many people were cruel to Jesus during the last week of his life on earth. He consistently responded with love and forgiveness toward the people who were hurting him. As a family, share some of your favorite stories about Jesus. What words would you use to describe Jesus in those stories? Review the events of the Final Week together and explore Jesus' responses in them. How would you describe Jesus in those times? What

qualities does Jesus faithfully display throughout his life? Choose one or two characteristics of Jesus your family can develop. What steps will your family take to grow more Christ-like? Pray and ask God to help you become more like Jesus.