



# HOLY WEEK GUIDE

2026



# WELCOME

The final week of the earthly life of Jesus began with Sunday's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, progressed until His death on Friday, and concluded with His resurrection the following Sunday morning.

This devotional guide is intended to provide a starting point for meditation, discussion, and worship as we remember the sacrifice of Jesus and celebrate His resurrection.

## Readings

Each day in this guide will include suggested readings from the Gospel accounts describing what took place on that corresponding day in the final week of Jesus' life. You may choose to follow a particular Gospel account or compare multiple accounts. Note that not every Gospel has intended to present events in exact chronological order, so some readings move back and forth across chapters.

## Reflection

Following each day's readings, there will be a few questions to encourage meditation and discussion. It is hoped these will be helpful whether used individually or with the whole family.

## Response

Each day has also been paired with a hymn and a prayer. As an aid to the singing of the hymns, a QR code has been included. Scanning this code will take you to an online resource where you can freely view the music for the hymn or launch a slideshow of the lyrics accompanied by music. To do so, click the "Present" button near the top of the page.

## Good Friday Services

You are invited to attend one of VBC's Good Friday services on April 3 at 5 or 7 pm. This is a somber time of reflection with music, Scripture reading, prayer, and communion as we remember Christ's sacrifice and prepare our hearts for Resurrection Sunday. Childcare is provided in the nursery for children 2 years old and younger.



# SUNDAY

## Reading

Matthew 21:1-11, 17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19

## Reflection

What were the major events that took place on this day?

What was Jesus communicating when He chose a donkey colt to ride into Jerusalem on? ( cf. Zechariah 9:9)

What was the significance of the words the people cried out as Jesus approached Jerusalem?

Why did Jesus weep?

How do we wish to demonstrate our worship of Jesus this week as we meditate on His sacrifice and resurrection?

## Response (Prayer & Hymn)

Praise him who comes, and is to come! Hosanna to the Father's mighty Son, here and in the highest.

Praise him who once humbled himself in love to save our human race. Praise him for his Father's boundless grace!

Who would not stop to see and wonder at how low your love bent down? A donkey once carried you, here on the Earth. You, and your mite and holiness! And in your pity for us, you serve and bless our fallen race.

This day is joy-filled for all creation. My glad soul will sing a song of praise, and wave branches of Thanksgiving that were once just palm branches, thrown in front of you by children.

Now we own your hidden majesty, and we cry with those children: Hosanna to the son of David! Amen. (Ephraim the Syrian)<sup>1</sup>



Hymn: All Glory, Laud, and Honor

<https://my.hymnary.org/song/45/all-glory-laud-and-honor>

# MONDAY

## Reading

Matthew 21:18-19, 12-13; Mark 11:12-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 12:20-50

## Reflection

What were the major events that took place on this day?

What are the things that are perhaps distracting us from our meditation on Jesus this week?

How do the images of judgment and cleansing help us appreciate the work of Jesus even more?

## Response (Prayer & Hymn)

O holy God, righteous Judge, my life terrifies me. A careful look discloses only sin and unfruitfulness, and what fruit that does appear is either so false, or imperfect, or in some way so corrupted, that it either cannot please you, or is absolutely displeasing to your eyes. Truly, my whole life is, on the one hand, sinful and worthy of your condemnation. And on the other hand, it is unfruitful and wrecked. But why distinguish between unfruitful and worthy of condemnation?

Surely if it is unfruitful it is to be condemned, for every tree that does not bring forth good fruit will be cast into the fire (Matthew 3:10). And not only will that tree be burned which bears evil fruit, but also the one that bears no fruit. So when I think of those on your left hand in the judgment, Lord, I am horrified, since they are there not because they have done anything bad, but because they have done nothing good (Matthew 25:32). To the hungry they gave no food, and the thirsty no drink.

How then can I possibly be saved? Who is he that is called the Wonderful, the Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)? It is Jesus himself, the very one who is my judge, and in whose hands I am trembling with fear. So I take courage, and I despair not. I hope in him and flee to him for refuge. Oh Jesus Christ, for your name's sake, deal with me according to your name. Look on me with mercy, a miserable sinner, as I call upon you. It is true oh Lord, that my participation in sin calls for condemnation, and my penitence can never satisfy you. But it is also certain that your mercy exceeds all my offense.

In you, oh Lord, I put my trust, amen. (Johann Gerhard)<sup>2</sup>



Hymn: He Leadeth Me

<https://my.hymnary.org/song/97/he-leadeth-me>

# TUESDAY

## Reading

Matthew 21:18-25:46 (If time is short, consider focusing on Matthew 22:34-46)

Mark 11:20-13:37

Luke 20:1-21:38

## Reflection

What were the significant events that took place on this day?

Pick one of the parables in Matthew, Mark, or Luke, and explain what the central point of the parable is and why Jesus would have wanted to teach this lesson so close to His death and resurrection.

How did Jesus model the two great commandments for us in His final week?

What themes does Jesus emphasize about the future (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) that should be on our minds today as believers (e.g. warnings against false teachers)?

## Response (Prayer & Hymn)

Come, Lord, and use your keys. Open, so we understand.

You reveal so much, yet you are not believed. You warn us from the Scriptures, yet are not understood. Where hearts are closed, open and enter in.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45).

Open, Lord – yes, open the hearts of those who doubt you. (Augustine of Hippo)<sup>3</sup>



Hymn: Rejoice, the Lord is King

<https://my.hymnary.org/song/81/rejoice-the-lord-is-king>

# WEDNESDAY

## Reading

Matthew 21:18-19, 12-13; Mark 11:12-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 12:20-50

## Reflection

What were the major events that took place on this day?

What are the things that are perhaps distracting us from our meditation on Jesus this week?

How do the images of judgment and cleansing help us appreciate the work of Jesus even more?

## Response (Prayer & Hymn)

What had you done, my Savior, that Judas betrayed you, and you were led, bound as a lamb to the slaughter? What evil did you commit, to be falsely accused and unjustly condemned? What was your offense? Whom did you ever wrong, to be discouraged with whips, crowned with thorns, reviled, buffeted, and beaten?

Oh Lord, how did you deserve to be spit upon, covered with shame? To have your garments parted and your hands and feet nailed to a cross? To be lifted upon the cursed tree, to be crucified among thieves? To endure such a sea of God's wrath, that made you cry out, as if you had been forsaken by God your Father? To have your innocent heart pierced with a cruel spear, and your innocent blood spilled before your mother's eyes?

I can find no offense in you. The centurion who executed you confessed you to be the very Son of God. The thief that hung with you said you had done nothing wrong. So what caused this cruel disgrace, suffering, and death?

Lord, I caused your sorrows. My sin brought about your shame, my failings your injuries. I committed the fault, and you are plagued for the offense. I am guilty, and you are charged. I sinned, and you suffered the death. You hung on the cross. Oh the deepness of God's love, the wonder of his grace! Mercy without measure! What can I say? I was proud; you are humble. I was disobedient; you became obedient. I ate the forbidden fruit; you hung on the cursed tree. Oh Lord, let me never forget your infinite love. Amen. (Lewis Bayly)<sup>4</sup>



Hymn: O Sacred Head,  
Now Wounded

[https://my.hymnary.org/song/79/  
o-sacred-head-now-wounded](https://my.hymnary.org/song/79/o-sacred-head-now-wounded)

# THURSDAY

## Reading

Matthew 26:17-46; Mark 14:12-42; Luke 22:7-46; John 13:1-17:26

## Reflection

What were the significant events that took place on this day?

What was the original significance of the Passover meal?

How did Jesus fulfill the promise of Passover, and what did He inaugurate that was even better than the covenant God had made with His people at Sinai?

## Response (Prayer & Hymn)

Precious God, precious Jesus! What a love is here. Oh for grace, for love, for life, for every gift of my God and Savior. Oh that my lips would praise you constantly and unceasingly, forever, as the drops of the honeycomb which follow each other – sweetly and freely, from the abundance of my heart, not constrained, except in the constraint of your love. I pray that prayer would follow praise, and praise grow into prayer. That there may be a movement to magnify and adore the riches of your grace. That the name of Jesus may be always in my mouth from that one blessed source, that Jesus lives in my heart, and rules, and reigns, and is formed there in the hope of glory.

Blessed Jesus, you are the one your people will praise. You are the next of kin, the nearest of all relations, and the dearest of all relatives. And by your blood you have redeemed both soul and body, both hands and inheritance. You have redeemed the whole, never more to be lost or forfeited. And now, Lord, your jubilee trumpet sounds, and the everlasting gospel is heard in our land, to give liberty to the captive, sight to the blind, to bring the prisoners out of the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of prison. Make me know the joyful sound, and daily walk in the light of your countenance. Cause me, by the sweet influence of your Spirit, to live in the constant expectation of the year of the everlasting jubilee when the trumpet of the archangel will finally sound, and all your redeemed return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy.

Your people will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Hallelujah! Amen! (Robert Hawker)<sup>5</sup>



Hymn: Jesus, Thou Joy  
of Loving Hearts

[https://my.hymnary.org/song/144/  
jesu-thou-joy-of-loving-hearts](https://my.hymnary.org/song/144/jesu-thou-joy-of-loving-hearts)

The background of the entire page is a photograph of three crosses on a hill, silhouetted against a warm, orange and red sunset sky. The crosses are arranged with one in the center and two on either side. The text 'GOOD FRIDAY' is overlaid on the lower half of the image in a large, bold, yellow, distressed font.

# GOOD FRIDAY

“But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; the punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” - Isaiah 53:5

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Good Friday services at VBC: 5 & 7 pm

# SATURDAY

## Reading

Isaiah 53

## Reflection

In Isaiah 53, what did God tell us the death of Jesus would be for?

Why do you think the people of Israel did not understand this when Jesus finally came?

As you reflect on this week of meditating on final week of the life of Jesus, what has made the biggest impression on you? How do you desire to see this week impacting your worship of Jesus both in your heart and in your life?

Looking back at Isaiah 53, what hints do you see pointing to Easter morning, the greatest plot twist in all of history?

## Response (Prayer & Hymn)

Lord, we are inclined to be fainthearted in our weakness of the flesh. Of ourselves we are unable to behold the bright shine and clearness of your glorious resurrection.

So strengthen and comfort us that we may always believe the resurrection of your Son. Through him we receive the holy hope of the life to come, and the immortal resurrection of our bodies, so that we may also comfort and strengthen others who are weak.

Cause this hard earth of our flesh to quake and move, through the power of your Spirit, to holy and fruitful repentance, change, and conversion.

Preserve us so we never resist the truth nor take part in lies. Help us to love the truth. Keep us from error and blindness.

Let our joy be in the cross of Jesus Christ your Son, and our life in his resurrection – so that we with him, and in him, may truly rise again here to a godly, righteous, and sober life, and in the world to come to the blessed everlasting. Amen.

(Myles Coverdale)<sup>6</sup>



Hymn: Man of Sorrows,  
What a Name

[https://my.hymnary.org/song/221/  
man-of-sorrows-what-a-name](https://my.hymnary.org/song/221/man-of-sorrows-what-a-name)

# Footnotes

1 Robert Elmer, *Fount of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church*, 1st ed, Prayers of the Church Series (Lexham Press, 2022), 305.

2 Robert Elmer, *Grace from Heaven: Prayers of the Reformation*, 1st ed, Prayers of the Church Series (Lexham Press, 2024), 114-15.

3 Elmer, *Fount of Heaven*, 227.

4 Robert Elmer, *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, 1st ed, Prayers of the Church Series (Lexham Press, 2019), 202-3.

5 Elmer, *Piercing Heaven*, 222-23.

6 Elmer, *Grace from Heaven*, 132-33.

