

Monday

Matthew 21:1–11

When Jesus and his disciples were coming to Jerusalem, he sent two disciples ahead of him with a special job. They were to go to the village and find a donkey and her colt. Then they were to bring the donkey colt to Jesus.

Jesus told the disciples if anyone asked them what they were doing, they should say, “The Lord needs it.” Then the people would know that the colt was needed for a very special purpose. In fact, this happened to fulfill a prophecy from hundreds of years before, found in the book of Zechariah. Long before (about 500 years), the prophet Zechariah had written that a king would ride into Jerusalem, mounted on a donkey. Jesus was that king.

The disciples found the donkey and the colt and brought the colt back to Jesus. Then they put their coats and cloaks on the colt. Jesus sat on their clothes on top of the little donkey and began to ride toward Jerusalem. All along the way, people spread their coats on the road as well. When the ran out of outer clothing to put down, others cut branches from nearby trees and put the branches on the road with the coats and cloaks. As this happened, the people shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” and “Hosanna in the highest!” Hosanna means “save us.”

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people of the city were amazed by the excited crowd. “Who is this?” the people asked. The crowds who were following Jesus answered, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus is the great Savior, and King that God had promised for his people. The people were right to worship and praise Jesus. And as our King and Savior, Jesus deserves our trust, our praise, and our worship too.

- **What did Zechariah prophesy was going to happen in Jerusalem?**
- **What did the crowds of people do for Jesus as he entered Jerusalem?**
- **If Jesus is our Savior and King, how should we treat him?**

Tuesday
Matthew 22:34–39

Many years after God gave the Ten Commandments to his people, God sent his Son to earn forgiveness for every commandment we break because of our sinfulness and also to keep every commandment in our place.

On Tuesday of the week when Jesus would be killed, he spent the entire day teaching. He taught several parables. He taught about Judgment Day and heaven and faith. One man, who didn't like Jesus and didn't agree with Jesus, wanted to try and trick him. He asked Jesus a question. He asked which of the commandments was the greatest. Jesus was not tricked. He gave an excellent answer to the man's question. Jesus summarized all of the Ten Commandments and said the greatest commandment is to love God with all you are and have and to love your neighbor as yourself. The commandments are about love.

Jesus lived a perfect life of love and he died for our lack of love. Jesus showed true love to the world when he lived and died for each of us – in our place to save us.

- **Talk about the ways you can show love either to God or another person.**

Dear Jesus, thank you for being God's sign of love, my Savior. Help me to follow you. Amen.

Wednesday

Matthew 26:17–29

On the night before Jesus died on the cross to save us, he gathered his disciples around him for a special meal. This special meal was the Passover meal. It celebrated the time when the Israelites were living as slaves in Egypt. God had his people put blood from a lamb on the entrance to their homes. The angel passed over the homes on which the blood of the lamb had been spread and saved all those inside.

Jesus is the new Passover lamb. And as Jesus ate with his disciples that night, he began a new type of Passover meal. We call it the Lord's Supper. When Jesus gave the disciples bread that he had broken, he said, "Take, eat, this is my body." When he gave them wine to drink, he said, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood." Jesus told the disciples to celebrate his special meal and remember his great love for them – a love that moved Jesus to suffer and die on the cross, a love that brings forgiveness of sins.

- **Have a conversation about the Lord's Supper. Children ask adults what Holy Communion means to them.**

Dear God, thank you for assuring us of our forgiveness in Holy Communion. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday

Luke 19:28–38; 22:7–20

On the first day of the week, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Many people in Jerusalem were happy to see Jesus, and they wanted him to be their king. They waved palm branches and put their coats on the ground so that Jesus could ride the donkey over them. As Jesus went by, they rejoiced and praised God, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Later that week, on Thursday, it was time to celebrate the Passover meal. This was a feast where the Jews celebrated how God had saved them from Egypt many years before. It was their most important holiday. So Jesus asked Peter and John to prepare a room so that he could eat the Passover meal with his disciples. To do this, Jesus told them to enter the city gate and follow a man carrying a water jar. He would lead them to the right home with a large upstairs room. They would prepare the meal in that room.

That night, as Jesus and his disciples ate the meal together, Jesus told his disciples that he wanted to eat this Passover meal with them before he suffered and died. Then Jesus took bread and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And they ate the bread together.

Then Jesus took a cup of wine from the table and said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” A covenant is a very special promise. God had made a covenant with his people early in the Old Testament, but the people were always breaking it. The prophets had promised a new covenant. Now Jesus was saying that he was making that new covenant. His body would be wounded, and his blood would flow so the sins of his people could be forgiven. They would live forever with God under the new covenant. So the disciples drank the wine of the new covenant for the first time.

In the Lord's Supper, Jesus is really present, and we remember what Jesus did for us as he was sacrificed in our place.

- **Why was the Passover meal important to the Jewish people?**
- **Why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper today?**

Close with prayer

Friday

Matthew 26:36–27:66

Knowing he would soon die on the cross for our sins, Jesus prayed all night long the night before in the Garden of Gethsemane. In great agony, he asked his Father in heaven, "If it is possible, let this cup be taken from me." "Nevertheless," Jesus said, "not my will, but your will be done."

When the early morning hours came, a great crowd arrived with swords and clubs. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, was among the crowd. He betrayed Jesus with a kiss on the cheek, indicating that he was the one the Jewish leaders were looking for. Soldiers in the crowd seized and arrested Jesus, and the rest of his disciples ran away in fear.

The angry crowd took Jesus to the high priest's house. The Jewish leaders did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Instead, they thought Jesus was a false teacher, and they wanted to put him to death.

They had no authority, however, to put Jesus to death. So they took him to Pilate, the ruler of the region. Pilate, as a government official, had the authority to put people to death for crimes committed. The Jewish leaders told Pilate that Jesus was a troublemaker and a criminal, who had lied and broken Jewish laws.

Pilate believed that Jesus was innocent, but he was afraid of the people. Pilate wanted to be liked by the people. Then he had an idea. It was a Jewish feast day, a holiday, and it was customary for him as the governor to let one Jewish prisoner go free. Pilate brought out Jesus and another prisoner named Barabbas, who was a murderer and a thief. Pilate asked the people, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"

The Jewish leaders convinced the crowd to ask Pilate to free Barabbas instead of Jesus and to have Jesus killed. So the people shouted that they wanted Barabbas!

"Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked.

"Crucify him!" the crowd shouted.

So Pilate let his soldiers put a robe on Jesus and treat him cruelly. They twisted together some thorny branches into a crown and placed it on his head and then hit him beat him with whips. They made fun of Jesus, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spit in his face. Then Pilate let the soldiers take Jesus away and nail him to a cross. There he hung between two criminals. All of this obviously hurt Jesus terribly, but this is what he needed to come and do – to die on a cross to take the punishment for our sin.

Jesus hung on the cross from early morning in great agony. Finally in the middle of the afternoon, the sky grew completely dark and the ground quaked. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, then it was finished. He died. The soldiers watching Jesus felt the earthquake and saw rocks split. They were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Then Jesus' friends came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Jesus' disciples and friends and family were very sad. They did not understand yet that Jesus died on the cross for a purpose, to save his people from their sins. They did not understand this was not the end of the story. Jesus would not stay dead. After three days, on Easter morning, he would come back to life!

Jesus died on the cross in our place because he loves us very, very much. Because Jesus suffered and died and rose again, God forgives our sins through faith in Jesus and his sacrifice, and we will live with him in heaven someday.

• **When Jesus died on the cross, was that the end of the story or the end of Jesus?**

• **What was God's reason for letting Jesus be crucified?**

Saturday
Mark 15:1–16:8

Early Good Friday morning, the chief priests took Jesus to the governor, Pilate. They accused Jesus of many bad things, but Pilate did not find anything that Jesus had done wrong. So Pilate had an idea of how to free Jesus. At Passover time every year, he always released one Jewish prisoner and let them go free. Pilate asked the crowd if they wanted Jesus set free. But the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd to ask for another prisoner instead – a murderer named Barabbas. Pilate asked them what he should do with Jesus, and they cried out, “Crucify him!”

“Why, what evil has he done?” Pilate asked, but the crowd yelled even more loudly, “Crucify him!”

Wanting to please the crowd, Pilate set Barabbas free. Then Pilate had the soldiers whip Jesus, and sent him away to be crucified.

Before they crucified Jesus, though, the soldiers taunted Jesus and made fun of him. They put a purple robe on him so that he looked like a foolish king. They twisted together a crown of thorns and pushed it onto his head. They laughed at Jesus, and they spat on him, and the pretended to bow down to him.

Finally, they led Jesus out to be crucified. When they reached a place called Golgotha, the soldiers nailed Jesus’ hands and feet to the cross. They put a sign on the cross that said, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” They crucified two robbers at the same time, one on each side of Jesus. Then they took all of Jesus’ clothing and divided it among themselves.

While Jesus hung there, people made fun of him. For three hours in the afternoon, the sky went totally dark. Finally, Jesus called out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Then he made a loud cry, breathed his last breath, and died on the cross.

A man named Joseph took Jesus’ body down, wrapped it in a cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut out of a rocky hill side.

Early on Sunday morning, the third day since Jesus had died, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body with potpourris spices. They asked each other, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”

When they got there, they were surprised to find that the stone had already been rolled away! They looked inside the tomb and were frightened by an angel in a white robe! The angel told them not to be afraid. He told them, “You seek Jess of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, he paid the price for the sins of the world. Those who trust in him are no longer separated from God by their sin. When Jesus rose from the dead, he proved that he is God’s Son and he opened heaven for all who believe him.

- **What did the crowd tell Pilate to do to Jesus?**
- **What did Jesus do to open heaven to us?**