



Dear River Church Family,

As we enter Holy Week, I encourage you and your family to use this guide for daily Scripture reading and prayer. May it draw your hearts closer to Jesus during this sacred season.

Holy Week begins today—Palm Sunday—and culminates next Sunday with Easter. In just one week, many powerful prophecies were fulfilled. Jesus came to earth with one mission: to save humanity. He accomplished this by dying on the cross on Good Friday and rising from the grave on Easter Sunday. By conquering sin and defeating death, He opened the gates of heaven, made forgiveness possible, and gave us access to the very presence of God (Romans 5:8).

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, sin became part of our human nature. There's no way we could ever be "good enough" to earn our way into God's presence. That's why Jesus came—to make a way for salvation. The Old Testament Law required many sacrifices, but Jesus became the perfect and final atoning sacrifice. He endured the cross out of His deep, unshakable love for us.

Holy Week is a sacred opportunity to reflect on the foundation of our faith. Our God does nothing by accident. Every step Jesus took toward the cross was filled with purpose. Every moment of that week carries the weight of His personal love for you and for me.

Pastor Amy

A SPECIAL NOTE FROM BEKA



Dear River Church,

When Pastor Amy asked me to create a booklet for Holy Week, I didn't know where to start. How does someone write about the most profound event in all of human history in just a tiny booklet? I've chosen to focus on just one small part of that story—hands. What are the hands in each reading doing or showing us about the kingdom of God?

At the bottom of each day, you will find a short sample prayer I found myself praying as I wrote this. Feel free to change it and make it your own. This booklet is meant to be a tool to help you encounter the love and peace of Jesus for yourself as you read these words and ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight into life in this upside-down kingdom of God.

I've also provided reflection questions to help us let the word of God grow deeper in our hearts. Please sit with them, maybe even journal your thoughts. If possible, spend 2-5 minutes in silence as you listen for God's response to your questions. God wants to meet with you and speak to you as you seek to connect to this story of Jesus's death and resurrection.

Since we've been going through the book of Luke for the past few months at River, Luke will be the main text for each day's reading. For further reading and reflection, please look at the bottom of each page to see what other biblical authors have to contribute to the story.

May your life be deeply blessed by God's word,

Beka

APRIL 13, 2025

PALM SUNDAY

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 19:28-44

"Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"

—Luke 19:38, NLT (quoting Psalm 118:26)

We all love to be on the winning team! Whenever our team wins a championship or tournament, we love to celebrate with others. In many countries, like Vietnam, crowds take to the street waving flags and cheering together. We pump our fists in the air and shout for joy! Winning feels great!

During the last week of Jesus' life, he finished up a long journey and entered Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowds gathered around him, cheering and waving palm branches in their hands as they quoted a famous verse from an ancient song in their Hebrew Bible that praised God for sending a king who would rescue them (see Luke 19:38). The crowds assumed that Jesus was the kind who would rescue them from their current misery.

Israel was being oppressed by the Romans, and everyone was looking for a leader who would violently overthrow the Romans and free the Jews as their new king. However, Jesus had a better plan, one that would not just bring freedom to the oppressed, but to also free oppressors from their own prisons of racism, pride, and cruelty. Jesus' plan would not just free one nation from another, it would free the whole world. So while the excited crowds kept chanting for their king (Messiah/Christ), Jesus began to cry. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand **the way to peace**" (Luke 19:42, NLT). Jesus's plan did not include violently taking power. Jesus's way to peace was so counterintuitive it surprised everyone then and still challenges us today.

Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, shining upon us.

Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords on the altar.

(Psalm 118:26-27, NLT)

The famous verse the crowds sang that Palm Sunday came from Psalm 118:26, but the next verse gives us a clue about Jesus's way to peace—sacrifice. God's plan to **bring peace** to the world was not to kill off all the evil leaders and put Christians into powerful positions. Historically, when the oppressed take power, they often repeat patterns of abuse, racism, and become just as oppressive. Humanity needs a rescuer who would provide another way to peace—a kingdom of peace whose king would reign with love. A king who would sacrifice himself to absorb all of the world's violence, putting an end to the cycle of power and hatred. This was Jesus's plan to win, and he invites us to join him on this journey to victory.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"King Jesus, show me your way to peace. Amen."

Peter, a close follower of Jesus, also called Jesus the "Messiah/God's Christ" (Luke 9:20), but Peter thought Jesus would lead a violent rebellion to gain power. So later, Peter uses his own sword to defend Jesus in the garden (Luke 22:50). What we believe about the kind of king God is impacts our behavior.

What about you? What does your behavior this week reveal about who you believe Jesus is? What kind of kingdom will God bring to this earth (<i>Luke 11:2-4</i>)?					
	1				



APRIL 14, 2025

MONDAY

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 19:45-20:1-19

"One day Jesus was in the Temple, teaching the people and telling them the Good News. The leading priests, teachers of the law, and elders came up to talk with him, saying, 'Tell us what authority you have to do these things? Who gave you this authority?'"

—Luke 20:1-2, NCV

Stories have the power to move our hearts, change our minds, and give us hope. Whenever we watch a movie, we find ourselves cheering for the hero, angry at the bad guys, and are relieved when everyone lives happily ever after.

Jesus is a master storyteller. He is constantly telling parables to teach powerful lessons. Jesus also did some radical things that made people question the status quo. For example, he went into the temple and flipped over the tables of vendors who were getting rich off of people who were desperate to follow God! The religious leaders in powerful positions questioned where Jesus got his authority to make such a mess, heal people on the Day of Rest (Sabbath), and teach his followers a radical message of forgiveness.

Jesus didn't respond to their question with an answer (in fact, Jesus hardly ever answered people's questions directly), but he made them think more deeply by asking a question and telling a story. At the end of his story, the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus, and they started planning how to kill him!

In that story, Jesus paints a picture of God as a landowner who creates a beautiful vineyard and then rents it out to tenants to take care of it. When it was time to harvest the grapes, the landowner sent servants to the vineyard, but they were all treated poorly by the tenants. This represents the many messengers God had sent

as prophets to remind people that God has created this beautiful world for us to take care of. However, God's messengers were often ignored and treated poorly. Jesus is foreshadowing his death, again, as the landowner's son killed by the tenants.

I will not be afraid, because the Lord is with me. People can't do anything to me. ... The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone. ...

Thank the Lord because he is good, His love continues forever. (Psalm 118:6,22,29, NCV)

This story should remind us of Adam and Eve in the garden—we are given the same command, to protect and care for the earth. But too often, humanity has rejected God's message, choosing instead to destroy the earth's resources and be violent toward other people made in the image of God.

Jesus then quotes Psalm 118 again—a powerful way to show he is the rejected cornerstone. Jesus's way of peace is a Psalm 118 mindset that takes refuge in God, even when life is painful. We choose to trust God instead of trying to seize control for ourselves through violence and impatience. That is the authority and power of Jesus—God's goodness and love that continues forever (Psalm 118:29).

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"God, remind me of your loving presence throughout today. Amen."

A cornerstone helps the rest of a building to get aligned correctly. Jesuss' way of peace through God's love must be our foundation.

What is your relationship with this cornerstone today?						



APRIL 15, 2025

TUESDAY

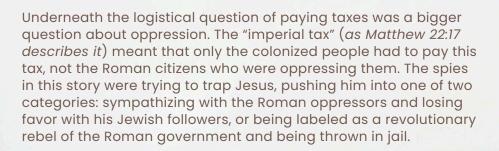
TODAY'S READING: LUKE 20:20-26

So they watched Jesus and sent some spies who acted as if they were sincere. They wanted to trap Jesus in saying something wrong so they could hand him over to the authority and power of the governor. So the spies asked Jesus, "Teacher, we know that what you say and teach is true. You pay no attention to who people are, and you always teach the truth about God's way. Tell us, is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing they were trying to trick him, said, "Show me a coin. Whose image and name are on it?" They said, "Caesar's."

Jesus said to them, "Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and give to God the things that are God's." So they were not able to trap Jesus in anything he said in the presence of the people. And being amazed at his answer, they became silent.

—Luke 20:20-26, NCV



Jesus doesn't fall into their trap, an example to all of us. As humans, we bear the image of God. God's kingdom is not one that can be contained by any political party, any particular government, or any national identity. Our ultimate allegiance must be to God's kingdom, which respects and obeys the authorities placed over us, but doesn't compromise Jesus's way of peace and love to gain power or comfort.

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it."

(Genesis 1:26-28, NLT)

When God created humanity, we were all given the job description to co-rule and co-care for creation in a way that honors God as our King. We learn about what honors God through these stories in the Bible—most clearly in the person of Jesus. We don't need to be power-hungry like so many empires throughout history. Power and authority in God's kingdom look like Jesus: serving, loving, and bringing peace and life to a broken, dying world.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"Thank you, King Jesus, for showing us our true identity. Help me love well and follow your path of peace. Amen."

This is a super short story, but Jesus makes us think. If we are to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar (a coin with Caesar's face representing obedience to Rome even when it felt unfair), and to give God the things that are God's, it makes us ask the question: Who's image and name are on you and me? What might God be calling you to do as God's image bearer today?



SPY WEDNESDAY

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 21:1-4; 22:1-6

Jesus looked up and saw some rich people putting their gifts to God into the Temple collection box. Then he saw a poor widow put two small copper coins into the box. He said, "This poor widow gave only two small coins. But the truth is, she gave more than all those rich people. They have plenty, and they gave only what they did not need. This woman is very poor, but she gave all she had to live on."

... It was almost time for the Jewish Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover. The leading priests and teachers of the law wanted to kill Jesus. But they were trying to find a quiet way to do it, because they were afraid of what the people would do.

One of Jesus's twelve apostles was named Judas Iscariot. Satan entered him, and he went and talked with the leading priests and some of the soldiers who guarded the Temple. He talked to them about a way to hand Jesus over to them. The priests were very happy about this. They promised to give Judas money for doing this. He agreed. Then he waited for the best time to hand him over to them. He wanted to do it when no one was around to see it.

-Luke 21:1-4. 22:1-6, ERV

<->

A foundational characteristic of God's upside-down kingdom is generosity, an abundance mindset that trusts God cares for us and sees our needs (*Matthew 6:26,31-33*). Jesus pays attention to this poor widow and uses her as an example for his disciples: be like this widow who trusts God so much her hope is not in money so she is free to be sacrificially generous.

In contrast, Judas's hands seem eager to get money. He might have realized that this king (Messiah) was not going to be the kind of king he thought Jesus would be—someone who would save Israel from Rome's oppression and help bring economic prosperity. Loving money more than God's kingdom leads to so much evil.

Give this command to those who are rich with the things of this world. Tell them not to be proud. Tell them to hope in God, not their money. Money cannot be trusted, but God takes care of us richly. He gives us everything to enjoy. Tell those who are rich to do good—to be rich in good works. And tell them they should be happy to give and ready to share. By doing this, they will be saving up a treasure for themselves. And that treasure will be a strong foundation on which their future life will be built. They will be able to have the life that is true life.

(1 Timothy 6:17-19, ERV)

At the core of generosity is trust in God's goodness and greatness. Even since the Garden of Eden this has been God's heart toward us, but our spiritual enemy has always been trying to get us to doubt God's goodness (Genesis 3:1). May our ears be open to the voice of truth and may our hands be open to the needs of others.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"Jesus, you were generous because you trusted your Father would care for you. Help me live open-handedly and trust you more deeply today. Amen."

like for you today? If your wallet could talk, what would it say is important to you—your hope or what you trust in?					



Further reading: Matthew 26:1-5,14-16; Mark 12:41-44, 14:1-2,10-11;

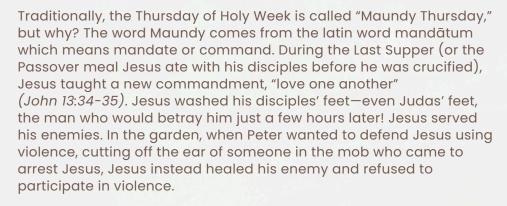
MAUNDY THURSDAY

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 22:7-65

"But Jesus said to [Judas], 'Judas, are you using the kiss of friendship to hand over the Son of Man to his enemies?' The followers of Jesus were standing there too. They saw what was happening and said to Jesus, 'Lord, should we use our swords?' And one of them did use his sword. He cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus said, 'Stop!' Then he touched the servant's ear and healed him."

—Luke 21:1-4. 22:1-6, ERV

<**>>**



Today's reading is full of drama and surprises. King Jesus continues to flip our expectations on their head to reveal the many ways our hearts need to be reoriented to the way of Jesus instead of the default way of this world. When the disciples fought about which disciple was most important, Jesus showed them that, in God's kingdom, humility, sacrificial service, and love are greater than violence, pride, or power.



Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.

(1 Timothy 6:17-19, ERV)

One of Jesus's followers was so deeply impacted by this teaching that he later wrote, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:7-9, NIV). God's love is a powerful love that transforms enemies into children who love one another.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"God, thank you that while I was still your enemy, you loved me and sacrificed for me. Jesus, please fill me with your love for anyone who has caused me harm. Amen."

At the time when Jesus could have focused on protecting himself, he instead chooses to bring healing to a person who came to do him harm.

How does this glimpse into God's heart impact the way you see God's kingdom coming to earth? Are there any strained relationships in your life that you can ask God to heal?



Further reading: Matthew 26:17-56; Mark 14:12-52; John 13-18:14; Romans 5:8-10

APRIL 18, 2025

GOOD FRIDAY TODAY'S READING: LUKE 22:66-23:53

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the King (Messiah/Christ), are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!" But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

—Luke 22:39-43. NCV

One of the clearest clashes of kingdoms happens in today's reading: The violent Roman empire using the most brutal form of torture (crucifixtion) to kill the kindest, humblest king who ever lived. Jesus' kingdom is not interested in geographical conquest. Jesus' kingdom is not focused on material wealth or political power. Jesus' kingdom is not even centered around getting the last word or winning every argument. The foundation of Jesus' upside-down kingdom is sacrificial love and a loyal trust in God. Nothing, not even the pain and threat of death would stop Jesus on his way to sitting at the right hand of God's throne

(Hebrews 12:1-3).

Years later, one of Jesus's disciples, Peter, encouraged others with today's reading in mind, "This is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and gave you an example to follow. So you should do as he did. ... People insulted Christ, but he did not insult them in return. Christ suffered, but he did not threaten. He let God, the One who judges rightly, take care of him." (1 Peter 2:21,23, NCV).

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

(1 Corinthians 15:56-58, NLT)

The default kingdom of this world whispers to us to retaliate when someone hurts us, to get even, or to honk that horn when someone cuts us off in traffic! However, God's kingdom is one that refuses to forget that every single human, no matter how mean, is made in the Image of God and is never beyond God's grace. Loyalty to God's kingdom means becoming more like Jesus, even if that means going through suffering and death. This kind of loyalty and trust requires supernatural power—a gift we all need.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"God, please, give me courage to trust in you and the gift of your power to love others like Jesus. Amen."

The Roman soldiers used hammers to put nails in Jesus's hands. Jesus spread out his arms, completely open-handed, entrusting himself to his Father (*Luke 22:46*).

What about our hands? Have you and I caused harm to other Image bearers this week? Have you and I suffered at the hands of other Image bearers? How can we, like Jesus, commit ourselves to God's hands?				



APRIL 19, 2025

SATURDAY

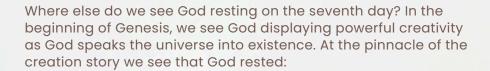
TODAY'S READING: LUKE 19:45-20:1-19

It was late on Preparation day. When the sun went down, the Sabbath day (day of rest) would begin. The women who had come from Galilee with Jesus followed Joseph. They saw the tomb. Inside they saw where he put Jesus's body. Then they left to prepare some sweet-smelling spices to put on the body. On the Sabbath day they rested, as commanded in the Law of Moses.

—Luke 23:54-56. ERV

-Luke 23:54-56, ERV

Silence. Stillness. Darkness. In that quiet tomb where Jesus laid, the author of life had been killed. The hands that had just healed his enemy's bleeding ear hours ago now pierced through by Roman nails. These hands had humbly washed his disciples's dirty feet, raised the dead to life, and broken bread to share with his disciples. But on this Sabbath day, these hands did not heal, serve or feed anyone. On this seventh day of the week, Jesus's hands rested.



<**>>**

By the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing, so he rested from all his work. **God blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day, because on that day he rested** from all the work he had done in creating the world.

(Genesis 2:2-3, NCV)

God resting is not a statement about God taking a nap. In fact, we see elsewhere that God does not need to sleep like you and me (see Psalm 121). **Resting is all about authority and confidence**. It was as if God was taking in the view of his beautiful world, enjoying everything he had just created.

When Moses was given the ten commandments, the longest command with the most detail was the fourth, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work..." (Exodus 20:8-11). Unfortunately, obeying this commandment became a ritualistic task instead of the act of worship it was intended to be—actively trusting in God's provision one day every week instead of continuing the cycle of slavery to work every single day, like when they were slaves in Egypt.

Jesus came to bring freedom from all forms of oppression and slavery, even religiosity. He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). In fact, so many of Jesus's miracles were done on the Sabbath to show the original intent of the command—to bring freedom to the captives. However, as Jesus's hands lay silent on that Holy Week Sabbath, the greatest victory was achieved.

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"God please give me confidence in your provision and an unshakeable trust that you are the true king of this universe and I am no longer a slave. Amen.

It is often so hard to take a break, a nap, or not get caught up in the busyness of life and work.

What might God want to say to you in silence today as you reflect on Jesus' death? Is there anything in your life that is in desperate need of God's resurrecting power?



APRIL 20, 2025

EASTER SUNDAY

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 24

"'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ... When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."

-Luke 24:25-27,30-31 ESV

We have been looking at various hands in the story of Holy Week. On Sunday, the cheering hands that held palm branches, as people assumed Jesus was their national king who would overthrow the Romans. On Monday, we saw a parable about impatient hands that used power and violence to build the kingdom of this world. Tuesday's story—how we use the money in our hands reveals our true loyalty to God's kingdom as God's Image Bearers. Wednesday contrasted generous and greedy hands while Thursday highlighted Jesus's hands that served and healed people. Friday, we remembered Jesus's nailed hands that stretched out on the cross to welcome even dying criminals to join the victory of God's kingdom. Then yesterday, the resting hands in the tomb that conquered death, giving all who join Jesus's kingdom the same freedom over death.

In today's reading we see another emphasis on hands. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize it was Jesus they had been talking to until Jesus broke the bread and gave it to them (Luke 24:30-31). Perhaps the disciples weren't paying attention to the big holes in Jesus' hands, but Luke 24:16 suggests it was something more.

How often are we like these disciples? We don't tend to immediately recognize Jesus speaking to us in our heartache, in our pain, in our doubts and questions. It is only when our eyes are opened to recognize Jesus is right there with us in our suffering!

And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

(Luke 24:38-40, ESV)

Jesus even invites his disciples to touch and see his wounds, to witness his suffering and tell others about Jesus' power over the grave (Luke 24:48). He didn't hide his scars because they told the story of how death, darkness, and the kingdom of violence will never win in the end. The same invitation to reach out and experience God's resurrecting power is still extended to each of us today!

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

"God, I am amazed at your power to resurrect Jesus from the dead! You demonstrated that there is nothing too evil, too dark, or too hopeless that can stop the power of your kingdom. Please, empower me to serve and love others so that more people know your goodness and love. May your kingdom come to earth as it is in heaven. Amen."

How does Jesus' victory over death change your perspective on life? Would you like to join God's kingdom and follow Jesus's way of peace?					
	•				



REFLECTION

REFLEGTIO!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TITHES & OFFERINGS

1



OR

2 US ONLINE GIVING (VPN would be needed)





UPCOMING EVENTS



GOOD FRIDAY @ RIVER CHURCH FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2025 @ 7PM



EASTER @ RIVER CHURCH SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2025 THREE SERVICE TIMES: 9AM, 10:15 AM, 11:30 AM

BE PART OF OUR FAMILY



JOIN OUR WEEKLY OASIS GROUP FOR PRAYERS & BIBLE STUDY

STAY UPDATED



JOIN OUR WHATSAPP GROUP



VISIT
RIVER CHURCH WEBSITE
RIVERCHURCHVIETNAM.COM

NEW TO RIVER CHURCH?WE'D LOVE TO CONNECT







WIFI INFO: River: mbetonayo | River 1: Mbetonayol