

**THE KINGDOM
IS AT HAND**



HOLY WEEK 2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Monday	9
Tuesday	13
Wednesday	
• Morning	16
• Night Gathering	19
Thursday	22
Friday	25
Saturday	28

**REPENT, FOR THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...**

...IS AT HAND.

MATTHEW 4:17



DEAR MERCY COMMONS,

Thank you for joining us in this time of fasting and prayer as we prepare our hearts. We are fasting from food Monday through Wednesday of Holy Week. Our last meal will be on Sunday night, and we will resume eating on Wednesday at our host homes, where we will continue our Holy Week journey in smaller groups. Our desire is that this booklet helps us to be intentional as we engage in the spiritual discipline of fasting from food.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 4:17

This is the announcement that defines everything.

Before the cross, before the resurrection, before the crowds fully understood what was happening, Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was not far off, but near. Not distant, but breaking in. Not someday, but now.

The Kingdom is at hand.

And yet, like those in Matthew’s Gospel, we often find ourselves unprepared for the kind of Kingdom Jesus brings. We long for God to move, but resist His authority. We want His comfort, but hesitate at His commands. We celebrate Him as Savior, but struggle to receive Him as King.

Throughout Holy Week, we see this tension clearly. Crowds shout “Hosanna,” yet misunderstand what kind of King He is. Religious leaders resist Him. Disciples falter. And still, Jesus moves steadily forward, fully surrendered to the Father, fully embodying the Kingdom He proclaimed.

This raises the question for us:

If the Kingdom is truly at hand, are we ready for it?

Fasting is one of the ways we prepare. We step away from what fills us so that we can become aware of what truly sustains us. We quiet the noise so we can hear the voice of the King. We deny ourselves not as an end in itself, but to make room for repentance, for clarity, for surrender.

Fasting exposes what we rely on.

It reveals where we resist God's rule.

It creates space for the Kingdom to take deeper root in us.

Because the Kingdom of God is not just something we believe in, it is something we are invited to enter.

As you walk through this week, the invitation is simple but not easy:

Repent.

Prepare the way.

Make room for the King.

May this be a time where we do not just reflect on what God has done, but actively align our lives with what He is doing now. The Kingdom is at hand. He is nearer than we think.

May you know His presence, His authority, and His kindness as you give yourself to a deeper, more intentional pursuit of Him. May you experience the joy that comes not from feeding the flesh, but from being formed by the King.

All for Him,

Nick

FASTING

WHY DO WE FAST?

Fasting has long been a powerful component of Christian worship. Jesus began His public ministry after 40 days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness. He spoke of fasting in the Gospels (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15) and the early church practiced it (Acts 9:9, 13:2, 14:23). Fasting has been a part of the Mercy Commons story, too, and many significant moments of direction and vision for the church have come directly out of church-wide fasts. **But what is fasting for?** Is it just some sort of sanctified diet? In short, we deny ourselves food to feast on Jesus.

- The physical hunger we feel in a fast intensifies our longings for Jesus. In our pain and discomfort, we desperately seek God and cry out to him. We recognize more clearly our dependence on God and our hunger and thirst for more of his presence.
- The combination of prayer and fasting (the two always go together!) helps remove distractions and allows us to focus on Jesus. The time we don't spend eating is more time we can spend in silence, prayer, or listening to God. In our busy lives, fasting helps us create space to meditate on God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to speak.
- All of this is not just for our own spiritual renewal, but to empower us to bring renewal to our world. Significantly, Jesus fasted just before beginning His public ministry. The 40 days in the wilderness were for Jesus a preparatory time, a season of struggle and temptation and isolation (similar to the 40 days the Israelites spent in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land), and yet one that clearly catalyzed His forward momentum in mission.

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Consider maintaining a family meal practice even if you or your kids are skipping meals. Spend some time reading the day's passage, then use the family discussion questions to prepare your hearts and apply the scripture. Spend some time in prayer together using the provided prayer as a guide. To make this time special, consider lighting a candle, dimming the lights, sitting on the floor on cushions, or outside if the weather permits.

TIPS FOR FASTING

- If this is your first fast, ease into it. Don't feel the pressure to go without food for all three days. Start with fasting for a meal a day, then gradually build up to a full day.
 - An intermediate fast is known as a "Daniel Fast." This is where you abstain from choice food, meat, and wine and only eat vegetables and drink water.
 - If you are fasting from food, we typically encourage a juice fast that includes fruit juice, soup/broth, and water.
 - We only recommend a full water-only fast if you have experience fasting and/or have participated in one of these other versions before.
 - The idea behind fasting is to abstain from a routine habit/practice for the sake of spiritual hunger. You may not be able to fast from food for health reasons, so consider abstaining from social media, television, or any other habitual activity during the day that you can set aside for focused prayer.
 - Don't eat a massive, greasy meal as your last meal. You'll regret it!
 - At some point during each day of the fast, find a 30-minute time slot (at least) to read that day's devotional. Ideally, this is in a quiet, distraction-free place where you can have uninterrupted time. Bring your juice and ask Jesus to be your nourishment! Feasting on the Word of God will do wonders for a growling stomach.
 - Each day will have a theme and a passage of Scripture to contemplate. The idea is to read and meditate on the Scripture for a good 15 minutes, then spend 15 (or more) minutes in prayer.
 - If your days are full and you can't find time to take a break, consider reading the booklet on Sunday night to prepare your heart for what's to come.
- If you have kids, this is a great opportunity to introduce them to the concept of fasting and include them in it. Make sure you clarify the purpose of fasting in an age-appropriate manner. Much of how they will participate will depend on their age, so here are some age-appropriate suggestions:
- **Age 5-9:** Abstaining from candy, soda, and dessert.
 - **Age 10-13:** Abstaining from one meal during the day. This HAS to be done wisely and with faith. If it is an intense sports season, consider a protein drink as a meal replacement.
 - **14 & older:** Depending on the maturity of your child, they can make the same choices that you, as an adult, would make.
 - If you have children who are abstaining from food, this is a great opportunity to be more intentional about family prayer and/or devotions.

MONDAY, MARCH 30



1. SILENCE & SOLITUDE (2-5 MIN)

Settle your mind before the Lord.

Ask the Spirit to make you attentive to Jesus – not as you imagine Him to be, but as He reveals Himself in this passage.



2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 3:1-3; 21:6-11)

In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is he who is spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His path straight.’”

—

Later, when Christ and the disciples drew near to Jerusalem, Jesus directed the disciples to fetch a donkey and colt for His entry into the city:

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and He sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and other cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before Him and that followed Him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowd said, “this is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”



3. POSTURE BY PAT AND AL GILLESPIE

These two passages are the bookends of Christ’s ministry: John’s assertions about Christ in Matthew 3 initiate Jesus’ ministry, while Christ’s entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21 represents a culmination of His three years preaching the good news.

Not only that, but John the Baptist’s urgent remarks in the wilderness of Judea offer a life-altering message for us: Repent. This message is especially poignant in light of the two responses we see to Christ’s lordship in Matthew 21. First, the Galileans’ shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” a refrain that both acknowledges His authority and pleads for His saving power. This posture is a stark contrast to the people of Jerusalem who question Christ’s identity; they are perplexed and

concerned by Jesus' audacity in this moment. To the latter group, Christ is offensive. To the former, Christ is the long-awaited Lord.

Repentance, as John the Baptist wildly proclaimed, is the cornerstone of the Galileans' posture.

Like John, we can be confident that Christ is in our midst. He has come, and He is here, and He will come again. Still, the crowds in Matthew 21 remind each of us that we have a choice in how to greet our Savior.

If we truly desire Christ the Saving King, we must also have Him as Lord over our hearts. Too often, though, we are (for lack of a better word) offended by the Christ we encounter— He is a King who asks us to fear not, to die to ourself, to take up our cross, to follow Him. He is a God who comforts, of course, and a God who commands.

What do we do when we encounter God?

Embracing His Lordship begins with repentance: a deep, spiritual course correction. While this response feels stark, we see the beauty that comes from it in Matthew 21 as crowds of Galileans recognize their Savior and pursue Him with abandon.

As we think about this scene, words from John Mark McMillan, one of our favorite musicians, come to mind:

Oh let us adore the
Son of Glory dressed in love
Open up your gates before Him
Crown Him
Stand Him up

How wonderful it is that Christ the King came to deliver us from evil. How wonderful it is that His kingdom is at hand even now. How wonderful it is that He will sit on the throne if we repent and open up the gates before Him.

PRAYER

King Jesus, we repent for putting anything and anyone other than You on the throne of our hearts. In Your kindness, we ask that You reveal to us the areas of our lives that we have not allowed You to rule over. Take Your rightful place as our King and Savior. Amen.

MONDAY FAMILY DISCUSSION

Consider maintaining a family meal practice even if you or your kids are skipping meals. Spend some time reading the day's passage, then use the family discussion questions to prepare your hearts and apply the scripture. Spend some time in prayer together using the provided prayer as a guide. To make this time special, consider lighting a candle, dimming the lights, sitting on the floor on cushions, or outside if the weather permits.

Read Matthew 3:1–3 (John the Baptist Prepares the Way)

- Practice sitting in silence for a few minutes (not as punishment), but to listen and encounter God. There may be giggles or interruptions; try not to correct, allow time to settle.
 - Spend some time sharing your experiences afterwards. Kids aren't often offered space in silence with the expectation that they can encounter God, but they totally can. It might not be profound, but it could be revealing.
- John told people to “repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near.” What do you think it means to turn back to God when we've gone the wrong way?
- John's job was to prepare the way for Jesus. What are some ways we can help prepare our hearts for Jesus in our lives?
- Pray for God to help reveal to us the areas of our lives that we have not allowed Him to rule over.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31



1. SILENCE & SOLITUDE (2-5 MIN)

Settle your mind before the Lord.

Ask the Spirit to make you attentive to Jesus – not as you imagine Him to be, but as He reveals Himself in this passage.



2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 21:12–15)

“Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there... ‘It is written,’ He said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.’”

The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them...

But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple courts, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant.”



3. POSTURE BY BETHANY WONG

Jesus does not drift towards the cross. He walks into Jerusalem as King. And the first place He goes is the temple.

He does not begin by organizing, teaching, or negotiating. He confronts.

The temple was meant to be a house of prayer—a place where Israel would meet with God. Instead, it had become crowded with transactions, noise, and profit. The King arrives, and what does he do? He cleanses His house.

“The Kingdom is at hand” (Matt. 4:17) means the rightful King has come to reorder what belongs to Him. His authority is not abstract- it is active. He overturns tables. He exposes corruption. He refuses to let worship be reduced to convenience.

Yet notice what follows. After the disruption, “the blind and the lame came to Him... and He healed them.” When the false is cleared away, the vulnerable draw near. The Kingdom is not only judgment- it is restoration. The leaders resist Him. The children recognize Him. The powerful are indignant. The needy are healed.

The same King stands before all of them. Holy Week reveals that Jesus' path to the cross is not weakness but royal authority expressed through obedience. He will cleanse fully—not only a building, but hearts- through His suffering.

We can ask: what in us needs overturning? Where has our prayer been replaced by performance? Where has devotion become transaction?

Fasting is not self-punishment; it is making room. It is consenting to the King's cleansing work so that prayer might rise again from His house.

The Kingdom is at hand, and He is near enough to rearrange us.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
You are the rightful King.
Search Your house – our hearts.
Overturn what doesn't belong.
Restore in us a true spirit of prayer.
Make us a people who welcome Your authority,
not resist it.
Hosanna to the Son of David.
Amen.

PRACTICE

Fast in a way that creates space for prayer.

- Sit quietly for five minutes with the phrase: **“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”**
- Ask the Spirit to name one table that needs overturning: a habit, distraction, resentment, or compromise.
- Write it down and offer it to Jesus in surrender.

Close by thanking Him, not only for cleansing, but for healing.

TUESDAY FAMILY DISCUSSION

Consider maintaining a family meal practice even if you or your kids are skipping meals. Spend some time reading the day's passage, then use the family discussion questions to prepare your hearts and apply the scripture. Spend some time in prayer together using the provided prayer as a guide. To make this time special, consider lighting a candle, dimming the lights, sitting on the floor on cushions, or outside if the weather permits.

Read Matthew 21:12–22 (Jesus Cleanses the Temple)

- Practice sitting in silence for a few minutes (not as punishment), but to listen and encounter God. There may be giggles or interruptions; try not to correct, allow time to settle.
 - Spend some time sharing your experiences afterwards. Kids aren't often offered space in silence with the expectation that they can encounter God, but they totally can. It might not be profound, but it could be revealing.
- Jesus cleared the temple because it was meant to be a house of prayer. Why do you think prayer is important to God and in our lives?
- How do you think fasting clears and makes room? What do you think God wants us to make more room for in our lives?
- Share and pray for one thing you want to praise God for, one thing you want to give to God, and one thing you need from God.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1



1. SILENCE & SOLITUDE (2-5 MIN)

Settle your mind before the Lord.

Ask the Spirit to make you attentive to Jesus – not as you imagine Him to be, but as He reveals Himself in this passage.



2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 10:28–31)

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”



3. POSTURE BY KIP HENDERSON

My favorite depiction of “fear of the Lord” is the poor sailors who get caught up in the story of Jonah when they inadvertently assist God’s prophet in fleeing from his next mission. God sends a terrible storm, and each man cries out to his own god, praying for relief. Finally, Jonah tells them the storm is on his behalf, and they must throw him into the sea. Jonah 1:15 says, “Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this, the men greatly feared the Lord.” It feels like a scene out of a movie where a character suddenly realizes they were being much too cavalier with a person who could wipe them out in the blink of an eye. Can you picture the stuttered apology, the backing away, the raised hands in submission? Please don’t smite me!

Fear of God, by necessity, drives out fear of everything else. And yet, we who are so burdened with fear turn to anything but God to protect us. We hope secrets will protect our marriage, we hope small lies will protect our job, we hope curating our image will preserve our favor. We trust our anger to drive away those who would pry at our most vulnerable parts. From the mom who turns to overeating to protect her from stress and anxiety, to the CEO and church pillar who would lose everything if he disclosed an addiction to pornography, confessing and repenting from what has protected us for so long feels like death.

For many, that’s a good enough reason to stay in sin and the protection of this world. You might justify it to yourself, saying, “You don’t know what it would cost me.” Who could demand such blind faith in light of such high consequence?

Jesus. The God who spooked those sailors became a man, and instead of putting on a display of power, He allowed Himself to be spat upon, beaten, taunted, and nailed to a cross. Have you ever considered that, as an elder spat in the face of Jesus, Jesus could have named the exact number of hairs on his head?

We've been afraid of the wrong thing. Do you really value whatever sin-supported status quo you're protecting over your soul? And who better to entrust our souls to than our Creator, the Lord of wind and waves, heaven and earth, who loves you so intimately that He has counted your hair, and so extravagantly that he died for you? Repent, die, and be resurrected as a new creation. Fear is no longer a barrier.

PRAYER

Jesus I surrender my fears and sinfulness to you
and ask for your kingship in my life and in my
actions. As you expose the dark areas of my
heart won't you set me free and show me what
it means to fear You alone.

PRACTICE

- What would be different about your life if you feared the Lord above all else?
- Name one area or secrecy or sinfulness in your life.
 - What benefit does holding on to the sin or secret give you (I feel safe, I don't have to be known in community, I get enjoyment out of it, etc.)
 - What does it cost you to hold on to this sin or secret? (I feel distant from God, I have less time for my family, I break the trust of people I care about, etc.)
 - What pain would result from giving it up?
 - What would I gain from confession and repentance?
 - Who will you invite to hold you accountable as you seek change?

WEDNESDAY NIGHT GATHERING



1. REMEMBERANCE AND GRATITUDE

Before dinner, open your Bibles together and read the passage. Spend 30 seconds in silence reflecting on its words and open in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to be present. Then read the “posture” together.



2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 26:17-28)

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so." Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.



3. POSTURE BY STEPHANIE CHRISTIN

Throughout this Holy Week, we have been and are approaching God with the “kingdom come” theme woven throughout Matthew’s Gospel. Jesus is the King ushering in His kingdom, the Kingdom that the Law and the Prophets predicted and longed for. A key thing needed for this Kingdom to rule and take root here on earth is repentant people in a restored relationship to God. There have been temporary fixes to this throughout scripture, but Jesus is needed for it to truly work.

Looking back, we see the original instruction for the Passover (also known as a Seder) meal was given by God to Moses and Aaron in Exodus 12. These instructions came directly before God’s deliverance of the Israelite people from death and slavery. He instructed his people to sacrifice a lamb without blemish and then to use its blood as a mark over their doorway to signify a household protected from the plague of death that God sent to kill the Egyptian firstborns.

This was the last plague that then led to the Israelites being delivered out of slavery.

You can imagine that in the Jewish traditions, this week of Passover remembrance was deeply meaningful to the people. When Jesus rose with the bread in His hand, it was likely one of the significant Passover meals and therefore would carry even more weight with his disciples. Bread was already a key element prescribed by God to remember what was accomplished through Moses. Now Jesus rises and draws a line from Moses to Himself in saying, "Take and eat, this is My body." The new DELIVERER of God's people. Then he goes even further to draw a line from that sacrificial lamb to Himself and says, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." The new SACRIFICE to identify the people of God and protect them from eternal death.

In God's amazing goodness, He rewrote history for His people by bringing a better Moses and a better Adam. Because of His incredible mercy, He wrote all tribes and nations (Acts 10:35) into an extravagant promise that He made to Abraham. And because of what Jesus accomplished, we have been welcomed into the family line of God's chosen people through a sacrifice that we can only understand by looking back to the history depicted in scripture.

Communion is the new Kingdom act of remembrance that God calls us to. As he commanded the Israelites to remember in Deuteronomy 8, He now invites us into the sacred act of remembrance through communion.

TAKE COMMUNION TOGETHER

As partakers in this new promise, we are invited through communion to look back and reflect on what Jesus did.

Take communion together and thank God for His Kingdom and this new covenant He brought to earth through the conquering of sin and death on the cross.

DISCUSSION

Over a meal together, discuss these four elements of the traditional seder as instructed in Exodus 12 and **how these elements point forward to Jesus and his Kingdom come?**

- **Unleavened bread** (matzah) – originally a reminder of leaving Egypt quickly before the bread could rise. It also points to a call for watchfulness and readiness.
- **Bitter herbs** – representing the bitterness of slavery.

DISCUSSION CONTINUED...

- **Lamb** – recalling the sacrificial lamb whose blood marked the Israelites' homes.
- **Retelling of what God has done** – The meal is meant to provoke questions so the story can be retold. (Exodus 12:26–27)

PRAYER

When you have finished a meal together, gather for a time of prayer.

- Remember what God has done with gratitude, both over history and over this time of fasting.
- Ask Him to solidify anything He has spoken to you during this time of fasting.
- Pray that His Kingdom would become real to those who do not yet know Him as we look toward Resurrection Sunday. Be specific.

WEDNESDAY GATHERING - INCLUDE THE KIDS!

Use this opportunity to explain how Passover was held as a time to remember how God had rescued his people from slavery into freedom and how sin enslaves us, but Jesus rescues us from our sin.

- Before participation in communion, be sure kids know that this is a meal meant for people who have put their faith in Jesus and want to remember how he gave his body and blood to cleanse us from our sins. If we take this meal, it is because we have accepted Jesus as our Savior. Parents, help your kids decide whether they are ready to partake in this meal.
- Consider getting some of the elements of the seder as visual and tactile markers for everyone to experience. This may be especially engaging for kids.
- Parents help reframe questions as appropriate for your kids' understanding.
 - For example, to your preschooler: Who can we show love to the way Jesus loves us? How can we show others Jesus' love?
 - For example, to your elementary-aged kid: How did you feel when fasting? Did you notice anything change, or did you learn anything about yourself and your heart? Did you hear or experience God, and what was it like?

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

1. SILENCE & SOLITUDE (2-5 MIN)

Settle your mind, soul, and body, and ask the Spirit to lead you into truth as you chew on this scripture. (The word for meditation literally means "chew on!" So let's ruminate on some Beatitudes.)

2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 5:3-10)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

3. POSTURE BY TIFFANY COATS

"The kingdom is at hand!"

During my years in missions and ministry, I've noticed a common misunderstanding over that phrase. A motivating, sometimes energizing, quietly insidious idea: a driving belief that we have to bring the kingdom down here, and work with all our earthly strength to do so. If you're anything like me, this often leads to a feeling of urgency that expresses itself in a "do, do, do!" Unfortunately, that's led to a lot of guilt, especially in this past season, while I've wrestled with a chronic health condition that severely limits my "do" capacity.

Lately, I've found myself stumbling over a quiet truth. The kingdom from the beatitudes requires mostly "be" actions, not "do" actions. His kingdom is already at hand. Our job? We're asked to step into it, not chase it down. The beatitudes are filled with states of being: being poor in spirit, experiencing mourning, being meek, being hungry and thirsty for righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart, being a peacemaker, and even being persecuted! Some of these are situations that happen to us

(mourning, persecution) and some are states of being we cultivate (thirst for righteousness, practicing mercy and peace-making when opportunities arise). In either case, each are a heart condition: a posture, not things to add to our to-do list for the day.

This isn't a truth that breeds complacency. Quite the opposite. This is the truth that prevents burnout in the mission field, in ministry, or in daily living for Jesus. This is a deep breath for those of us who are relentlessly battered by our inner moralism and struggle to "bring" the kingdom of God on our own strength to earth.

Jesus had thirty-three years on earth to "do" a lot of things. He spent thirty years of that time just being. His active ministry only took up one eleventh of his life, and that time wasn't even spent "maxing out" all the things he "could have" been doing (or, as some overeager, mission-minded doers might think, "should have"). He didn't stay to heal every sick person (Mark 1:32-38), or perform every miracle he was capable of (Matthew 13:58), but he was obedient to the God who appointed him king over everything. He didn't rush around with frantic urgency. Even entering into holy week, the final high-pressure days of his life, he didn't run. He walked. Every action was rooted in a sense of deep peace, knowing he was already king over everything.

We can root our actions in the knowledge that he's already king, too. We can consciously cultivate the heart posture of the beatitudes, a state of being that plants all hope and trust in the kingdom that's already won, even when we still face persecution and pain. Practicing meekness, mercy, and righteousness in a world clamoring with a thousand desperate needs, we can walk in the footsteps of Jesus without running to fix it all. He's already ushered in the kingdom. And he's walking with us, peaceful and in charge, as it slowly overcomes the world in his timing.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to let go of my striving and addiction to making things happen on my own strength. Give me the peace of Jesus to embody these Beatitudes and live in such a way that shows all around me that Your kingdom is truly at hand - already here.

PRACTICE

Write down an area in your life where you can practice being part of the kingdom already at hand, using the beatitudes as a guide: such as cultivating a deeper hunger for righteousness in your heart and habits, or sitting hope-filled in a season of mourning knowing comfort is at hand.

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3



1. SILENCE & SOLITUDE (2-5 MIN)

Take a few minutes to enter into silence with the Lord. If there is anything weighing on your heart or mind, acknowledge it and take some time to bring it to God. Ask him to hold that for you as you open yourself to being present with him now.



2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 26:1-16)

As you read the word of God now, choose to be hurried, remember that we need to dwell in the word and we need the word to dwell in us.

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”



3. POSTURE BY KARIN SALTAS

Ask the Holy Spirit to gently lead you into what he wants to show you today.

Re-read the passage of scripture, taking time to honor it as the living and active word of God, which leads us into truth, guides, and sustains us. The anointing of Jesus was an act of devotion and gratitude for this woman. This story is to be told and retold because she did a lovely thing. It's interesting to consider that once again, it is an unexpected person who seems to understand who Jesus is. Jesus has spent time teaching about the kingdom of God.

Think about the parables of hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. The kingdom comes with a king, and following him will be costly, but He is worthy of it all. The religious leaders and even his disciples are still not seeing it, but here is a woman who understands who he really is and what he is really worth.

This is further accentuated because this act of beautiful kindness sits between 2 stories of betrayal and treachery. The high priest, who should be leading people in worship, is plotting to have Jesus killed, and Judas, one of the 12, agrees to betray him for money.

Her act of worship was a fragrant and extravagant one; she held nothing back, giving all of the best she had to Jesus. This act would have been one that left a lingering fragrance, one which Jesus would carry with him to the cross. It is a marvelous thing to think that our acts and attitudes can be beautiful gifts given to Jesus.

PRAYER

God, please reveal the truth of your word to my heart.
Holy Spirit, do what only You can do.

Allow time to listen to the Lord as well as to bring your requests.
Take time to thank Jesus for all that he laid down and took on to go to the cross.

PRACTICE

- In which way might the Holy Spirit be sanctifying me today?
- What attribute of Jesus might the Holy Spirit want to add to me today?
- What part of this passage was easy to hear?
- What part of this passage felt challenging to hear?
- Are there areas of my life or heart that I am holding back?
- Is my life a fragrance offering, does it release the aroma of Christ to the saved and lost around me? (2 Corinthians 2 :14-16)

As you set aside time on this Holy day and remember the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, ask the spirit to remind you of the heart and love and compassion with which Christ went to the cross, holding nothing back but giving his all, his very life to reconcile us to the father.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4



1. SILENCE & SOLITUDE (2-5 MIN)

Set aside a quiet space without distractions. Ask the Holy Spirit to still your heart, focus your mind, and open your eyes to His truth as you come before Him.



2. SCRIPTURE (MATTHEW 16:24-27)

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.



3. POSTURE BY JACOB LIU

This isn't the first time in the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus speaks about taking up our cross. In an earlier teaching, Jesus stresses the divisive reality of following Him, declaring, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Obeying the call of the King sets a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother (Matthew 10:24-39).

In this instance, however, Jesus emphasizes the self-denial required of His disciples. Just as in His day, our world is rampant with self-glorification, as we elevate ourselves into gods — objects of our own affection and worship. "Me, me, me!" Without fear of God, this is all we know. We pursue our desires, seeking fulfillment, validation, and purpose, striving to gain the world. Prestige, power, pleasure. But when does the chasing end?

Reflecting on his career as a world-renowned actor, Jim Carrey said, "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer." Carrey realized something that has been true since the creation of man, that a temporary world cannot satisfy an eternal longing. In God's upside-down Kingdom, only through denying ourselves will our searching souls find rest.

What does it mean to deny ourselves and take up our cross? A cross is heavy and unwieldy, dragging on the ground and causing exhaustion

with each step. To carry our cross means to surrender our will to live, to lead ourselves — slowly, painfully, and with full awareness — to our own execution. It means to give to God our deepest desires, our most profound insecurities, and our entire heart in complete humility. What greater cost could Jesus demand? Yet, this is the ultimate invitation into eternal life, a life where fear is stilled and striving comes to rest. Will you follow Him?

**We are pursued by a Savior
who denied Himself,
took up His cross,
and followed not His own will
but the will of the Father.**

**We are rescued by a Redeemer
who lost His life
that we might find ours.**

**We belong to a King
who forfeited the world
that our souls might be restored to Him.**

**We are loved by Jesus
who bore our penalty
so that we might stand unashamed before the Father.**

PRAYER

Thank you Father that by your great love, you made a way for me to have an inheritance in your true eternal Kingdom through Jesus, who in obedience denied himself, took up His cross, and paid my debt of sin through His death and resurrection. I praise you that I am now able to stand with joy before your throne! Amen!

PRACTICE

Invite the Holy Spirit to examine your heart. How does Jesus' own surrender and call to take up your cross challenge and encourage you today?

Reflect on Jesus' declaration:
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
What praise and conviction has the Holy Spirit stirred in you this week?

