

WEEKLY DEVOTION

The Work of Imagination: Holy Week

A daily reflection for the holiest week of the year

PALM SUNDAY

Whose Parade Is This?

Mark 11:1–11 · Matthew 22:20–21

Last week we asked a question that has not finished asking itself: whose image do you bear? The coin in Jesus' hand bore Caesar's face — a small, ordinary object carrying the full weight of empire. But as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, the crowd waving branches and cloaks, another image was being pressed into the world.

“This is not a military procession. It is an act of imagination — a vision of the world as God intends it.”

Holy Week begins not with solemnity but with noise and longing. The crowd was hoping for one kind of king. Jesus came as another. And every year we wave our branches and discover that we, too, are still learning whose parade we have joined.

FOR REFLECTION

What image of Jesus did you carry into this week — and has this week already begun to complicate it?

PRAYER *God of the lowly entry, teach us to recognize you in the unexpected. When we look for power, show us love. When we expect triumph, meet us with a towel and a basin. Amen.*

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Overturning the Ordinary

Mark 11:15–19

Jesus walked into the temple courts and turned over the tables of the money changers. It is one of the most startling acts in the Gospels — not because of the anger, but because of what the anger was about. The house of God had become a house of transaction. What was meant to be a place of imagination — of encounter, of wonder, of all people drawing near — had been reduced to commerce.

“Wherever sacred things become merely useful things, Jesus is still turning over tables.”

The work of imagination, in every age, involves disruption. It means refusing to let holy things be reduced to their utility. This week asks us to notice: where have we settled for a transactional faith when we were made for something wilder and deeper?

FOR REFLECTION

Where in your own life has something holy been slowly reduced to something merely functional?

PRAYER *Disruptive God, overturn whatever has grown stale in us. Give us back the wonder of a faith that cannot be bought or sold, only received. Amen.*

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

The Questions That Find Us

Mark 12:13–17, 28–34

They came with their trick questions, hoping to trap him. And each time, Jesus refused to be trapped — not by avoiding the question, but by answering a deeper one. Whose image is on the coin? He handed it back. Which commandment is greatest? He answered with his whole life.

“The question ‘whose image do you bear?’ is not just about coins. It is about us.”

We bear the image of God — the imago Dei pressed into us at creation. Holy Week is the week that most fully reveals what that image looks like: love that does not flinch, truth that does not bend, a life given freely. The imagination of God, it turns out, looks like a cross.

FOR REFLECTION

What question is God asking you this week that you have been trying to avoid?

PRAYER *God who questions and sustains, help us to sit with the hard questions of this week without rushing to easy answers. Meet us in the uncertainty. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

The Space Before

Psalms 31:9–16

Wednesday of Holy Week is sometimes called “Spy Wednesday” — tradition says it is the day Judas made his deal. But what we know for certain is that it was a day of waiting. Between the temple debates and the upper room, there is a silence. Jesus was still among them, but the machinery of what was coming had already begun to turn.

“Holy Week teaches us that imagination requires waiting — and that God works even in the in-between.”

We live much of our lives in the Wednesday spaces — between what was and what will be, between the question and the answer, between the diagnosis and the prognosis. The Psalmist prays from exactly that place: my times are in your hand. That is enough. Barely. But enough.

FOR REFLECTION

What “Wednesday space” are you living in right now — and what would it mean to trust it to God’s hands?

PRAYER *God of the waiting, hold us in the in-between places. When we cannot see the way forward, remind us that our times are in your hands. Amen.*

MAUNDY THURSDAY

The Imagination of a Servant

John 13:1–17 · 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

He got up from the table, tied a towel around his waist, and began to wash their feet. Surely this is one of the great acts of divine imagination in all of Scripture. To be God — and to kneel. To hold the cosmos — and to hold a basin. The disciples did not understand it. We have been trying to understand it ever since.

“Jesus reimagined what power looks like. Not a throne, but a towel. Not dominion, but a basin of water.”

Then came the bread and the cup — the ordinary objects of an ordinary meal, pressed into the service of something that would outlast the Roman Empire. Bread and cup bear the image of Christ now. We receive them bearing the image of Christ ourselves. The two images meet at the table every time we gather.

FOR REFLECTION

Who in your life might need the humility of your presence — not your answers or your fixes, but simply your kneeling?

PRAYER *Lord Jesus, you showed us that love bends low. Give us the courage to lay aside whatever keeps us from serving one another. On this night, teach us again what you have always been showing us. Amen.*

GOOD FRIDAY

When Imagination Goes Dark

Isaiah 53:3–6 · Mark 15:33–39

There is no way to make Good Friday comfortable. The cross defeats our best attempts at explanation and beautification. At noon, darkness came over the whole land. The one who bore the image of God bore it all the way here — to abandonment, to pain, to death.

“The cross is the most radical act of imagination in history: that love can bear the worst the world has and not stop being love.”

Here is what we dare to say: God did not stay safe from suffering. God entered it. The image of God is not untouched glory — it is this, too. The man on the cross, forsaken and still faithful, shows us that the love of God has no floor, no limit it will not descend to.

Today is a day to sit with that without rushing to Sunday.

FOR REFLECTION

Where is the place in your life or in our world where you most need to know that God has been there?

PRAYER *God of the cross, we do not understand this day. But we trust that love was at work even here, in the dark. Hold us in the silence. Amen.*

HOLY SATURDAY

The Waiting Room of Hope

Job 14:1–14 · 1 Peter 3:18–19

Holy Saturday is the most honest day in the church calendar. The disciples did not know about Easter. They were simply in the grief, in the confusion, in the silence after everything fell apart. The tomb was sealed. The dream, it seemed, was over.

“*Holy Saturday is where most of us actually live — after the loss, before the hope has come clear.*”

This is the day that asks the most of our imagination: can we trust that something is happening that we cannot yet see? The tradition says Christ descended to the dead — that even death itself was not beyond the reach of God. That there is no Saturday, however dark and sealed, that has the last word.

Tomorrow the women will go to the tomb. For now, we wait. And waiting, too, is a spiritual practice.

FOR REFLECTION

What sealed tomb in your own life are you standing outside of — and what would it mean to spend this day simply trusting that God is not finished?

PRAYER *God of the sealed tomb, we are not yet at Sunday. Hold us in the Saturday places of our lives. Let our waiting not be despair, but the quiet, trembling posture of those who believe morning is coming. Amen.*