

Holy Week Fireside Chat – Were You There?

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That first Holy Week was an unsettling time. It was filled with high highs and low lows. The crowds went from shouting Hosanna to Crucify Him in just 5 days. The disciples were anxious. They had been anxious about going into Jerusalem to begin with. They were fearful about the political situation. Jesus kept warning them that he would die there – that had to be unsettling! But they still didn't get it, couldn't accept it, that Jesus was going to be killed. They didn't want to believe or acknowledge that death was coming

We are in a time of anxiety. We don't know what to think, how to act, how to feel. Emotions run highs and lows. We're happy to have some free time, yet we worry about what is to come. There are predictions of many deaths coming. Political leaders have warned us that this would be a difficult week where many people will die. We don't want to believe it or accept it. Jesus' words and actions toward his disciples that Holy Week are probably more relevant for us now than ever. **What did Jesus do that first Holy Week?**

He washed his disciples' feet – which was an act of service. It was a way of showing love and care and a way of modeling how he wanted them to reach out in love and care to others. Mary had washed his feet with perfume and dried them with her hair, a few days earlier. Now Jesus washed his disciple's feet. It is when we show our love and care for others that it lifts them up so they are able to pass on that love and care to others.

Jesus Instituted Holy Communion

It was a meal, the Passover meal. A place of receiving nourishment. A place of fellowship. Jesus came to his disciples with a tangible way to connect with him, bread and wine, his body and blood, a way to be fully present even after he had gone.

Right now we can't physically be together to celebrate communion. This is a time of fasting from this sacrament. We miss it. It will be all the more powerful when we can come together again and share in communion together.

Both Judas and Peter participated in it. Judas was soon to betray Jesus and Peter was soon to deny him. Yet Jesus included them in that holy meal. It is a reminder that in the sacrament of Holy Communion, God comes to us. God makes the promises. In the sacraments we know tangibly that we are loved and forgiven by God.

Jesus gave a new commandment – Love one another! The word “Maundy” (in Maundy Thursday) comes from the same root word as “commandment.” Jesus told his disciples. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

The love that Jesus showed to his disciples and the people he encountered day to day, is a model for us. He wants us to show that love to the people in our lives. Love is to be the way that people know we are followers of Jesus. We are called to be sources of love in this world. We are called to let the love of God flow through us and love as Jesus loved.

Jesus prayed for his disciples. He prayed not only for the disciples who were with him, but also for those who would believe based on their testimony. That’s us! On the night before he was crucified, Jesus prayed for you and me.

Jesus prayed for himself – “Take this cup from me, but not my will but your will be done.” God said “No” to Jesus’ prayer. God knew what was best for all people and knew that Jesus had come to die so that the world might be saved. Since God said “no” to Jesus’ prayer, is it any surprise that sometimes his answer to our prayer is “no”?

Then Jesus faced those who came to arrest him. He acted with quiet resolve and dignity.

From the cross in the midst of agony, he promised the thief on the cross “today you will be with me in paradise.” From the cross he prayed “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” From the cross he arranged for the apostle John to take Jesus’ mother, Mary, into his home and care for her.

From the cross he also drew on the words of Psalm 22 – “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus felt alone on that cross. Jesus felt separated from God. But that psalm ends up praising God’s faithfulness. As Jesus was feeling alone, he trusted God’s faithfulness.

In this time when we are more alone and separated than ever, it is important to remember that God is with us, even when we don’t notice God with us, even when it feels like we are totally alone. God gave Jesus the strength to make it through his crucifixion, and God brought Jesus from death into life.

As Christians, we too, trust in God to walk with us through all the suffering in this life, and ultimately to welcome us into the next. That was the whole point of Holy Week – Jesus’ death so that we might be forgiven and live forever with him. That was the whole

point of Jesus' coming to earth – for us to see God in human form, to have an example of what God's love looks like when living in a human body.

So this Holy Week, as we are more anxious than usual, as we feel more separated and alone than usual, as we worry about what the future may hold, this is a time to trust God, to know that God is walking with us each step of the way and to live our lives as God's people, letting God's love flow through us.

I encourage you to **read your Bible this week**, especially the later chapters of each of the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – to follow Jesus' through that holy week. As you do, think about what was happening for Jesus and his disciples that first Holy Week, and to notice the ways that especially connects for you at this time.

♪ **Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?**

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh..... Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Oh..... Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh..... Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?