

April 3 – Holy Saturday

Read John 19:38-42

from Rev. David Chafin, Deputy Regional Minister

For a gospel that focuses on the calling of Christ to live in broad daylight that which might only be dimly believed in the privacy of the heart, John tells a rather strange story of the burial of Jesus by two secretive disciples. These two men, followers at a distance who had a certain stature in the community, have taken on the intimate work of caring for one whose death was that of a criminal – an act that made them ritually unclean among their people.

Perhaps it's helpful for us to ask ourselves how others who are "not one of us" might well be doing the good work of God in our midst, and lifting up their names as people of faith. It may be no coincidence that these "hidden disciples" are well known in the near east and are honored by numerous monuments and chapels built in their memory. God's work is often done by those we would least suspect.

*May my eyes be open to your work in our world,
even in the dim places – even in the grave.*

Point us toward the resurrection truth of your Son our Savior.

April 4: Easter Sunday

Read Luke 24:1-12

from Rev. Thaddeus B. Allen, Regional Minister

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!

This ancient cry of the church is close on our lips this day as we celebrate the defining moment of the world and of our lives. God has chosen to grant us life and life eternal through Jesus Christ who lives.

This is no idle tale! Run quickly towards this gift and be amazed. Live and live joyously! On this most holy of days, the church and the faithful have something important to say. Darkness and pain will not carry the day. God has declared and insured that light and life win. So, today, let us sing with all of creation that Christ is Risen! And may our lives be a reflection of this risen life.

Almighty God, on this precious Easter morning, we live with you and sing your praises. May we unleash all the life that you have put within us, and may we live for you. We are yours, and we love you. Amen.

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Prayerscapes for Lent

Reflections and Prayers from The Order of Ministry

Mar. 28: Palm/Passion Sunday

Read Luke 19:28-40

from Rev. Judy Bennett, Island Christian Church, Wheeling

As I grow older, I find it increasingly hard to tolerate noise and confusion. Loud music, TV, radio, crowds where people are yelling at the top of their lungs: all of these things and more seem to unnerve me. And I've just come to realize how noisy this passage from Luke seems to be. People singing and shouting – each one attempting to outdo the others. The scowling Pharisees trying to get Jesus to quiet them. People throwing cloaks and waving branches. Why, it's a wonder the poor little donkey didn't buck and run.

And Jesus calmly declares "...if these were silent, the stones would shout out." Today, we are called to be loud and noisy in our praise of Jesus. Not to stand complaining with those who would decry his presence. God inhabits the praises of God's people. And so we shout for the world to hear – "*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

Praise to you, O God our Savior!

May our lips and our lives proclaim your coming in our lives!

Mar. 29 – Holy Monday

Read Psalm 51:1-13

from Rev. Dr. Larry Grimes, Community Christian Church,

Beech Bottom, WV and Bethany College Dir. of Church Relations

Ready or not, here I come!

Before you do, hide your face from my sins

Ready or not, here I come!

Before you do, blot out all my iniquities.

Ready or not, here I come!

Before you do, blot out my transgressions.

Ready or not, here I come!

Before you do, scrub me clean, wash me white

Ready or not, here I come!

Before you do, meet me with your steadfast love

Ready or not here I come

Before you do, greet me with your mighty mercy

Ready or not here I come!

As you do, let me sing with joy and gladness
Ready or not here I come!
As you do, let my crushed bones rejoice
Ready or not here I come!

Mar. 30 – Holy Tuesday **Read Isaiah 42:1-9**
from Rev. Aaron Watkins, First Christian Church, Bluefield

“I am God. That’s my name.” These are the words of the Prophet as paraphrased in Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*. What is it that is so significant about a name? We all have them. So what? The thing is they are our identities. And the irony is for most of us our names were chosen by someone else, most likely our parents. Some of us in our lifetimes choose to change the names that were given for us before we entered this world. For others they are changed when we get married. Many of our names have meanings, some don’t. When it comes to God, we as the people of God call God by many names---Father, Creator, Lord and Maker are among many of them. But first and foremost, He is the God who gave us a Savior in Jesus Christ. He is the Almighty who calls us to live right and well. Despite our sins, God continues to take our side and backs us up. Wow! There is nothing more powerful than the name of God!

Holy God, may my lips and my life proclaim praise to your Name!

Mar. 31 – Holy Wednesday **Read Isaiah 52:12 – 53:12**
from Rev. David Chafin, Deputy Regional Minister

It may be difficult to find any redeeming virtue in times of unjust or unwarranted suffering. None of us want to imagine those we love being treated with the cruelty suffered by the Servant described in this text. Yet beyond what the eye can see or the imagination can embrace, is the redeeming word of hope to all who are afflicted, to all who suffer: *“Out of his anguish shall he see light ... the righteous one shall make many righteous.”* God can bring out of the darkest night a new day. Let us claim this day with gratitude to the One who redeems them all.

*Gracious giver of all our days, grant us open spirits
to see your redeeming grace at work in the dark places of our world,
and in the hard places of our lives.*

April 1 – Maundy Thursday **Read John 13:1-17, 31b-35**
from Rev. Thaddaeus B. Allen, Regional Minister

Tonight is a sacred time as we enter into the Easter Triduum. As we prepare the events that will unfold, we hear again, that Jesus gives his people a New Commandment (13:34). In his service and in the foreshadowing of his saving work, our Lord asks us to love one another.

Some will experience foot washing this night. Most will participate in the Lord’s Supper this night. In all of our worship we will be called to a renewed sense of service and being. God, through Jesus, is calling us to a sacrificial way of life. This life is laid out for us in Jesus. And as participants in life with Jesus, he simply calls us to love. On this day, there can be no doubt, of our Lord’s love for us always.

Giver of every good and perfect gift, we humbly bow before you this day.

*We ask that you might give us the strength to love
in new and powerful ways.*

*You call us to a new way of being,
and we yield ourselves to you and to your church. In Christ, we pray.*

April 2 – Good Friday **Read Luke 23:33-49**
from Rev. Joshua Patty, Central Christian Church, Fairmont

Luke reminds us as he tells of Christ’s crucifixion that there were winners and losers. The crowd witnessed the entire spectacle, then returned home “beating their breasts.” The same people who had cried out for blood got their wish. Standing “at a distance,” likely in silence and grief, were the losers, many of Jesus’ disciples and loved ones, who witnessed not only the brutal execution of their friend and teacher, but the violent self-satisfaction of the crowd.

You and I watch this unfold at a greater distance across the centuries. Brashly, the symbol of horror – the cross – has become the positive representation of our faith, in our art, our architecture, and even our fashion.

Harder to admit, given nearly 2000 years since that awful Friday, is that we sometimes bear more in common with those who demanded, and then cheered, Jesus’ death. We seek violence and call it justice; we blame our problems on others and scapegoat them. In actions large and small, we have cried out for blood, “Crucify him!” Christ bore it then, and bears it still – the scorn, the condescension, the blood thirst, the sins. He suffered, bled and died. But he forgave them. And he forgives us.

*As we have seen the cross of Jesus once again, O God,
help us to receive your boundless mercy which it depicts,
and which it delivers to our lives and to our world.*