

# Holy Week Preparations

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, March 21, 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or watching via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

## SETTING THE STAGE

Holy Week is nearly upon us. For those who may not know, Holy Week (a.k.a. Passion Week) celebrates and commemorates the final week of the earthly life and ministry of Christ. This special season opens with Palm Sunday and culminates with Easter, serving as the most sacred season in the whole of Christendom.

**KEY** – This morning I would like to outline an array of practical ways to make the most of this holiday season...

**NOTE 1** – Practices that will serve to prepare your heart for Holy Week (i.e., as it approaches). We invest time and energy to prepare for holidays in our culture (e.g., Thanksgiving and Christmas). Why not take the time to spiritually prepare for a spiritual grouping of holy days that address vital aspects of our faith?

**NOTE 2** – Practices that you can also engage in the midst of Holy Week itself. Are you looking for ways to draw closer to the Lord and grow in your understanding of the faith in the midst of this Easter season 2021? Take special note of the principles and precepts offered in this sermon today! Let us delve in...

## #1 SPEND TIME IN SCRIPTURE

As a Pastor, telling you to be in the Word is like a doctor telling you to eat right, exercise and drink plenty of fluids—you really can't go wrong! But rather than tell you to be in the Bible, I want to outline some helpful methods for you to engage the Word (i.e., so the Word can engage you)!

**KEY 1** – In the week or so leading up to Holy Week you may want to try one of the following...

**A)** Read through the FOUR Gospel Accounts (Palm Sunday through Easter)

The Gospel writers dedicate a tremendous amount of real estate to the final week of Jesus' life and ministry...

-8 of the 28 chapters of Matthew focus on the final week of Christ's life (Matt. 21–28)

-6 of the 16 chapters of Mark focus on the final week of Christ's life (Mark 11–16)

-6 of the 24 chapters of Luke highlight final week of Christ's life (Luke 19–24)

-9 of the 21 chapters of John focus on the final week of Jesus' life (John 12–20)

**NOTE** – Though this is a brilliant way to prepare for Holy Week, it is also the most comprehensive. However, time spent in Scripture is something that is both rich and rewarding! You will never “regret” reading too much!

**B) Select ONE Gospel**

You may also want to select one of the four Gospels and live in the corresponding chapters in the week leading up to Holy Week (e.g., Matt. 21–28, Mark 11–16, Luke 19–24 or John 12–20). Since each book of the Bible is wholly inspired, infallible and inerrant, you really cannot go wrong with any of the four! Since you are picking just one of four, you may have time to read and re-read the varying accounts—allowing you to delve a bit deeper.

**FYI** – In either case (A or B), take special note of any questions that you may have and research and/or get help accordingly. Feel free to ask me if you have a challenging question or if you need help finding a relevant resource. I am always more than happy to help you research the Word of God!

**KEY 2** – During Holy Week, might I recommend doing one the following...

**A)** Spend time each day reading re: the events that transpired on that particular day in history. For instance, on Monday, March 29, read what took place on Monday of the Passion Week, and so on. This will allow you to stay connected to the overarching story on a day-by-day basis! Resources are available that outline the key happenings of Holy Week with Bible references. I will include links to trusted resources in these notes...

<https://bible.org/article/chronology-synopsis-passion-week>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/easter/what-is-holy-week.html>

**B)** There are also wonderful daily devotionals available in print or online that lead you through the key moments of the Passion Week. Take the time to read and reflect upon the writings of prolific and reputable Christian authors (i.e., past or present). Such devotionals may be available right in your Bible app(s)!

## **#2 PONDER PERSONAL APPLICATIONS FROM YOUR READINGS**

Point 1 challenged you to spend time in the Word. Point 2 challenges you to find application for what you read. You must understand that the happenings of Holy Week are to possess ongoing impact in our daily lives and living! Generally speaking, it is of benefit to wrestle with questions like the following...

**Q1.** How does the declaration of Jesus' kingship on Palm Sunday manifest in your life in the here-and-now? In what way(s) do you know Christ as both Savior AND Lord? To what degree is your life marked by submission to Him and His teaching?

**Q2.** How does the sacrificial death of Christ on Good Friday impact your life? Have you placed your faith in Him and His finished work OR are you trusting in someone or something else for eternal life? Are the things you are living for worth Jesus dying for?

**Q3.** How does Jesus' victory over death, hell and the grave on Easter Sunday affect you in 2021 and beyond? Do you know Jesus as merely a religious icon OR as the Risen Savior who is alive, well, intimate and abiding through all seasons and earthly circumstances?

**KEY** – Let me provide a specific example from the happenings of Holy Week. Let us pretend for a moment that today is Thursday, April 1 (i.e., Maundy Thursday). Historically, this was the day in which Christ and His apostles shared the Last Supper, etc. In your readings for this day, you will come across the following passage from the Gospel of John...

**John 13:1–5, 12–17**

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

**FYI** – It is not my intention to preach a sermon on this text! Rather, reading this text should cause you to consider its application(s) in your life. When I read this text, my mind automatically begins to contend with questions like the following...

- Q1. How can I put Jesus' principles of "servanthood" into practice?**
- Q2. To what degree do I prioritize service over "being served" by others?**
- Q3. What do I have to serve and/or offer? What unique gifts, skills or talents?**
- Q4. Who are the people in my orbit that I can serve right now? Am I serving them?**
- Q5. To what degree can God interrupt my plans to serve those I may not be "aware" of?**
- Q6. Are there people that I find it hard to serve? Are there people I am "unwilling" to serve?**
- Q7. What am I going to do about my hard heart so that I can be to a place of Christ-like service?**

**James 1:22 (NIV)**

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

**#3 MEMORIZE IMPACTING BIBLE PASSAGES**

**FYI** – If you take the time to study the Word you will come across truly impacting texts. Those who are faithful in their reading of the Bible will testify to "words jumping off of the page" (i.e., texts that seem like God put them there just for you)! Though this is a simple point of the many I am going to give you, why not commit such verses to memory?

**2 Timothy 3:16–17**

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**KEY** – You will never regret "hiding the Word of God" in your heart!

## #4 PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL CHURCH SERVICES

Community churches will certainly spotlight the events of the Passion Week (as this is the most sacred season on our church calendar). Why not participate and attend? Join in during a Palm Sunday, Good Friday and/or Easter Sunday service offered at a church near you (in-person or online).

**KEY 1** – We would love to have you join us for our services! There is nothing like worshipping together...

Christianity is both personal and communal simultaneously. It is personal in that you will stand before God and give account as an individual (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). It is communal, however, in that God desires that we share life together! The church of Jesus Christ is the collective assembly of the redeemed, called out from the world and called to be uniquely His by faith (i.e., it is—we are—His people)!

### **Romans 1:1, 7 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God . . . 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy **people**: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 1:1–3 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, 2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy **people**, together with **all those everywhere** who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy **people** throughout Achaia: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Ephesians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God’s holy **people** in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Philippians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God’s holy **people** in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Colossians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

**KEY 2** – I reject any version of Christianity that downplays or diminishes this collective element or the need for interpersonal connection. If COVID-19 has taught us anything it is this—it is not good for man to be alone (cf. Gen. 2:18)!

Get to church!

## #5 SHARE CHRIST WITH OTHERS

**KEY** – We are a people with a purpose (i.e., we are obligated to the mandate of Christ)...

### **Matthew 28:18–20**

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### **Mark 16:15–16**

15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 1

### **Q. How can you share the message of Christ with others in this holiday season?**

#### **A) Invite Them to Special Services as You Attend In-Person**

Do you plan on coming to any of our special services? Why not invite a friend? Many are open in this season!

#### **B) Invite Them to Special Services as You Attend Digitally**

Why not start a watch party on social media? Take the time to invite friends or family and flood FB with Jesus!

#### **C) Share Christ Online**

During this holy season, share Bible passages online that speak to your heart (born of personal study, etc.). Share posts from this church, other churches and/or authors that resonate. It takes no effort to share Jesus in this way—and you never know who in your sphere of influence sees and take a moment to read! Cast your digital seed far-and-wide!

#### **D) Give Gifts if Applicable**

What better way to celebrate the gift of Christ than be giving gifts in His name? Maybe you and your family can bless someone with an Easter Basket, flowers, a Christian book, a new Bible, a hand-written card, a phone call, an invitation to Easter Dinner, etc.?

### **Galatians 6:10b**

10 . . . let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

If not a physical item, can you offer your service utilizing the gift(s) God has given you? Is there someone in need in your world wherein you can be the hands, feet and voice of Christ? Put to work what God hath given...

### **1 Peter 4:10–11**

10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

## #6 PRACTICE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

**KEY** – We have already talked about the discipline of being in the Word. But what else can we do?

### A) Pray

The time leading up to Holy Week and the week of Holy Week itself can be a powerful time for prayer. I put forth that being in the Word (point 1 above) is vital in that it fosters a healthful prayer life. In fact, I tend to pray about the things that I read in Scripture.

#### **Q. How could our previous musings on John 13 be incorporated into prayer?**

- How can I put Jesus' principles of "servanthood" into practice?
- To what degree do I prioritize service over "being served" by others?
- What do I have to serve and/or offer? What unique gifts, skills or talents?
- Who are the people in my orbit that I can serve right now? Am I serving them?
- To what degree can God interrupt my plans to serve those I may not be "aware" of?
- Are there people that I find it hard to serve? Are there people I am "unwilling" to serve?
- What am I going to do about my hard heart so that I can be to a place of Christ-like service?

### B) Praise and Worship

This holiday season is the perfect time for praise and worship. Praise celebrates the activity of God (what He has done and/or is doing). Worship celebrates His nature (who and/or what He is). How can we not worship in light of what Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter reveal about God and His work on our behalf?

### C) Fasting

Fasting is a biblical discipline. It is the symbolic declaration that we need God more than we need the most fundamental aspect of human existence—the need for food and water. Have you ever tried fasting in the midst of Lent or Holy Week? Many faithful fast food and water on Good Friday from 9am–3pm (i.e., coinciding with the time Christ spent on the Cross).

#### **Matthew 6:16–18**

16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### D) Communion

Have you ever considered observing Communion at home? The ancient church commemorated the death of Christ in their homes (cf. Acts 2:42). You do not need a clergy member to host the Lord's Supper. You need bread, the fruit of the vine and a reverential heart! Inviting Christ into your home in this way is a profound way to worship and connect as a family unit!

Speaking of family...

## #7 INVOLVE YOUR CHILDREN IN HOLY WEEK

This is a church with a lot of young families and children. This is a good thing! As much as the church is committed to playing its role in the spiritual development of your children, there is no one who can replace you as the primary influencer in the lives of your children...

**FYI** – One of the greatest mistakes the North American church has made is replacing mom and dad with a children’s or youth pastor! Though they play vital roles, an “ounce of father or mother is worth more than a ton of priest!” Make sure you are sharing the faith—i.e., your faith—with them!

### **Deuteronomy 6:4–8 (Emphasis Mine)**

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one [i.e., The Lord is our God, the Lord alone]. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. **7 Impress them on your children.** Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

### **Q. How can you involve your children in Holy Week?**

- A1)** Talk about what they are learning in church?
- A2)** Talk about what you are learning in church?
- A3)** Talk about what God is speaking to you in the Word and prayer.
- A4)** Worship, pray and read from time-to-time with your family and children.
- A5)** Decorate your home for Easter with Christ-centered décor. Make it about Christ!

**KEY** – The Lord looks to you to set the spiritual trajectory for your children. Your children look to you (i.e., albeit unknowingly) to set the spiritual tone for the household. Do the work of the Lord and watch what He can do! Sunday church should not be the only place or time you talk about Jesus!

### **Q. To what degree is He welcomed, honored and obeyed in your home?**

#### **Proverbs 22:6**

6 Start children off on the way they should go,  
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

## **CONCLUSION PT. 1**

**KEY 1** – I have outlined a series of points for you to consider and apply...

**Q. Which points are you looking to put into practice?**

**Q. What steps will you take to maximize this season?**

**KEY 2** – May this be your greatest Holy Week (i.e., for you and your family)!

## CONCLUSION PT. 2

Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church website ([www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org)). For those who are present, you may place your donation in one of our offering boxes.

### **Numbers 6:24–26**

24 The Lord bless you  
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.