

Hobby WEEK

— & EASTER DEVOTIONALS —

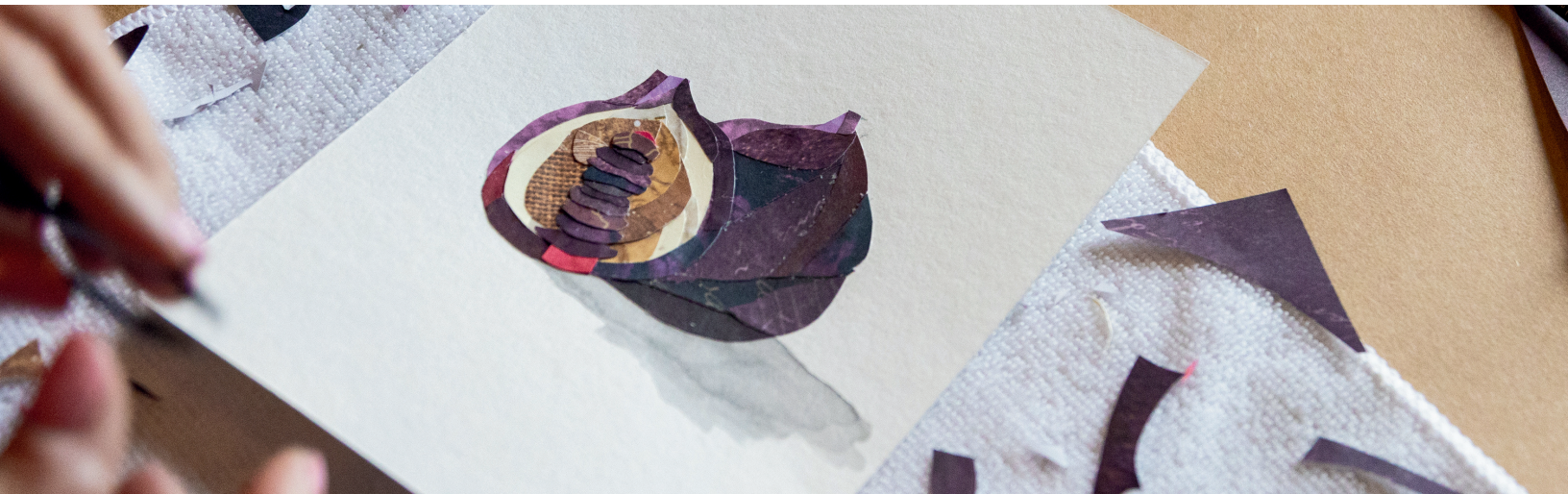


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PALM SUNDAY

ASHLEY LYNCH



The familiar opening scene of Holy Week sets a positive emotional tone that will quickly deteriorate in the coming days. Christened “Palm Sunday,” this day is known for throngs of Jewish pilgrims waving palm branches, eager cries of “Hosanna!” erupting through the crowd, and the God-man entering Jerusalem upon Zechariah’s prophesied donkey. But the image of a jubilant, misguided celebration contains a less obvious spiritual significance.

In context of the Passover, which overlapped Holy Week, Palm Sunday happens to be lamb selection day. Previously, in Exodus 12, God commanded Israel on the eve of their deliverance from Egypt that *“on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses . . . Your lamb shall be without blemish . . . and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight”* (v. 3, 5a, 6). Palm Sunday coincides with this special tenth day when **all sacrificial lambs were set apart for Passover.**

Therefore, Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem on the tenth day of the month is even more calculated and meaningful than meets the eye. Jesus does something wildly more extraordinary than claim victory as King over Rome, as the Jews supposed. Jesus enters Jerusalem on lamb selection day to boldly identify Himself as the sacrificial lamb awaiting a gruesome death sentence later that week, atoning for all sinners forever (*Hebrews 9:26*).

Even more staggering is the reality that the Triune God planned this particular lamb selection day before the beginning of time. God the Father planned before sin entered the world to sacrificially give Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be our perfect substitutionary sacrifice, out of incomprehensible love for sinners (*John 3:16*). And Jesus, in perfect submission to His Father, voluntarily laid His life down: *“I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord”* (*John 10:17b-18*). John the Baptist was prophetically spot-on when he exclaimed early in Jesus’ ministry, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (*John 1:29*).

Even as the crowds celebrated, Gospel writer Luke informs us that Jesus had actually wept as he approached Jerusalem (*Luke 19:41*). He was not entering the city as a King on his day of victory, but rather, a sacrificial lamb, volunteering to be slaughtered in a mere matter of days.

HOLY MONDAY

WILL FULLER

Jesus Clears the Temple

We walked through the Temple with him,
The courts clogged with the clatter of commerce
Of another Passover -
People busy buying and selling God's favor,
Bartering for forgiveness,
Money passing hands.

He stopped and looked around.
Something changed.

"My house," He said,
And something in the tone told us
He really did see the Temple as his Home.

"My house is meant to be a place of *prayer*. For all nations."

Fire -
The same that lit the little tree along Moses' path,
And guided his flock by night through the wilderness,
That consumed Elijah's offering
And lifted him up to heaven, alive -
Transfigured Jesus' eyes,
Those wells that so often gushed
With compassion and mercy.

"But *you* have made it a den of *thieves*."

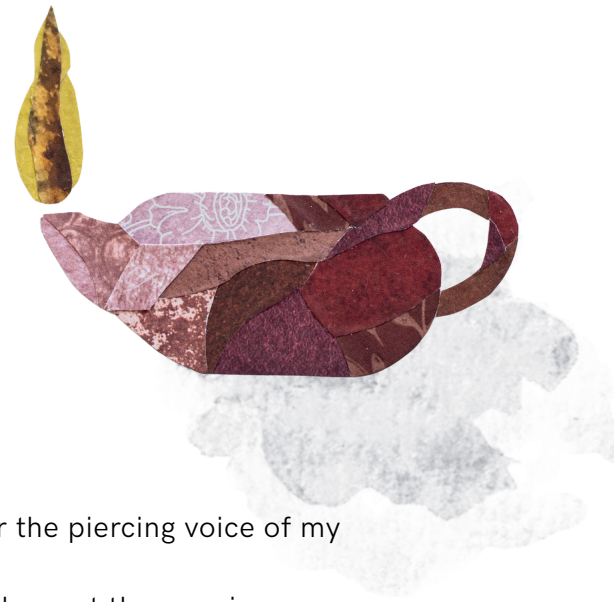
We stood stunned
As he flipped tables,
Drove out vendors -
Upheaving, spitting them out into the streets outside.

In the wake of His storm,
In the dread silence of the courtyards
We held our breath.
What happens now?



HOLY TUESDAY

BRENDAN MICHAEL



The Temple Teachings [Matt. 22-25]

Amid this weary world of swirling chaos and mass injustice, I hear the piercing voice of my Lord, crying out across the temple courts:

Preaching parables that challenge barriers and welcome those at the margins;
Lamenting that moral leaders now neglect the weighty matters of the Law - Justice,
Mercy, Faithfulness;
Prophesying wars and rumors of wars with far-seeing eyes to the very end of the age.

In all this, I see Him poised upon the threshold of His coming pain, facing down the haughty and hateful gaze of those in power. I see Him turn to me, now - one for whom He soon will die in order to redeem - and still I hear His cry across the desert of my self-righteous heart:

That I should welcome the marginalized;
That I should seek Justice, love Mercy, live Faithfully;
That I should name the True King in a war-torn time of false messiahs;
That I should know that 'til I taste the fullness of the Age to Come, I too often stand,
in fear, among the crowd that soon will call for the rabble-rousing Speaker of Truth to
be silenced.

My Lord, forgive me.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

ASHLEY LYNCH



Holy Wednesday commemorates that fateful day when Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' closest followers, betrayed him.

Judas Iscariot was a pawn in Satan's devious attempt to sabotage God's plan of redemption for humanity. Strategically close to Jesus, Judas Iscariot did not set out to achieve the label of most notorious traitor. Jesus prayerfully chose and invited Judas to be one of twelve men in all of history to minister alongside and be an apprentice of the Son of God. Judas witnessed miracles, healings and exorcisms - in fact, he participated in some! He listened to Jesus' warnings, prayers and teachings.

Satan had not outwitted our omniscient God, however! Mystery of mysteries, over and above diabolical plans and deplorable human sin, Acts 2:23 reassures us that Jesus' death was not only the product of evil intentions. Rather, and most importantly, His [Jesus'] death was *"according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God"* to offer salvation to every lost image-bearer... including the ones who delivered Him to the cross in the first place.... Including Judas Iscariot.

Therein lies the great tragedy of Judas' betrayal. It's not the fact that Judas betrayed Jesus; in some way, we have all betrayed Jesus with our sin-bent hearts. Judas' betrayal did not have to be the end of his story; he could have repented and found overwhelming forgiveness. He certainly experienced profound regret, but Judas did not repent. And that led him to end his own life.

Yes, Judas' story ends tragically. But let us not miss the profound significance of the truth that Jesus' love and forgiveness is so comprehensive He would have forgiven and restored His own betrayer. No sin is too horrific for Jesus to forgive, if we only humble ourselves and repent

MAUNDY THURSDAY

WILL FULLER

The New Command

From Sinai my voice was heard
By Moses, all alone;
And he brought down my written word
On tablets made of stone.

A new command I give to you,
To love as you've been loved;
From faithful heart, and ever true
With mercy from above.

Through doubt and fears beguiling,
I loved you, unawares;
My Love was reconciling
You in spite of toils, and snares.

Soon I'll show you to the full
How far my Love extends
Through nail-ripped hands and suffering cruel
Unto the bitter end.

So you must be to those you meet
And being, show them Me;
And through Your love the world will greet
My Love, borne forth through Thee.



GOOD FRIDAY

BRENDAN MICHAEL



The King Enthroned [John 18-19]

They say the kings of old would sit upon a throne, a crown upon their brow, and look to the sky for a sign among the stars to know their reign was favored by the gods. With grim satisfaction they would behold their far domain and proclaim their glory amid the chanting cries of their subjects - the praise of men they would soon oppress and enslave.

The enthronement of our King, the True King, was a different tale.

His throne a Roman cross and crown a wreath of thorns,
His sign in the sky a vast abyss of eclipsed darkness, as if to speak the silence of God,
With weary sorrow he beheld his kingdom amid the sound of mocking cries - the scorn
of men he had come to forgive and deliver.

On this day, when the Maker of Life was murdered and his cold, broken body was laid beneath the ground, when all hope was lost and the Enemy seemed to triumph, we remember the grief before the glory.

We linger in the lament, that our world is broken enough that its Beloved must die to set it right.

We dwell in the darkness of this day, in the shadow of the blotted sun, when the Everlasting One stepped down into Death in the manner of all men, and for a time the people of God had lost everything.

Lord, have mercy on us.

SILENT SATURDAY

BEN LYNCH

Silence is a sound nobody hears
One only found by attentive ears
Silence, a sound everyone fears
For all noise has been strangled by their tears
Heartbeats and laughter nobody hears
Silence alone enters these ears
Death...a silence everyone fears
The only sound is falling tears
"Freedom!" the captives long to hear
Soon to be heard by every ear
But the dawn has yet to come, I fear
The dawn has not come...I fear
Where is He to wipe away every tear?
Where is He to cast out my fear?
The stone will roll away, I hear
But no rumbling has reached my ear
Saturday is still dark, I fear.
Is the dawn coming?
Leave me, leave me to my tears.



RESURRECTION SUNDAY

WILL FULLER



The Light Shines in the Dark

Praise be to God for His victory over sin and death! Arriving at Resurrection Sunday feels like the end of a long journey we've been on since Ash Wednesday. We've walked with Jesus through His life and ministry, and ultimately this week to His betrayal, suffering, and death; today, we rejoice in his new life.

There's a small line in John that always strikes me. He recounts Jesus, leaning back at the Last Supper table into Judas's breast, offering him the dipped bread - signifying him as the betrayer. John describes Judas walking away from that intimate table to turn Jesus over, filled with the presence of the evil one, and then he says, "**and it was night**" (13:30). *What an appropriate statement.* Jesus' disciples must have, in the wake of His death, like darkness had descended over their hearts. Often the darkness of our world and our lives can be similarly overwhelming.

Yet we know that the Light of Life, Jesus, rose out of the darkness of Hell and into new life. John says that Jesus resurrected "**early on the first day...while it was still dark**" (20:1). *What a glorious truth.* In the depths of the disciples' despair...in the darkness of our own piercings and pains...Jesus arose.

May the shining light of Jesus's resurrection pierce the night of our hearts today. May we rejoice in the truth: He is alive. "**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it**" (John 1:5).

ASCENSION

BRENDAN MICHAEL



The King Rises [Acts 1:6-11]

When He had somehow gone, and the angels finished speaking and the disquieting silence settled upon the disciples, it was clear that a corner in the cosmos had been turned. Everything changed.

And yet -

I find my mind trips upon this event. I struggle to hold it within my frail imagination.

Did the Apostles blink their eyes in surprise as their resurrected Rabbi began to float and drift into the sky?

Or was it more like reversed lightning - a flash and concussive force as the air was torn in two? Was it the throwing open of a portal, a door between realities, when He vanished from the earth?

As the Psalmist admits, such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

What I do know is this: the King has somehow stepped further up and further in.

He has set his foot upon this footstool of a world, His heel crushing the ancient Enemy.
Jesus the Son of Man has taken a seat upon the throne of all things, having moved like a wild wind beyond the walls of Time.

His nail-pierced hands, on which our names are graven, now grip the cosmic scepter;
His eyes that bathed the cripple with compassion now cast their vision beyond the far horizon of heaven and earth.

His patience that endured the deepest suffering now dwells at peace;

His presence on the earth now takes a new form - His Church the Beloved, born of His blood, breathed-into by His Spirit, struggling forth to labor in love for the slow birth of a New Creation, where everything sad will someday come untrue.

Each day that I wake to rise and live my life again, choosing to bend the knee and follow, to offer myself to the long redeeming and resurrecting of the world, I remember -

that on the other side of things, just around the corner, though a crack in the door and a turn in the road, in a world more Real than this shadowland,

The King has ascended.

He is alive.

Amen.