



Follow Jesus  
through the  
eight days  
leading to his  
crucifixion

# Follow My Lead

Holy Week  
Devotional

April 10-17

**newlife**  
CHURCH

# Sunday, April 10

**Each day you will begin by reading  
the story in scripture. Today's  
passage is Matthew 21:1-11**

*read:*

There is something so subtle and yet so powerful about this day that I believe instructs every follower of Christ. Perhaps you already know this, but Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey is the fulfilment of a prophecy regarding the coming Messiah.

Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The Jews of that day knew the Messianic prophecy about a king riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. That's why the people were so quick to shout "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" The Jews saw the prophecy merely as a sign. But really, they expected their new King to come and conquer in power and might! They wanted, and even expected, their king to free them from the oppression of their captors through force and a victory in war. A physical win. But as we know now, Christ did not come to defeat in the physical, for only one specific period of time. He came to defeat evil in the heavenly realms and HE came to accomplish that for eternity! Christ came for the eternal souls of His people; then and forever.

# Sunday, April 10

Jesus could have entered Jerusalem with legions of angels and with power that could have shaken the foundations of the earth... and yet, he entered Jerusalem on a donkey in humility and in selflessness in order to accomplish God's purposes.

## Reflection & Action!

- 1.** As a Christ follower, what does Jesus' action mean for us? What does his example require of us?
- 2.** Do I take the way of humility, as Christ did, in my earthly journey?
- 3.** We are called to embody that same humble attitude in our everyday lives. We are called to be sacrificial for the sake of God's people. We are called to lay down our lives, so that others might be able to receive salvation.
  - What areas of our life have we taken on a temporary or physical pursuit of victory? How can we personally shift our position and thinking into an eternal and kingdom perspective?

# Monday, April 11

## Today's scripture

**Matthew 21:12-22**

### read:

All the gospels tell the story of Jesus clearing the temple a little differently. However, when we look at the big picture, one thing stands out throughout the four narratives. Jesus is the Son of God, the King of the Jews, and he is demonstrating his authority as such. Only the Son of God would have the authority to come into the temple and correct the corruption that had developed. Only the Son of God could see past the exterior display of religion to the condition of their hearts. The temple had become busy and crowded with religious ritual and law. From a distance, everything looked perfect. Jews from all over were coming to worship and sacrifice at the temple, they held the law in high esteem and worked hard to obey every letter. They even set up money changing tables and sold sacrificial animals for the foreigners to get the proper currency and purchase their offering right on the temple property. How convenient... But maybe that was the issue. The whole process had become that of convenience and had lost its true purpose. The temple was meant to be a place of unhindered worship, a house of prayer, but it had become a place of commerce and business. Jesus calls it a den of robbers because of what was happening (or not happening) within the hearts of the worshippers.

# Monday, April 11

Their behavior in their daily lives was not what God required from his chosen people. Their religion was barren. Much like the fig tree that Jesus and his disciples saw on the way to Jerusalem. From a distance, this fig tree had potential. It wasn't the season for figs, the fig trees should have all been bare, not even the leaves would have sprouted yet. But this fig tree was full of leaves, promising some fruit to be growing as well. And yet, when Jesus got close there was nothing but leaves, the tree was fruitless. There were plenty of leaves, but no fruit. There was bustling religious activity, but no sincerity and no truth.

## Reflection & Action:

1. Have our practices become so routine that it's lost all depth and meaning? Do our hearts match our actions?
2. Do we go to church on Sunday because of routine or do we go because our love for God is so deep that we can't wait to come together with other believers to worship?
3. Is church the only place that our faith is nurtured or is our communion with God and our individual study of His Word so personal that we are living out the Scripture in our daily lives?
4. If Jesus came into your home, would he be delighted with the sweet fruit of faith growing in your heart or would he be disappointed by the barren branches like the fig tree?
5. Take a moment to walk through your temple (your heart) with the Lord and ask him to show you what areas need to be cleansed and purged.

# Tuesday, April 12

## Today's scripture

**Let's read through  
Mark 11:20-25**

### read:

On this third day of Passion Week Jesus is again heading into Jerusalem with his disciples. Along the way they see the fig tree that Jesus cursed the day before. It is completely withered. The disciples are scared - the fig tree represents the faith tradition of the disciples, and all of its promise to save. But Jesus has condemned it to die, just as he is about to be condemned to die. And so Jesus encourages his followers with three things. He encourages them to have faith, to pray, and to forgive. Faith is what will hold them fast as they go through this extreme trial of the next few days and witness Jesus' crucifixion. Their faith is what will draw power from God, even in the weakest of circumstances. Prayer is the lifeline in the midst of loneliness and despair. Persistent, humble prayer is the evidence of complete trust in God, and the way to draw power from him in every situation. And forgiveness will release them into freedom and peace, not only as they learn to forgive others, but as they receive the forgiveness of God through the cross of Christ. As you walk alongside the disciples today, following Jesus on his road of suffering, what are you thinking and feeling? Are you disappointed that you have to follow your Lord into this misery?

# Tuesday, April 12

Are you frustrated that you've had to walk through your own time of misery? Have faith in God. Keep believing. Trust Jesus, and stay on the path with him. Perhaps you've lost some of the fervor of your faith, some of the liveliness that you once had. Pray. Ask the God of mercy to strengthen your faith, or energize your faith. Listen for the quiet voice of the Father to assure you that you belong to him, he has you in the grip of his grace. Even when the doubt or apathy lingers, let Jesus' words assure you and strengthen you: "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." The readiness to forgive is all about receiving the grace of God that has been extended to you. When there is trouble in your life, or when things aren't going the way you want them to, stay grateful. That gratitude will keep your heart soft and humble, and will turn your mind to the one who saves you from all the misery and brokenness of your life. You are sure to have others disappoint you in life. As well, you will disappoint yourself along the way. A readiness to forgive and be gracious is what lets you receive the amazing grace that God extends to you.

## Reflection & Action!

- 1.** What words of encouragement do you need to hear from Jesus as you walk with him on the road of suffering? (Ex. keep believing, talk to me, be gracious etc.)
- 2.** Reserve a quiet time of any length this week to reflect on (and perhaps even wrestle with) the state of your faith, your prayer life, the forgiveness you need to make.

# Wednesday, April 13

## Today's scripture

**Read Matthew 26:6-16**

### read:

Have you ever spent a day waiting in anticipation for something you really dreaded? When I was younger I remember not looking forward to the days where we would have to do a running test in gym. Maybe nowadays it's the day before you go on a flight and you spend the night lying awake thinking of all the things you could have potentially forgotten to pack and dreading all those hours sitting in a small cramped seat. Right now in the story, on this day, we wait. On Holy Wednesday we spend time resting and in preparation. We read an account of Jesus in Bethany waiting for his death to come. In preparation, he is anointed with oil. In those days, Passover lambs were chosen six days in advance. Two days before the sacrifice it was customary to anoint the Passover lamb with oil to announce they were free of disease or blemish and ready to be sacrificed. Jesus undergoes the very same thing - being anointed with pure nard on his head by Mary. On this day, I encourage you to spend time in silence. We often don't spend time waiting for turmoil ahead. We jump from Palm Sunday to Good Friday to Easter Monday. We distract ourselves and focus on other things. Our world has many dark days ahead.



# Wednesday, April 13

Our God doesn't promise us no struggle but ensures us that He will be with us every step of the way. Spend some time meditating on God, focusing on Him and His plans for you. Ahead of us, Jesus calls us to follow His lead – to die to our sins and let go of earthly things. Like Jesus' death, the death to ourselves will be a painful one. But for right now, we wait in prayerful silence.

## Reflection & Action!

- 1.** Where in your life have you been distracted and not spent time in stillness?
- 2.** Is waiting hard for you? Why?
- 3.** Enter into a time of silence or stillness, as a way to identify with Jesus preparing himself for the days ahead.

Just **4** days  
till **Easter**  
**Sunday!**

# Thursday, April 14

## Today's scripture

**Matthew 26:36-56**

*read:*

What does it mean to follow Jesus on the day of his betrayal? On the day that He was betrayed, Jesus spent time alone in the Garden of Gethsemane pleading with God to allow this coming cup to pass from him. Jesus submits to his father's will over his own and shows us quite purely what Joshua is talking about in Joshua 24:15, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This evening we can also very easily look at the disciples who fled Jesus' side when he was arrested or Peter when he denied Christ and we can judge them for their lack of faith and their chicken-natured retreat from their saviour! Yet, how many of us would deny the name of Christ if a gun were placed against our head? That's a grim image, is it not? One that is accompanied with the painful realisation that the clear judgement we held moments earlier pointed at the disciples is replaced by a mirror where we see ourselves. So again, I ask, what does it mean to follow Jesus on the day of his betrayal? It's a hard question to answer, but not because the answer is out of reach; rather, the answer is one that we know already in our hearts. The difficulty comes in bringing ourselves to say, "here I am Lord, I'm in this with you, I will not forsake you, even if it costs me everything."

### Reflection & Action!

1. What fear(s) do you hold in your heart that hold you back from embracing the call of Christ to put it all on the line?
2. What is holding you back from surrendering those fears?

# Friday, April 15

## Today's scripture

**Take a minute to read through  
Mark 15:33-39**

*read:*

What is good about "Good Friday". Honestly, that title has always bothered me. Yes, I know that His sacrifice was good and yes, I know that it is good for us, but that day would have been the most painful day of our Lord and Saviour's life; and I am not speaking of the physical pain He endured, but the unimaginable pain brought about by the separation from His Father. When He cries out, "My God My God, why have you forsaken me," He is not saying why did you allow this to happen? But rather, why have you turned your face from me? Why can I not sense your presence with me? God was separated from His One and Only Son, because it was then that all of the world's sin was laid upon the shoulders of Jesus and our Holy and Righteous God could not be "one" with sin as He was "one" with Christ on earth. And so, for that short period of time, Jesus was alone. We need to let that sink in for a moment. Alone. Hell isn't "hell" because of the lake of fire and the other atrocities we perceive would take place there. I believe hell is so terrifying because hell is being separated from God. And the reason why Christ made the ultimate sacrifice was to spare us from that, from being separated from our Creator, our Father, our Prince of Peace, our Refuge, our Counsellor. This would be the worst form of punishment we could imagine. And its eternal.

*cont.*

# Friday, April 15

We need to let that knowledge and understanding influence how we live around those who do not yet know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. We need to live out our daily lives knowing that we can, through the Holy Spirit, turn others off the path of destruction and of separation into an eternal relationship with their Creator. Jesus made this GOOD sacrifice for all mankind so that we would not ever have to experience what He did that day.

## Reflection & Action!

1. Have you ever felt separated from God? If so, what did you experience in that time?
2. Does this perspective of eternal separation reshape how you'd interact with non-believers?
3. What does His sacrifice require of us?
4. Let the good, once-for-all, never-again-separating sacrifice Jesus made influence the way you speak, act and love to your co-workers, friends, neighbours or family members who do not yet know salvation, redemption and relationship with God.

**Want to know more?  
Come to our Good Friday  
service today at 6pm**

# Saturday, April 16

## Today's scripture

**Open your bible to  
Matthew 27:62-66**

### read:

It's funny, or at least odd, to be scared of resurrection. Yet, that's how the leaders who didn't trust Jesus felt. These leaders despised Pilate, a Roman governor, the very symbol and actual instrument of oppression. But they trust Pilate enough to send guards to secure the tomb. That's the first twist. A second twist is that they actually served as prophets, predicting the very thing they were afraid of, resurrection! Prophets, at least, to Pilate, who thought he was done with this petty Jewish squabble. But now they have put it in his head - the possibility of resurrection. Yet another twist in the story involves the tremendous effort put into securing the tomb where Jesus lay. At least for those of us who know the good news of this story it's a twist only because we know how futile it will be to "make it as secure as you can." The tomb cannot be secured if the power of God almighty decides to open it. Curiously, the futility doesn't even stop us from resisting the resurrection that Jesus offers us. We fear being duped and hood-winked if we trust in resurrection. We'd rather make a name for ourselves than die to ourselves. We'd rather achieve our own success than "lose our life" to find it. We're afraid of resurrection. We're afraid it can't really happen.

*cont.*

# Saturday, April 16

And so we try to secure our own future, shape our own destiny, order our own world to our liking, all the while resisting Jesus' call in our life "to take up our cross and follow him" – yes even into the tomb where we die to our self so that we can be raised with Christ into real life. "I am the resurrection and the life", says Jesus. Do you believe it?

## Reflection & Action!

- 1.** As you follow Jesus' lead, perhaps there is something in your own life that makes you afraid of resurrection, or resist resurrection. In what part of your life do you need to die to self?
- 2.** Go to a cemetery near you, or to the graveside of a loved one you have laid to rest. Use that time to think about the hope of resurrection in your own life.

**Spoiler:**  
**Good news is coming!**



# Sunday, April 17

## Today's scripture

Flip to Matthew 28:1-10

read:

He is risen! Happy Easter! What a wonderful day it is that we get to celebrate Jesus being resurrected from the dead. As you're reading this say aloud right now 'He is Risen'! In the gospels account of this story, Jesus starts appearing to more and more of His followers. He starts by appearing to Mary and then two disciples and the rest of them in a locked room. He proclaimed that he died but is risen again just as He said He would. As we've been learning, Jesus calls us to follow His lead. This means we die to ourselves, take up our own cross, and live again in new life. And just as Jesus appeared to those who didn't know and tell them of the good news we too need to go out and share the news of our resurrection. When I was born, the first girl after three boys, my parents were notably excited. My grandma tells me that my dad told almost every person in the hospital he could find that they just had a baby girl. He was so excited to share the wonderful news with anyone who would listen. In the same way, God tells us to share our story and our resurrection with anyone who will listen. To spread the gospel (which means good news) to everyone who has not heard. The joy in our hearts of being saved by Jesus needs to spread like an overjoyed parent spreading the news of their new child. It is easy to think that since Easter is almost over, so is the resurrection. But spreading the news of Jesus' resurrection and sharing how he has changed your life is always occurring. As Jesus commands us to, go out there and share His name with all nations of the earth.

# Sunday, April 17

Reflection & Action!

- 1.** How can you share the good news of Jesus' resurrection with those who don't know?
- 2.** Do you have joy in your heart of your resurrection? How can that joy be reignited?
- 3.** Share with someone you don't know that Jesus is risen!

**Thank you for coming  
along on this amazing  
and emotional journey.  
Happy Easter!**

*To God be the glory  
forever & ever!  
Amen.*

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