

23 THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"There was once a man who planted a vineyard, rented it out to tenants, and then left home for a long time. When the time came to gather the grapes, he sent a slave to the tenants to receive from them his share of the harvest. But the tenants beat the slave and sent him back without a thing. So he sent another slave; but the tenants beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him back without a thing. Then he sent a third slave; the tenants wounded him, too, and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my own dear son; surely they will respect him!' But when the tenants saw him, they said to one another, 'This is the owner's son. Let's kill him, and his property will be ours!' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

"What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to the tenants?" Jesus asked. "He will come and kill those men, and turn the vineyard over to other tenants."

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3 STATEMENTS

- Jesus' entry into Jerusalem marked the completion of the journey of Jesus as the bearer of the way of the kingdom.
- Jesus came to Jerusalem to reclaim the nation and the temple for God.
- The earthly powers and the powers of Satan came together in Jesus' betrayal and arrest.

the *Source* A FAILED JOURNEY?

The way of the cross was charted when Jesus set out the way of the kingdom in Luke 4:18-19. You have followed him on that way as Jesus showed God's reign through miracles and parables. You have seen Jesus show the way of forgiveness and discipleship. The opposition he encountered in Nazareth pointed toward a final showdown in Jerusalem.

The course Jesus set at the beginning of his ministry came to a climax in Chapters 19-23 of Luke's gospel. The Messiah reaches the goal of his journey, but at a first look, it is a failed journey.

BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO COMES

According to Luke, Jesus entered Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. This was the first time he had been there during the years of his ministry. It was a turning point in the whole gospel. *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem marked the completion of the journey of Jesus as the bearer of the way of the kingdom.* Jesus' entry was the beginning of his mission in Jerusalem as Savior and judge.

Jesus' entry on Palm Sunday had two purposes. First, Jesus came as Lord to claim the nation. Second, Jesus came as *Messiah* to claim the temple.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem marked the completion of the journey of Jesus as the bearer of the way of the kingdom.

Even before Jesus entered Jerusalem, he showed that he was Lord of Jerusalem. Read Luke 19:29-35, and answer the following questions.

1. Somehow Jesus knew the disciples would find a colt that no one had ridden. How does this help you understand who Jesus is?

2. When Jesus gave the instructions to the disciples, he described himself as "Lord." What does the title *Lord* mean to you?

Jesus' entry into the city was another sign of his coming as Lord. But it was unlike the entry that might be expected.

3. If you were planning the arrival of a great ruler to your community, what things would you plan to have happen during the entrance?

A number of things happened on Palm Sunday that pointed to Jesus' entrance as Lord, God's chosen ruler. Look up the following Bible verses and complete the chart to see how Jesus' entry had been foretold in Scripture.

TEXT	WHAT DOES IT SAY?
Zechariah 9:9	
1 Kings 1:33-35	
2 Kings 9:13	
Psalms 118:26-29	

All along, Luke had been preparing the reader for this triumphant entrance. The rejoicing of the crowds really began with the angels the night of Jesus' birth. Jesus' identity as ruler was confirmed by God at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus' identity was focused around his words of forgiveness and the healing

that the people saw Jesus do during his ministry. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Messiah king's role that was seen and heard by those who had faith.

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the colt, he entered as the long-promised king. Jesus entered Jerusalem like a king to reclaim Jerusalem and the whole nation. But the entrance had a dark side, too.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem he knew he would be rejected and killed. People talked about wanting to be made right with God. But many did not want to follow the kingdom way that Jesus talked about and lived. For many, Jesus got in the way of how *they* wanted to live and how they thought God should act.

The coming rejection of God's kingdom way brought out Jesus' words of judgment. But the coming rejection also made Jesus very sad. Jesus had pity on the people. Read Luke 19:41-48 and answer the following questions.

1. Jesus had sorrowed over Jerusalem before. Read Luke 13:34-35. To what does Jesus compare himself?

2. What does that tell you about Jesus' feelings toward the people?

The reason for the foretold destruction is seen in the way the temple was treated by the people and the religious leaders. Read Mark's version of Jesus' entry into the temple in Mark 11:15-19. Discuss together how this is a sign of Jesus the Messiah coming to reclaim God's temple for its intended purpose of true worship of God alone.

Jesus came to Jerusalem to reclaim the nation and the temple for God. The people shouted "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38). But the *whole* city did not shout the praise of Jesus. The Pharisees and the chief priests and scribes saw and heard what was going on. They knew very well the meaning of Jesus' entrance. Jesus coming as Lord

and Messiah was a threat to their political and religious power.

The gospel is a threat to those in power. Fingers can be pointed at those with political or religious power who seek to destroy or at least contain the gospel. Even today the powerful seek to destroy those who proclaim the kingdom way of the gospel. People today are oppressed, persecuted, and even killed for their faith. The powerful see the gospel as a threat. It is easy to point at others who are against the gospel. But it is difficult to see that even you may be an enemy of the gospel. The gospel calls you to obedience to God alone in all that you are, do, and think. That is a threat to your own power. Jesus' command is resisted even by those who call themselves Christians.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem to claim its people and temple for God, so

Jesus seeks to claim you even though you may fight against his coming. His way is the way of the cross, the way of death from which springs new life.

THE NIGHT OF BETRAYAL

All of the preaching and teaching Jesus did in Jerusalem—his coming as Savior and king, and the signs of the end of all time—came together on Thursday evening of that week. It was the day of Passover, the day the Jews celebrated their release from bondage in Egypt (see Session 4).

The story of the night of Jesus' betrayal has two parts that are closely linked. They are the Last Supper (Luke 22:1-38) and the events in the garden (Luke 22:39-53).

Read the first part of this story, Luke 22:1-13. Here Luke describes

Jesus came to Jerusalem to reclaim the nation and the temple for God.



three preparations that happened before the Passover meal itself.

1. What preparations are described in verses 1-2?

2. What preparations are described in verses 3-6?

3. What preparations are described in verses 7-13?



2. For what purpose is this food given?

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The stage is set. The characters are in place. As the curtain rises on the holy meal, the audience is at the edge of their seats. You know something is going to happen when the earthly powers join with the powers of Satan to restore bondage and death. All the opposition to Jesus circles around on the outside and on the inside of that upper room. It looks like a pack of wolves circling a flock of sheep, waiting to find the weak one at the right time. Read Luke 22:14-23.

Right at the center of all this hostility Jesus said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Jesus knew he would be betrayed and finally killed. Yet in the Passover meal, Jesus pointed to the promise of the kingdom of God.

In some meals described in the gospels Jesus was a guest eating with sinners. In other meals he was the host who took the food, *gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the people*. In this meal he did the same three-part action, but he identified what this food was. Using Luke 22:14-23 for reference, answer the following questions.

1. What are the bread and wine?

You are probably familiar with this meal. It is called by many names—the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Sacrament of the Altar, and Eucharist. This meal has become the central focus of Christian worship. Oftentimes this meal is understood to be the meal that binds people to Christ and to each other through the forgiveness of sin. And that is true. But just as often today people forget one thing—the Lord's Supper was also a time of anger, pride, division, fear, and betrayal.

Jesus said that this meal was the sign of a new covenant between God and people. But immediately upon saying that, Jesus pointed to a break in that covenant. Someone at the table would betray Jesus. What is surprising is the response of the disciples at verse 23. Discuss together what thoughts the disciples may have had as they talked.

This questioning of their own feelings was horrible enough to consider in light of the promise Jesus offered in the meal. But look what happened next! Read Luke 22:24-34, and discuss the significance of the disciples' argument.

Judas already had conspired to betray Jesus, but look what was happening inside that upper room—doubt, pride and division, betrayal. All of this happened among those who had just shared the one bread and the one cup of the new covenant.

The earthly powers and the powers of Satan came together in Jesus' betrayal and arrest.

BETRAYED WITH A KISS

Even before Jesus left the upper room to meet Judas, he was betrayed by his disciples. As they moved out to the garden the scene became darker. Read Luke 22:39-46.

1. For what did Jesus pray?

2. In whom did Jesus place his trust in this time of trial?

3. How did the disciples react to Jesus' situation?

In one sense you could call the disciples' sleeping a betrayal. Jesus asked them to pray, but in their own grief they abandoned Jesus.

Now the powers of the rulers and Satan came together in a final betrayal. Read Luke 22:47-54.

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (verse 47). There had been another who had kissed Jesus. The woman who kissed Jesus at Simon's house (Luke 7:37-38) kissed him in thanks for release from bondage and death. The kiss Judas gave to Jesus was a betrayal into bondage and death.

That is how people still respond to Jesus' message—with thanksgiving or betrayal. In a sense, Jesus keeps on being betrayed and being thanked by those who know him, and sometimes these two kisses may be from the same person. But Jesus did not turn from either the woman or Judas, and he doesn't turn from us.

The way of the cross was set. *The earthly powers and the powers of Satan came together in Jesus' betrayal and arrest.* They were assisted from the inside by the doubts, pride and division, and betrayal of Jesus' own disciples. The one who had begun the week in a triumphant entry as Lord and Messiah to reclaim his people and temple suddenly became the victim of those who opposed the gospel. The Messiah who carried the way of the kingdom to its goal in Jerusalem apparently had failed. Listen to his last words in the garden: "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!" (Luke 22:53).

Will Jesus have his hour? Will God's power of light and life finally prevail?

Shaping life

REMEMBERING THE STORY

Open *Lutheran Book of Worship* to page 69, in the Holy Communion service.

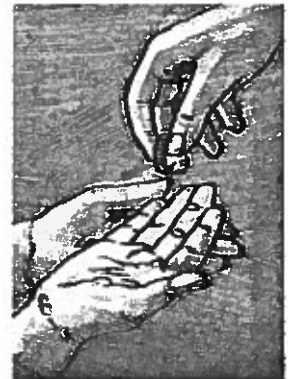
Someone once said that the Christian liturgy is the drama of the salvation story of the cross. The worship liturgy is the place where God comes to us with the word of life through Word and sacraments. Liturgy is for remembering God's acts on your behalf and for giving thanks.

This salvation story is especially clear in the portion of the liturgy called the Prayer of Thanksgiving (*LBW*, p. 69). Read the prayer that begins "Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father. . . ." What are the saving acts of God mentioned in the first four paragraphs?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The remainder of the Prayer of Thanksgiving is "unstuck in time." The Words of Institution point back to the night of Jesus' betrayal, but the words that Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 11:26—"For as often as we eat of this bread . . ."—point us to the future "until he comes." The response—"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again"—points backward and forward at the same time!

Look at the rest of this prayer to see this movement in time. What does this prayer's being "unstuck in time" say to you about the Lord's Supper and the scope of God's saving actions celebrated in this meal?



FURTHER

opportunities

Mishna minutes

The most important part of each of the four gospels is the crucifixion of Jesus. The writers were concerned that the readers see the significance of Jesus' death on the cross.

This week, select one of the passion stories from the gospels. You may select Matthew 21:1—27:66; Mark 11:1—15:47; Luke 19:28—23:56; or John 18:1—19:42. Read it as you would a short story, paying close attention to the details and the characters. Write down anything new or surprising that you discover about the story of Jesus' passion.

Activity 1

Prepare a Palm Sunday-type banner for use in your congregation's Holy Communion worship services. If possible, ask your pastor

or worship committee chair if you may become involved in the planning of a service of Holy Communion.

Activity 2

The words Jesus spoke over the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are called the Words of Institution. Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-22; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 contain these words, but they vary slightly. Locate the Words of Institution in Matthew, Mark, Luke, 1 Corinthians, and in the Lord's Supper liturgy your congregation uses. Make a chart of all five, marking in one color the words they have in common and in another color the words that differ. Talk about the chart with a parent or other adult.

Activity 3

Memorize the liturgy your congregation uses to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This will help you to focus on the promise given in the meal.

FOCUS



ON JOHN'S GOSPEL

"Who is Jesus and what does Jesus mean for the life of the community?" John had his own way of addressing that question. His answer and the way he wrote his gospel were different from the way Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their gospels. Rather than focusing on the actions of Jesus, John's aim was theological. John stated his purpose in the words "so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that

through believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

John wrote about Jesus as God's eternal Word who was from the beginning with God and who "became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). John was careful to show Jesus as the promised Savior, the Son of God, who offers eternal life. This gift of eternal life is a gift that begins now and comes to those who respond to Jesus as "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). In his gospel John made use of at least three sources: a collection of signs and miracles, a collection of sayings, and a passion narrative. John probably also knew of the gospel of Mark.

Most scholars place the date of the writing of the gospel of John sometime between A.D. 80-100, with the most likely date being A.D. 90.