



A JOINT MINISTRY OF GOOD SHEPHERD
& MILFORD MILL UMCS:

HOLY WEEK AT HOME FOR THE FAMILY

Each day, there is a devotional for the adults and an activity for the kids. You will find a common object around the house and follow the instructions with your family. If you don't have the needed item, improvise or draw it.

The Scripture is linked, so if you click on it, you can go directly to the passage.

**CELEBRATE HOLY WEEK WITH STORIES,
REFLECTIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND SPECIAL
OBJECTS**

PALM SUNDAY

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Item: Palm Branches (You can print out your own to make by clicking [here](#)). Alternative: use a coat or piece of fabric to lay down like in Luke's version)

Listen: Today we remember when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. The people cheered and celebrated by putting palm branches and coats on the road before him.

Do: Walk around your house or your yard with your palm branches and shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord"

Ask: What do you think it felt like to wave palm branches in front of Jesus that day? What would you shout at Jesus to tell him that you're excited?



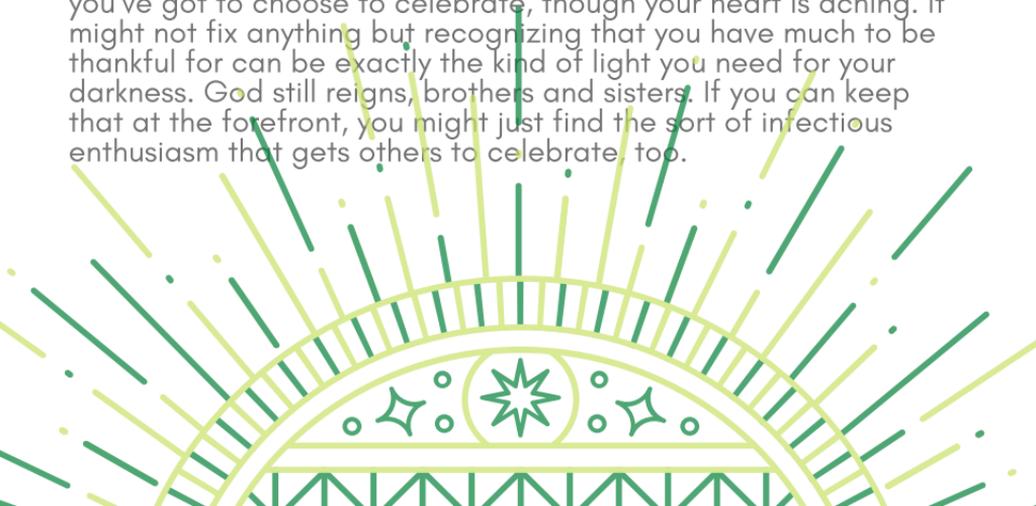
PALM SUNDAY

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Like so many folks right now, I've been giving a lot of thought to how to celebrate the end of quarantine. I remember hearing about this after our first week of restrictions. I was perusing Facebook and noticed a funny video of famous Saturday Night Live comedian Chris Farley storming down the aisle of the Ed Sullivan Theater, dishing out high fives to the audience of the Late Show with David Letterman as he made his way to the stage for his interview. Farley scoops up a member of the audience at one point, throws him over his shoulder, and races outside where he dumps the member in a dumpster. Upon returning to the studio, he performs several cartwheels before finally plopping down in his chair in front of Letterman. The caption of the video read, "Pastors on their first Sunday back at church."

I picture Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem in much the same way. The crowd that day had little to celebrate as a conquered people under the thumb of tyrannical, oppressive leaders. Jesus, in His ingenuity, took symbols the crowd would recognize, and fully embraced them, to remind the gathered throngs that they still had something to celebrate.

It might not seem as if we have anything to celebrate right now. It's altogether too easy to allow your heart to be broken, and maybe we've become good at expecting the worst. Sometimes you've got to choose to celebrate, though your heart is aching. It might not fix anything but recognizing that you have much to be thankful for can be exactly the kind of light you need for your darkness. God still reigns, brothers and sisters. If you can keep that at the forefront, you might just find the sort of infectious enthusiasm that gets others to celebrate, too.



HOLY MONDAY

Read: Matthew 22:34-40

Item: Card/Paper

Listen: After Jesus' big, exciting entrance into Jerusalem, his next few days were kind of... boring! He went back to teaching people about God. There were so many rules that everyone had to follow, so Jesus helped them understand what all the rules are really about—loving God and loving our neighbors.

Do: Write a letter (or draw a picture) to someone who lives alone. If you need help thinking of someone, ask Pastor Bonnie or Pastor Lem for the name of someone at church. Then mail it.

Ask: Does life feel kind of boring right now? What do you think Jesus felt when life wasn't very exciting? How can you love your neighbors even when you can't be with them?



HOLY MONDAY

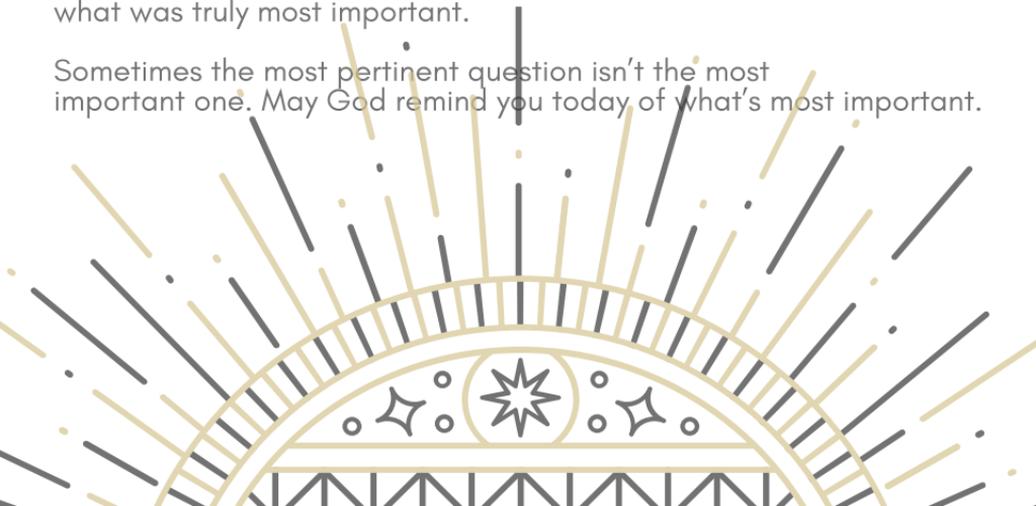
Read: Matthew 22:34-40

As a teenager, I often heard the saying, "Don't sweat the small stuff...and it's all small stuff." It wasn't until I was older that I learned that this was the title of a motivational self-help book and New York Time best seller. The author, Richard Carlson, was a renowned self-help book author and psychotherapist. The book itself has been translated into over 30 languages and was published in 135 countries. Carlson didn't coin the phrase, but he made it famous.

The book, published in the 1990s, and many of its contemporaries laid the foundation for many of the inspirational books we read today. Three of the most prominent themes are mindfulness, overreaction, and gratitude. Mindfulness is being present and mindful of yourself at any given moment instead of focusing on the future or what others are doing (or not). We have a tendency to overreact because our subjective perceptions - shaped by our upbringing and what we value - often make certain problems more urgent than they really are. Gratitude can help us to remain grounded, allowing us to think more positively and find satisfaction with our lives.

Jesus was grilled by the religious establishment on the small stuff. In the presence of a teacher like Jesus, other established teachers undoubtedly felt threatened. When asked, "What is the greatest commandment?", Jesus didn't answer the question as it was posed. He simply laid out the essence of all 613 carefully documented commandments of the law of Moses, reminding everyone in earshot what was truly most important.

Sometimes the most pertinent question isn't the most important one. May God remind you today of what's most important.



HOLY TUESDAY

Read: Matthew 21:12-13

Item: Red Crayon

Listen: On Tuesday, Jesus went to the Holy Temple and saw that instead of worshipping God, people were using it as a store. They were selling things that made it seem like you had to have enough money to *really* worship God the right way. It made him so mad that he flipped over all the tables and cleared it for worship again.

Do: Color your paper as hard as you can with your red crayon. Cover as much of the paper as you can.

Ask: What does red make you feel? What do you do when you get angry? Do you sometimes feel more than one thing at the same time? What do you do with those feelings? Do you think that it was okay that Jesus was angry at the people at the temple?



HOLY TUESDAY

Read: Matthew 21:12-13

The people once called the Hebrews by some were a displaced people. Centuries of war with enormous military powers had forced the people who would later be known as “Jews” to seek their fortunes in places they never thought to visit, much less live in. These people were forced into a new idea of home, of the center of all things. While their bodies inhabited nations throughout the known world, their hearts and souls were bound to Jerusalem, and many made pilgrimage there, traveling far for religious observances.

What they found was that the Temple only accepted one form of currency, so in order to participate in ritual sacrifices and other rites, moneychangers would convert currency into Temple currency so the faithful could participate. Jesus decried this practice, the monetizing of faith, and in His fury, reminded the religious establishment of His day of their Scriptural obligations, that God had made the Temple a house of prayer for all people, making them “joyful” there. Faith and greed were not business partners.

Faith and devotion were the currency God desired, and those who worked for God could not count themselves among the faithful while people were being oppressed by shady business practices. It took immense courage for Jesus to question a system that was intended for good but was causing harm. There are many institutions in our world today, including the church, that are doing the same. What “tables” and “benches” is God calling you to overturn? How can you, where you are, ensure that everyone who comes to God for help finds God?



HOLY WEDNESDAY

Read: Matthew 26:14-16

Item: Coins

Listen: One of Jesus' best friends, Judas, did something terrible to Jesus. He took money from the people who wanted to hurt Jesus and in exchange, he handed Jesus over to them to be killed. He loved money more than he loved his friend and it destroyed him.

Do: Ask your parents about how you can give money to people who need it right now. When we give our money away to others, we use money to help instead of for greed, like Judas did. Alternatively, if money isn't available right now, spend time in prayer for those who struggle to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, clothing.

Ask: Have you ever had a friend hurt your feelings? What did that feel like? Were you able to become friends again afterward? How do you think Jesus felt when his friend hurt him? How does it feel to give your allowance or birthday money away?



HOLY WEDNESDAY

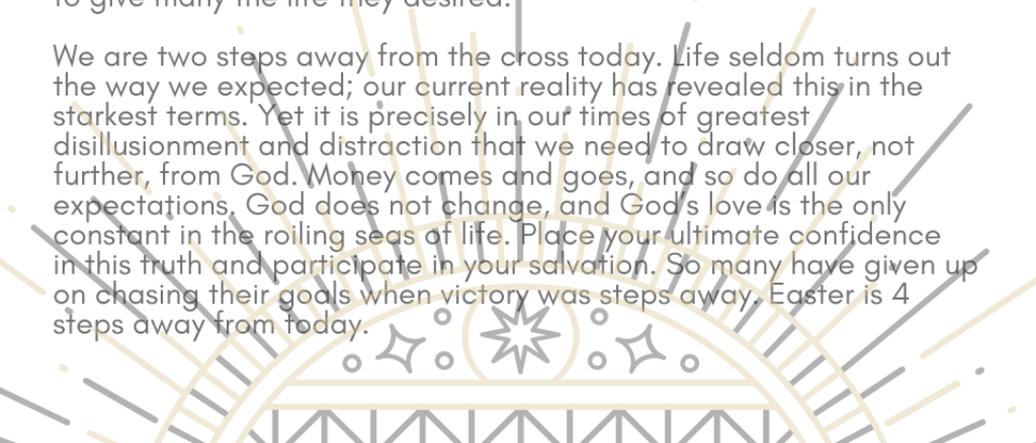
Read: Matthew 26:14-16

The story of Jesus goes hand in hand with talking about money. The two are inextricably linked, and Jesus spent more time talking about money and possessions than any other subject. One of the most misquoted sayings of Jesus is “Money is the root of all evil.” The truth is that Jesus never said this phrase; it’s actually a verse in 1 Timothy. The verse says that “the love of money” is the root of all evil. The author of 1 Timothy tries to lay out several obstacles to faith and how to avoid them; the love of money is but one.

Life alongside Jesus during His earthly ministry was undoubtedly hard. It required a complete life change for most, if not all, of His followers. Judas Iscariot’s background isn’t made very clear in the Gospels, but we know he served as the treasurer of the movement. The Gospels were written well after the events they describe took place, and Jesus never points out that Judas is stealing from the movement’s purse. The thievery and betrayal that Judas commits weren’t witnessed firsthand by the author of Matthew. I doubt we’ll ever know how Judas was found out.

I’m not so concerned with the how as I am with the why. So much of our lives are spent in the pursuit of wealth and possessions; not necessarily because of our love of these things, but to create a life. Judas, like many others in the movement, had joined Jesus because of who he thought Jesus was. This became Judas’ life. Yet the closer we draw to the cross in Jesus’ story, the further we move from the prevailing idea of who the Messiah was supposed to be, at that time: a strong political leader. Jesus was not this person. Jesus failed to give many the life they desired.

We are two steps away from the cross today. Life seldom turns out the way we expected; our current reality has revealed this in the starkest terms. Yet it is precisely in our times of greatest disillusionment and distraction that we need to draw closer, not further, from God. Money comes and goes, and so do all our expectations. God does not change, and God’s love is the only constant in the roiling seas of life. Place your ultimate confidence in this truth and participate in your salvation. So many have given up on chasing their goals when victory was steps away. Easter is 4 steps away from today.



HOLY THURSDAY

Read: John 13:1-17,31b-35

*****Don't Forget! Tune into our worship service tonight*****

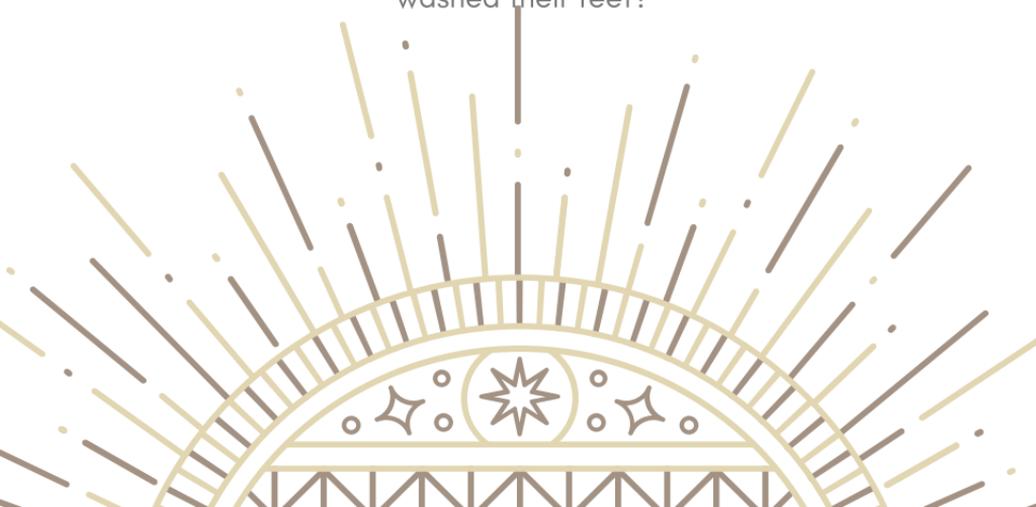
Item: Towel

Listen: Jesus shared a very special Passover meal with his friends. As they sat down, Jesus got up and got a bucket of water and towel to wash his disciples' dirty, dusty feet. They couldn't believe that their teacher would get so dirty for them.

Do: Decorate your towel with paints or markers as beautifully as you can. Washing his disciples was a generous gift that Jesus gave them.

Your towel can be a symbol of that beautiful gift. Alternatively, spend some time doing hand-care--washing, putting on lotion, or even painting your nails. Think about the way we care for ourselves.

Ask: How have grown ups shown that they love you through their actions? Does it feel good to have someone wash your hair or give you a foot massage? What do you think Jesus' friends felt when Jesus washed their feet?



HOLY THURSDAY

Read: John 13:1-17,31b-35

*****Don't Forget! Tune into our worship service tonight*****

The Last Supper is a complex scene, which is likely why it is so memorable. It has been depicted by many artists, and each one seeks to capture the complexity of the moment in the faces and gestures of the participants. Love, betrayal, bewilderment, and an almost unbearable anticipation colors the scene. We know what comes next, but before all of that, this last meal that Jesus and His followers share is like the calm before a terrible storm. A glorious calm.

Here Jesus leaves His legacy. He's calm, assured, but He knows He's not done teaching. In those days, a teacher like Him cultivated disciples; the more one had, the greater the renown. Disciples served their teacher like a master, and in return, they received the wisdom they coveted. Jesus turns this idea on its head to show His students that the result of all this teaching should be loving service to others, not self-improvement.

Unless we are prepared to serve others, we cannot pretend to follow Jesus. Unless we open our hearts to selfless love, we cannot call Him Lord authentically. We can shout from the mountaintop of our deep faith, but there is no greater testimony of our devotion to Christ than the way we treat others.



GOOD FRIDAY

Read: Psalm 22:1-11, 19-31

*****Don't forget to tune into our worship service tonight*****

Item: Cross (draw a picture of one if you don't have one to hold)

Listen: Today is the saddest day of our year. Even though Jesus had done nothing wrong, the people hurt him, laughed at and teased him, and put him on the cross to die. While he was dying, Jesus said some of the words from Psalm 22 about feeling like God had abandoned him. There on the cross, Jesus died.

Do: Hold on to your little cross while you listen to the Bible story.

Ask: What does today's story make you feel? Sad? Angry? Confused? Why do we call it Good Friday if it is such a sad day? What makes you feel better when you are sad?



GOOD FRIDAY

Read: Psalm 22:1-11, 19-31

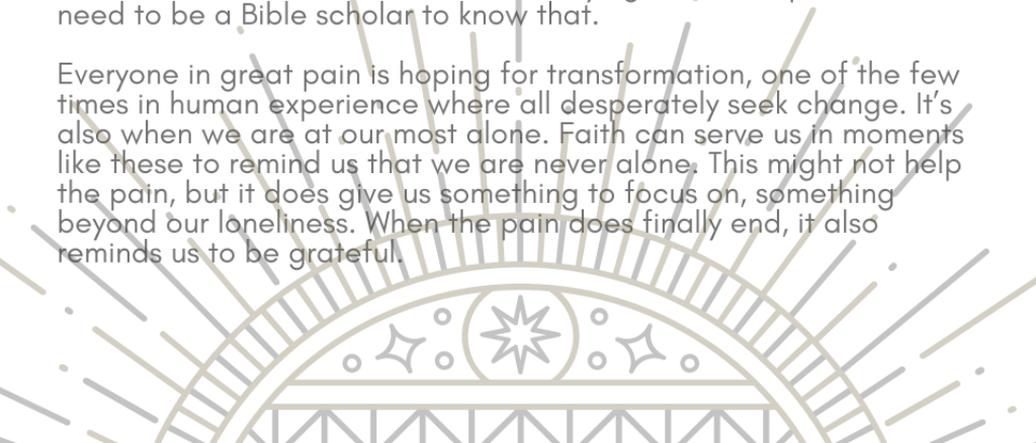
*****Don't forget to tune into our worship service tonight*****

Pain can be transformative. It forces us to rethink what we are doing, to change, if only to end the pain. Sometimes the pain lessens, sometimes it increases with each attempt to stave it off. As Jesus hung from His cross, His body was being pushed to its max pain threshold. His suffering was undeniable. His sense of abandonment was real. No matter what He did while He hung, however He shifted His body, there would be no relief until His body died, until He was transformed.

My mother suffered from chronic pain. Most of the time it could be managed by mental and pharmaceutical coping strategies, but other times nothing could help. In those moments, my mother would cry out to God and sing hymns. During a particularly difficult hospital stay, she was mocked by a member of the staff in the emergency room that couldn't take her suffering anymore. The staff member told her, "Yes, go ahead, cry out to your God, maybe He'll come and help you." Through gritted teeth and tears Mom replied, "At least I have someone to cry out to. Who do you cry out to when you're in pain? Who is listening?"

Jesus knew His Bible. He cried out the opening words of the lament found in what we know as the 22nd Psalm. Psalms of lament have often been said to follow a pattern. Some say it appears to be stating an orientation, followed by a feeling of disorientation, and concluded with reorientation. Others call it protest, petition, and praise. Telling someone that you're in real pain is the easiest thing in the world, almost an instinct. So is crying out for help. You don't need to be a Bible scholar to know that.

Everyone in great pain is hoping for transformation, one of the few times in human experience where all desperately seek change. It's also when we are at our most alone. Faith can serve us in moments like these to remind us that we are never alone. This might not help the pain, but it does give us something to focus on, something beyond our loneliness. When the pain does finally end, it also reminds us to be grateful.



HOLY SATURDAY

Read: John 19:38-42

Item: Seeds

Listen: On Saturday, we remember that Jesus lay in the tomb this whole day. But the next day, the first person who saw him thought he was a gardener. For thousands of years, Christians have celebrated today by gardening.

Do: Plant your flower seeds in your yard or in a pot of dirt in your house. Remember to water them until they sprout up and produce beautiful flowers. While you're at it, ask your parents if it's okay to pull some weeds in your yard, your neighbor's yard, or even at the park! If you don't have any seeds, draw a picture of flowers.

Ask: Do you like getting your hands dirty in the garden? Why do you think Mary thought Jesus was a gardener on Easter morning? what do you think he was wearing?



HOLY SATURDAY

Read: John 19:38-42

One of my favorite songs comes from the film version of "The Sound of Music", called "Edelweiss", named after the edelweiss, a white flower that grows in the Alps. Captain Georg von Trapp sings this song as an expression of Austrian patriotism in the face of the Nazi annexation of Austria. The film features a scene not found in the Broadway production where Captain von Trapp rediscovers making music with his children. The tune is haunting; it gets me every time I see the Captain's pained but defiant and prideful expression as he sings it.

The Scripture for this devotion mentions a character from the Gospels, the Pharisee Nicodemus, who had once come to Jesus at night shortly after the Cleansing of the Temple, when Jesus had been turning over tables. He tried to explain to Nicodemus the concept of being born again, or spiritual rebirth, which the Pharisee struggled with but listened. When the religious establishment considered their next move against Jesus, Nicodemus urged cautious investigation, despite being mocked. Now having seen Jesus slain, Nicodemus purchases something like 34 kilograms of burial spices and linen to embalm the body. This was a royal burial. These were expensive materials.

We can never truly know the potential impact we will have on someone else. A word of encouragement or inspiration we might consider to be trivial has the power to alter a life for the better. This is the power we wield, a power Christ has granted us all to bless others with. If I were to score the soundtrack of a movie based on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, I'd set the somber scene of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus preparing Jesus' body for burial to "Edelweiss". Somber, yes, but also full of promise and potential. These men likely didn't know or believe what was about to happen, but their lives would never be the same after having met the Savior.



EASTER SUNDAY

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

Item: Sidewalk Chalk

Listen: Christ Has Risen!! This is the best news of all-- death is not the most powerful thing in the world-- God's love is! We call this Good News "The Gospel" and it's the reason that we celebrate even when life seems like it is its very darkest. God's love has defeated sin and death and so today we celebrate!

Do: Decorate the sidewalk or alley near your house with the Good News that Christ has risen from the dead!

Ask: What is your favorite kind of celebration? How does this Easter feel different than other years? How can you go share the good news today?



EASTER SUNDAY

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

The story of Easter is the foundation of the Gospel. It's the reason we have a message to spread. In a world of darkness, the worst thing is truly not the last thing.

Death is so seemingly inevitable that at times it can almost seem like mercy, a release from the suffering and cares of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Death itself has no inherent power; it stands in stark contrast to God's act of creation. The death of Jesus was so offensive to God that God could simply not allow it to stand. Jesus was a believer in the concept of a bodily resurrection of the dead at the end of days, but in the case of the Son, God would not wait that long.

Easter this year will be very different from Easters past. There may not seem to be much to celebrate when you watch the news. You might even convince yourself not to celebrate. It would have been a real shame if the women at the tomb had simply dismissed all that they had seen as a delusion or hallucination and resumed their mourning. Yet at the cost of appearing crazy to the men they were charged with informing, they ran from the tomb to carry the Gospel to them. These were the first Apostles.

The word apostle is derived from the Greek word Apostolos, which means "messenger". As you enjoy time with friends or family in quarantine, what message of hope can you bring today? How can you convince others that God's love, not death or fear, is the strongest thing there is?

