

MARCH 29, 2029

ENTERING HOLY WEEK

By Pr. Beate Chun

Entering Holy Week

Grace to you and peace
from the one who is,
and the one who was,
and the one who is to come.

So now the church has entered Holy Week.
At the beginning of this service,
we have celebrated the
triumphant entry of Jesus.
Now what?

I think most of us imagine
that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem
and shortly thereafter
had one more meal with his disciples—
the meal we now call
the Last Supper.

And then he was arrested,
brought before Caiaphas and Herod,
and condemned to death on the cross.

But in reality, there were
many more events
that took place during those
last days after Jesus entered the city.

So today, let's imagine
we could travel back in time
and join one of the disciples
while they are in the middle of these events.
Let's join **Thaddaeus**
and ask him:
what has happened so far?

A Disciple's Perspective

The last few days?
What a whirlwind of activities!
It all left me exhausted...
and also mystified.

Starting with the moment
we arrived in Jerusalem...
And *how* we arrived in Jerusalem!

Jesus had asked for a donkey.
A donkey!
A donkey which we had
to borrow from a village along the road.

And then he rode into the city
on that donkey!

Quickly, word got out.
Crowds began to gather.
People started spreading their cloaks on the road.
Others cut branches and waved them.
Someone shouted,
“Hosanna to the Son of David!”
And suddenly, many voices joined in.

What a spectacle!

And then we went to the temple.
I had seen the temple courts many times,

but never like that day.
The sellers of doves,
the money changers calling out their rates,
the clatter of coins on tables—
What mayhem!

And Jesus walked right in
and began overturning tables.
The merchants fled.
The doves burst from their cages.
Coins scattered across the stone floor.
“My Father’s house is meant to be a house of prayer!” Jesus shouted.
His voice carried across the courtyard.

It became very quiet.
Then the blind came in.
And the lame.
People who had been sitting along the edges of the temple.
And he healed them, right then and there in the temple.
The temple no longer a market place
but a place of welcome and healing.

The children began shouting again,
“Hosanna to the Son of David!”
Their voices echoed against the high walls.

By evening, we were exhausted.
Jesus led us out of the city to Bethany.
The road was quiet under the fading light.

I thought perhaps things would calm down.

Increasing Tension

The next day, we went back to the temple—
again, the temple!
Many leaders surrounded us—
priests, elders, scholars of the law.

They debated with Jesus
and demanded to know
where his authority came from.

Jesus answered them with questions of his own,
and with stories and parables
that made the crowd laugh
and made the leaders angry.

The more he spoke,
the more his opponents seemed to get riled up.

Then yesterday, he spoke again for hours—
about the law,
about love of God and neighbor,
about hypocrisy and justice.
Some walked away shaking their heads.
Others looked ready to murder him.

Day by day,
the tension is getting worse!

The Anointing at Bethany

And then tonight!
You can't believe what happened tonight!

As usual, we went back to Bethany.
This time we were at the house of Simon the Leper.
It was meant to be a simple supper.
We were all tired.

Then the door opened
and a woman came in.
She carried a big alabaster jar in her hands.
She carried it very carefully,
like it was her firstborn.

I was wondering what she had brought,
but before we could even ask a question,
she had walked over to Jesus and broken the jar open.

Instantly, the whole room smelled
of her ointment.

Rich. Sweet. Overwhelming.

It was nard!

Nard comes from far away,
and is very expensive, that much I know.

I had smelled it only once before,
in the house of a wealthy man.

And can you believe it?

She poured all of it.

The entire jar.

All of it over the head of Jesus.

as if he is a king!

Like King David!

And does she imagine herself
some sort of prophet,
like Samuel,
going around doing anointings?
What had gotten into her!
Surely she was out of her mind!

The oil ran through his hair

and down onto his robe.

We were speechless!

All I could think of was:

How much that must have cost.

The others said it aloud.

“Why this waste?”

“That perfume could have been sold
for a great deal of money
that could have been given to the poor.”

My thoughts exactly!
And then—to pour it on his head,
And then Jesus turned toward us and said:
“Why are you troubling her?
She has done a beautiful thing for me.”

He touched the oil in his hair,
as if he really liked it.
We were all so surprised.

And then he said:
“The poor you will always have with you,
but you will not always have me.”
“When she poured this ointment on my body,
she prepared me for my burial.”

His burial?
What was that supposed to mean?
For the world of me,
sometimes I don't understand Jesus.
Prepared for his burial.

I have been thinking about those words ever since.
I know for a while now
he has been talking about his death,
but I never took it seriously.
I never wanted to take it in.

But now, in the middle
of all these conflicts,
with the leaders becoming
more and more angry each day,
I really have begun to worry:
Where will this end?
How will it end?

And now Jesus is talking about his burial—
that is more than I can stand to think about right now.

But, thank goodness it is **Passover week**.
For sure nothing bad can happen
during such a holy week, right?

And speaking of Passover,
I have also been wondering about that.
Will we have a Passover meal together?
Where might it take place?
How will we get ready?
We haven't even bought a lamb yet!

Oh, how my head is spinning...

Returning to Our Time

Alright,
let's leave Thaddaeus with his
spinning head and return
to our own times.

By the way,
all these events I just recounted,
including the many trips to the temple,
you can read about all of them
in the Gospel of Matthew.
Including what happened afterward.
How Jesus did get killed,
and how the woman was right
to express her love and devotion
just before his death.
And what about us?
In what ways might we
express our love, our devotion?
Can we even pause long enough
to focus on Christ and his suffering
in the midst of our busy days,
filled with a million little tasks,

filled with big worries about
our world and our future?

Can we stop and just
be with Jesus this week?

Amen.

Sermon for Sunday, March 29, 2026
Palm Sunday

Presented at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church San Francisco

Text: [Matthew 26:6-13 NRSVCE - The Anointing at Bethany - Now while - Bible Gateway](#)

Tags: Palm Sunday | Holy Week | Anointing at Bethany