

REFLECTIVE PREPARATION BEFORE EASTER CELEBRATION



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## **Central Community Church App**



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You may be thinking *Lent, Ash Wednesday, Fasting*? These don't sound like words familiar to Protestantism (differentiated from Catholicism).

A cross of ashes on your forehead on Ash Wednesday, fasting from food, chocolate, caffeine, or certain activities for 40 days throughout Lent might not be something you're familiar or overly comfortable with. So why are we making a point of emphasizing the season of Lent at Central?

## The gospel.

Lent affords us an annual opportunity to laser our focus on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, to contemplate the cost that Jesus paid for our salvation, and the sufficiency of His sacrifice.

There is biblical precedent for the placing of ashes as a symbol of our need for Divine mercy. Daniel confessed the sin of God's people and marked his body with ashes.

For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.

Daniel 9:18

The word Lent derives from an Old English word for spring and lengthen. Lent was originally a preparation period for those pursuing baptism but quickly became a season for the church as a whole to symbolically follow Jesus into the wilderness.

The 40 days of Lent (excluding Sundays which are *feast days*) draw on the biblical parallels of the flood narrative (Gen. 6-8), the Israelites wandering in the wilderness (40 years), Moses receiving the Law of God at Sinai (Ex. 24), Elijah's journey to Mt. Horeb (1 Kgs 19), and – most significantly – the fasting and temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4, Mk. 1, Lk 4).

"It is written,'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus, Matthew 4:4

Lent is a time of disruption – to break from our normal routines – to go into the wilderness ourselves a little bit in self-sacrifice and self-denial. We do this not to earn anything from God, but to empty ourselves of lesser things in order to fill ourselves with the greater things of the gospel.

Whereas Advent is a season of ever-increasing light as we await the incarnation of Jesus. Lent is a season of ever-increasing darkness in approach of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Observing Lent affords us an intentional opportunity to remind ourselves that the resurrection only came after the crucifixion. Celebrating the resurrection of Jesus begins with embracing His suffering – and Lent is the opportunity for the church to do both.

Some think that Lent strikes an unnecessary somber tone. But when practiced rightly, it actually invites us into a deeper hope (this has been referred to as bright sadness) and culminates in deeper joy.

When we prepare ourselves for Easter by entering the sorrow and pain that preceded it, the celebration will be all the sweeter and more joyful.



We see Lent as a gift, not a law and weekly fasts throughout the season of Lent as an opportunity to commune with Jesus more intentionally. Fasting isn't only the neglecting of something, but replacing it with a filling of a better thing - the best thing, Jesus.

Fasting at Lent creates an opportunity to turn off some of the clutter, noise, and comforts we're accustomed to in order to go into the wilderness with Jesus a little bit more intentionally – dwelling on His sacrifice – in the lead up to Easter.

Fasting from food has been the traditional practice but in our context we feast on all kinds of things worth weaning ourselves from and there's no better time of year to do that than in the lead up to the cross of Christ and all He sacrificed for us.

There are 40 fasting days in Lent but 46 days in the season of Lent. That's because Lent consists of feasting as well as fasting. You fast for six days, Monday-Saturday, and then Sundays (the day of the Resurrection) are feast days.

Each fast represents a common comfort to which our culture runs for distraction. The hope for each is that giving up these things will provide added time to commune with the Lord through the Word and prayer.

Week 1: Music, Radio, Podcasts

Week 2: Food

Week 3: TV & Movies

Week 4: Caffeine and Sweets

Week 5: Social Media & Internet Browsing

Week 6: Shopping for Non-Essentials

Week 7: Sleep

\*Week 2 isn't expected to be an absolute fast. Consider fasting one meal per day for the week or season, one whole day for the week or season, or the week itself. If you are fasting from food all week please research how to fast safely.

\*Week 7 isn't intended to be an absolute fast. We don't want you to die! Wake up an hour or two earlier or stay up an hour or two later and devote that time entirely to Jesus, to reading Scripture, meditating on His sacrifice, journalling, and prayer.

\*Consider building each week upon the next. For example, by week 7 you will find yourself fasting from music, radio, podcasts, food, TV & Movies, social media & internet browsing, caffeine and sweets, shopping for non-essentials and sleep.



"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, til you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Genesis 3:19

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

Psalm 51:1-2

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. There are numerous instances in the Old Testament where someone would pray in sackcloth and ashes. Rending one's garments and putting on sackcloth was a symbol of mourning, and ashes, a symbol of repentance.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of ash being placed in the shape of the cross on the participant's forehead (we sometimes place it on the hand), with the words, "Repent, and believe in the gospel" or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" spoken as they're administered. This vivid imagery represents the heart behind the day and entire season of Lent: We are sinners, life is short, and we desperately need gospel grace.

"Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need any forgiveness. It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the Law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power — it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk."

C.S. Lewis

## Prayer

Dear Jesus, it's Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. For the next forty days we have the privilege of fixing our gaze on you – the Author and Perfecter of our faith. For your glory and our growth, we ask you to overwhelm us with fresh mercies and irrepressible grace in the coming weeks.

Don't let this be a typical Lenten season, Jesus. Saturate and empower it with the gospel. It's all about you, Jesus. It is all about your finished work — not our constant failings and vain promises of doing better and doing more. Whatever fasting we may choose to practice, may it be as a betrothed bride, not as gloomy hypocrites. Our deepest repentance is always born out of seeing more of your beauty, more of the gospel, more of you, Jesus.

Indeed, Jesus, we begin Lent today anticipating our wedding, not our funeral. The law has been fulfilled and judgment is complete; the dowry has been paid in full and our wedding dress is your righteousness; the invitations have been sent out and the date has been secured. We praise, bless, and adore you.

Over these next forty days, intensify our hunger and fuel our hope. Break us that you might beautify us. Increase our love for holiness as you supersize our love for your glory. Free us from our idols as you reveal their emptiness and silliness in comparison with your beauty and bounty. We pray in your exalted and worship-worthy name. Amen.

## Ash Wednesday Service

Chilliwack Campus: 6 PM

A 45 minute time of singing, readings, prayer, silent reflection, and confession. All ages are welcome, childcare is available (Ages 6 Months - 5 Years).

# Using the Sermon Study Guide

Our *The Language of Lament* sermon series coincides with the season of Lent.

The Language of Lament Study Guide includes:

- Post Sunday content intended to guide you in your Life Group discussions or in personal study.
- Supplemental reading for the week.
- A section is provided for taking sermon notes.
- Life Group Leaders, as you interact with the guide and sermon, feel free to write your own questions for the group in the space provided for note taking.
- A corporate lament. One third of the Psalms are laments, many of them corporate laments. Lament is a lost prayer language, corporate lament all the more so. Therefore, throughout Lent we will be led in a different corporate lament each weekend in our gatherings.
- A weekly fast.

## LIFE GROUP TEMPLATE

Our Life Groups are more than Bible Studies, but they are certainly not less. Life Groups are small groups of believers and those exploring belief in Jesus who intentionally gather as community, supporting one another in the highs and lows of life and spurring one another on in the faith.

This includes the study of God's Word because it is our guide for faith and practice in the Christian life. Therefore, as we study a passage of Scripture as a group, the aim is to:

- Uncover the meaning of the passage,
- Discover how it fits into the grand story of the Bible.
- Discuss how it applies to our lives.
   (It is important to dig deeply for the original intent of the author in its context prior to jumping to application. The sermon will have explained much of this to you.)

The Bible is clear (there is an intended meaning in the text for us to submit our lives under). Christians are called to live out those commands with conviction and humility. It is our prayer that this guide serves you well in your Life Groups and individual study.

Please strive to contribute to the creation of a safe space for everyone in your group to share struggles, faith doubts and dialogue about what you are discovering in God's Word.

Outline of a typical Life Group gathering:

- Begin with evidences of God's grace or have someone share their faith story.
- Read the introduction to the week's study and ask an ice-breaker question.

- Work through a number of questions as a group (remember, it is not necessary to work through every question but to select a few that both help you discover the Truth of the text and apply it to the lives of your group).
- Close in prayer. Include things to praise God and give Him glory for, prayers of application of God's Word to your lives, and supplication, making the requests and needs of the group known to God.





Israel has had a long line of kings who, knowing the commands of God, chose a path of evil and rebellion. Zedekiah, the king in our passage, is not different than those that came before him. He knew God's commands and had heard of the revival under his grandfather, Josiah, yet chose to disregard them and follow the evil of his father and brothers. It is under Zedekiah's rule that God's patience with his people ended and his wrath turned against them in the form of an invading Chaldean army.

#### Read the Text

2 Chronicles 36:11-21

#### **Understand the Text**

- 1. What was Zedekiah judged for in this passage?
- 2. Who followed Zedekiah in his rebelliousness? Why is that significant?
- 3. What was God's initial response to Israel's rebellion?
- 4. Who was ultimately responsible for the Chaldeans coming against Israel?
- 5. How long was Israel to be in exile?

- 1. In what ways do you identify with Zedekiah? Where do you find yourself hardening your heart towards the commands and promises of God?
- 2. When you read the Old Testament prophets you see a clear and persistent message of repentance (turning from the wrong and to God). Where or who are the voices in your life calling you to turn from sin and trust Jesus? How are you responding to them?
- 3. How is God's persistence in sending messengers an encouragement as we seek to follow His will and Word?
- 4. In light of God's judgment of Israel, and knowing He will come again, how does this impending judgment of God impact you?

5. Given that future judgment will be universal, how ought it inspire us in our attitudes and priorities for our lost neighbours, co-workers, and loved ones? Do you find yourself responding to this reality faithfully? In what ways?

## Biblical Thread | Supplemental Reading

- 2 Kings 24:18-25:21
  The story of Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem
- Psalm 74
  - A lament written about the exile described in the passage
- Jeremiah 52
  - Recounts the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple
- Romans 2:5-11
  - The hardness of heart found in Zedekiah is a threat for us as well
- 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

  Judgment of Christ is coming to those who do not obey Him

#### Conclusion

God is patient and He persistently, graciously, and compassionately calls His people to see Him as He truly is and to repent of their wayward hearts. He lovingly warns of the consequences of not heeding His warnings and following His righteous path. God came against His people because of their persistent unrepentance and lack of faith. We would do well to see this example in Scripture and evaluate our disposition towards the words and warnings of God. In His grace, He has provided a way through Christ to be changed, transformed and sanctified. The day of the Lord is coming, and by all biblical accounts it will be a terrible day for those whose hearts are hard, and whose necks are stiff. We should heed the warning found in the demise of Israel, check our hearts, and lean heavily on the grace of Jesus!

## Weekly Corporate Lament: SIN

For not mourning over & fighting our sin

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Jeremiah writes the book of Lamentations in response to the devastation experienced through the exile. The city where the God of Israel was supposed to dwell lays in ruins, the temple destroyed, the people dispersed through the nations, and almost nothing remains. The first chapter of this book is a poem dedicated to outlining the devastation and the pain that came from the exile. God had allowed this to come against His own people and the results were catastrophic. There is no comfort, no support and no revival, yet there is a call for God to bring justice on those who enacted this devastation.

#### Read the Text

Lamentations 1

#### **Understand the Text**

- 1. What does verse 2 tell us about those whom Jerusalem put their trust in?
- 2. Why do her enemies prosper? (v.5)
- 3. There is a perspective change from verses 11 to 12. What is it? How does it impact the following verses?
- 4. What does Jerusalem ask of the observer in verses 18 & 19?
- 5. What is the final plea of Jerusalem to God in verse 22?

- 1. Jerusalem was thought to be untouchable, yet the people now lament its destruction. What areas in your life do you currently believe are untouchable by God?
- 2. All of Jerusalem's suffering is a result of the sin of the people. How might we wisely identify suffering that is the result of personal sin?
- 3. What areas of your life resonate with verse 16?
- 4. The writer identifies that the Lord's actions are right. How often do we maintain the Lord's right standing amongst suffering? How might we help each other accomplish that?

5. The disposition of the lamenter in verse 22 is to seek God to bring justice just as He has dealt with Israel. How often is our disposition to bring our requests to God even when we are hurting or being disciplined by Him? How do we train our hearts toward that posture?

## Biblical Thread | Supplemental Reading

- Leviticus 26:13-14
  - The yoke God broke in Egypt now sits again on Jerusalem
- Deuteronomy 28:15-68
   Curses for disobedience
- 2 Samuel 11:7-16
  - David and his offspring would reign in Jerusalem
- 1 Kings 5-8

  Building of the temple in Jerusalem
- Joel 3:1-3
  - God will judge the nations for their treatment of Jerusalem
- Amos 5:18
   The Day of the Lord

#### Conclusion

It is surprising to our sensibilities to see Jeremiah declare that the Lord was in the right for letting this happen. Instead of bitterness and an angry fist toward God, his response is one of acceptance. He mourns the brokenness, feels the pain, weeps real tears of loss, his stomach turns at the grim realities of conquering armies, and yet he declares that God is in the right for allowing such pain. His conviction is firmly planted in the understanding that God does what is right always. Instead of gripe and complain, he mourns, and then turns to God, this same God, and seeks justice for the wrongs done to the people. What an amazing testimony and encouragement to our approach to suffering and pain.

## Corporate Lament: DEHUMANIZATION

For the mistreatment of those made in theimage of God

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Chapters like this challenge our thinking about God. We are comfortable knowing Him as gracious, compassionate, merciful, and loving. We are not so comfortable with knowing Him as jealous, just, and wrathful. We cringe to think that a righteous God would use these measures to bring justice and discipline to His people. Yet, it is in His strong and challenging dealings with sin that we are pointed more clearly to the gospel and our need for a saviour.

#### Read the Text

Lamentations 2

#### Understand the Text

- 1. Even though the actual exile was carried out by the Chaldeans, who does the author of this chapter attribute the devastation to?
- 2. How is God described as carrying out this judgment? What attitude or attribute is repeated throughout the text as the driving force of His actions?
- 3. Run through the text and outline the extent of the devastation being observed. What is surprising about the scenes described?
- 4. What is surprising about the response in verses 18 & 19?
- 5. What is the implied accusation behind the questions at the end of the chapter?

- 1. How does this passage challenge or stretch your understanding of God?
- 2. What aspects of the gospel does this passage draw attention to?
- 3. Part of Israel's fall was due to the voices they allowed to speak (v.14). How do we discern voices of truth over voices of deception?

- 4. The disposition of the writer is to seek God, even while experiencing His wrath. Our current cultural climate is to scorn God when we face hardships (sin related or not). Where do you find yourself leaning away, or scorning God, because of the hardships in your life? How might we help each other to lean in instead of out?
- 5. The questions of verse 20 indicate that the author is struggling with the severity of the circumstances. How do we make margin, for ourselves and others, to ask and wrestle with these questions in the midst of suffering?

## Biblical Thread | Supplemental Reading

- Exodus 34:6-7
  God is gracious and yet will not will punish the guilty
- Psalm 78
   A history of Israel's rebellion, and a reminder of our capacity to reject God
- Proverbs 6:16-19
   A list of some things God hates
- Isaiah 6:1-6
   Our sinfulness in light of God's holiness
- Jeremiah 16:17 God knows our sin

#### Conclusion

Passages like this challenge us right to our core. They challenge us because we believe we know what is just and true and compassionate and can see God as being anything but these things. Yet, it also challenges us because we know the failings in our own lives and the countless ways in which we have tried to remedy them, and we hope and pray that God would have mercy. We should allow passages like this to remind us of the grave danger sin brings with it, and consider how amazing it is that God would have patience with us and offer us reconciliation with Him through Jesus. God is wrathful, but we do not need to experience it.

## **Corporate Lament: UNBELIEF**For lack of belief in who God is

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After reading the last two chapters you might be shocked at the sub-heading for this chapter. To experience the suffering and devastation outlined and discover that it was God behind it seems to naturally bring to mind other, less flattering directions to move. Yet, the author moves to recalling the faithfulness of God in the midst of all the carnage.

#### Read the Text

Lamentations 3

### **Understand the Text**

- 1. Who is talking and what pronouns are being used?
- 2. What aspects of God's character and actions are outlined in verses 22 to 27?
- 3. What is the attitude of the author given these realities? (v.21)
- 4. What is the conviction of the author in verse 31 and following?
- 5. What does the author call the people to in verses 40 & 41?
- 6. The rest of the chapter is a prayer to the Lord. What are the components of it?

- 1. The reiteration of the personal experience of suffering at the beginning of the chapter can feel repetitive, but drives home the point that this suffering was not national, or simply theological. Where are you experiencing real, personal suffering, and how do these verses resonate?
- 2. The author reflects on the character and actions of God and finds hope. Do you find this to be true in your own life? Why or why not?
- 3. In the midst of all this suffering the call is to self-examine, return, and worship (v.40-41). What is surprising about this call? Where do you struggle to heed the author's call? Why?

- 4. The confidence of the author in his prayer is that God will make everything right and bring justice. Do you have this confidence that God will make everything right? What stops you from engaging with this as a reality?
- 5. What aspects of the gospel do you see this text pointing toward?

## Biblical Thread | Supplemental Reading

- Deuteronomy 7:6-9
   The faithfulness and repayment of the Lord
- Hosea 6:1
   Returning to the Lord
- Hosea 11:8
   The anguish of the Lord in judgement
- Isaiah 52:13-53:12
   The suffering servant parallel
- 1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, Hebrews 10:23,
   1 Peter 4:19
   Promises all hinge on God's faithfulness

## Conclusion

The faithfulness of God is present even in His wrath, even in our suffering, even when we cannot understand it. If He is not faithful to His Word, His character, and His purposes, we have absolutely no hope. Everything hinges on His faithfulness. When God outlines that He will punish those who disregard His Word, it would be catastrophic if He acted otherwise, because we could not have any confidence in the promises He extends for those who trust and believe. This is why, even in the midst of unthinkable suffering, the lamenter calls Israel to repent, return, and worship God.

## Weekly Corporate Lament: LOVE OF MONEY

For putting our trust in money

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The shocking truth of the exile is the abandonment of God's people by God Himself. They were His prized possession and yet we again see the depth of their despair and how unhuman they had become. Yet the passage moves from this radical dehumanization to a realization that their punishment will end and there is hope for justice and reconciliation.

#### Read the Text

Lamentations 4

### Understand the Text

- 1. Why is this punishment greater than the punishment God brought on Sodom?
- 2. Why was His wrath kindled? (v.13)
- Who was Israel looking to for help in their time of trouble? (v.17)
- 4. What is the cup that the author says that Edom will drink?
- 5. What is the hope of verse 22?

- 1. How would you lament over the suffering, pain, and difficulty in your life?
- 2. One of Israel's mistakes was to look for salvation from surrounding nations (v.17). What are the "nations" in our lives that we look to for salvation when suffering and difficulty come? How have they fared in providing hope amidst trials?
- 3. Verse 22 declares that the punishment Israel received has been completed, which no doubt would bring great joy. How has the gospel been reflected in this way in your life, and how does it transform your thinking?
- 4. The author is certain that "Edom" will also taste of the cup of the wrath of God and this brings hope because justice will prevail. Does this idea of ultimate justice bring hope into your life? Why or why not?

## Biblical Thread | Supplemental Reading

- Genesis 19:1-29
  The story of Sodom and its punishment
- Exodus 19:5 Israel, God's treasured people
- Deuteronomy 32
   The song of Moses
- Isaiah 40 Israel's sins paid for and the greatness of God revealed
- Romans 12:19
   Vengeance is the Lord's
- Hebrews 10:19-30
   God's faithfulness and vengeance as motivators

#### Conclusion

In light of God's holiness, we should quake at the thought of His wrath and judgement, yet we can find great hope in the reality laid out in verse 22: Israel's punishment was accomplished. Unlike Israel, we do not have to face siege, starvation, and eventual exile for our failure and sin. Instead, we can look to Christ and see that all that punishment was paid for and our salvation is accomplished. We can look in hope to the future, not because of our good deeds, but because the justice of God was met in the work and worth of Jesus. We can face the injustices of today because, no matter what, the righteous justice of God will be met and sin will be paid for. This will be paid by Christ on the cross, or we can carry the wrath of God ourselves. Given the picture of destruction throughout. Lamentations, the right choice of casting ourselves at the mercy of Christ is rather self-evident.

Weekly Corporate Lament: DAMAGED CHRISTIAN WITNESS For not loving neighbour as ourselves

· NOTES ·

• NOTES •



Restoration is an all-encompassing process. You cannot simply slap a coat of paint on a condemned house and expect a return. Instead, the studs need to be exposed, the foundation laid bare, the deficiencies thoroughly examined. Only at that point can a true solution begin to form. Similarly, Israel has come to the end of itself and is looking at the devastation around them, the deficiencies of their faithlessness, and seeking a solution. Yet, it is shocking to see that the author is returning to the God of wrath that brought the destruction and looking for mercy.

#### Read the Text

Lamentations 5

#### Understand the Text

- 1. Who is the author presenting his case to and why is this significant?
- 2. Whose perspective is this from, given verse 7?
- 3. What situation in Israel's history does the circumstances outlined in verses 1-17 parallel?
- 4. What is the turning point in verse 19?
- 5. What is the specific request of the author? (v.21)

- 1. Before the lamenter seeks an answer from God they outline, in detail, their plight before Him. How might this change the way we pray or present requests, laments, to God?
- 2. The author's presupposition is that God reigns forever and so his disposition is to outline his case before God and seek Him for an answer. In what ways do you discount God's ultimate reign when you approach Him in prayer?
- 3. The request in the final verse of the book is that God would restore Himself to His people. In other words, the people long for relationship with God, not the blessings of God. How might it look to seek relationship with God instead of his blessings?

4. How does this passage, particularly the last 4 verses, point to the need of humanity, the way of salvation, and its author?

## Biblical Thread | Supplemental Reading

- Job 38-42:6
   God answers Job in his suffering
- Ezekiel 36:22-38 God will replace our heart of stone with one of flesh
- Romans 5:6-11 While we were still sinners
- Ephesians 2:1-10
  The great reality of "but God" described
- Revelation 21-22

  The consummation of salvation in Christ revealed

#### Conclusion

Lamentations ends recognizing the sovereignty of God and our utter reliance on his mercy for our salvation. The author recognizes that God is enthroned on high, and unless He moves to restore the people to Himself, they are utterly lost. This is why he brings his case before God and outlines the hardship. This is why he calls to the Lord in desperation. The earth-shattering reality is that God listened to that prayer and restored relationship with us, and did not leave us to be utterly rejected. He hears the cry of the destitute and restores them in Christ. He did not leave us to languish in our sin, but made a way to be sons and daughters. He did not forget forever, but forgave. He did not condemn, but came to save. It is this God that is worthy to be approached in all circumstances and trusted even when things seem harsh and unjust.

Weekly Corporate Lament: UNFORGIVENESS
For not forgiving others as we have been forgiven

· NOTES ·

· NOTES ·



The coming King of Zion <sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup>I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem: and the battle bow shall be cut off. and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea. and from the river to the ends of the earth. <sup>11</sup>As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. <sup>12</sup>Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. Zechariah 9:9-12

<sup>12</sup>The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

John 12:12-13

### Reflection

On Palm Sunday the crowds cheered, Hosanna! This word has two meanings that really build upon each other: Save, please! and Salvation has come!
Whenever we read or sing Hosanna! may we be aware of both elements of the word: We have been saved from our guilt and shame and salvation belongs to the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

## Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, we'll exhaust the glory of this passage when the Amazon River flows backwards, the sun turns into a snow cone, and yellowfin tuna yodel. Who is it that fulfills Zechariah's magnificent vision? It is you, King Jesus, and we welcome you and rejoice in you on this Palm Sunday.

No other king could vanquish warhorses and warriors, riding the foal of a donkey. No other king could break the battle bow and backbone of warfare by the brokenness of the cross. No other king could replace the dominion of darkness and the tyranny of evil with an eternal reign of grace and peace.

No other king would give his life and death for the redemption of rebels and idolaters like us. No other king can possibly make slaves of sin into prisoners of hope.

Lord Jesus, you are that King – the King of Glory, the Monarch of Mercy, the Governor of Grace, the Prince of Peace – the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Great is our rejoicing, because great is our salvation! You have come to us and for us, righteous and victorious, loving and sovereign.

By the riches of your grace, continue to free us from waterless pits, broken cisterns, and worthless idols. By the power of the gospel, enable us to live as prisoners of hope and agents of redemption, until the day you return to finish making all things new. We pray in your holy and matchless name. Amen.



And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:34

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lea sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:46

It is finished.

John 19:30

<sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – <sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8

<sup>12</sup>The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

John 12:12-13

### Reflection

On Good Friday, we commemorate the death of Jesus, the event at the centre of the mystery of redemption. Our Good Friday services are crafted to help us contemplate, revere, and even embrace the cross. As we approach Easter, it can be tempting to rush past Good Friday or turn away from the cross in discomfort. But we must see the cross as the precursor of joy, an inseparable part of the triumph that we celebrate at Easter.

## **Good Friday Services**

Chilliwack (south gatherings): 9:30 + 11 AM

Agassiz (north gathering): 10:30 AM

## Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, for years I struggled with calling the day of your crucifixion "good." How presumptuous on our part. That there had to be a day when you, the eternally glorious Son of God, would be made sin for us is not good at all. But at the same time, that you would freely and gladly give yourself for us on the cross is never-to-be surpassed goodness — quintessential goodness.

Oh, the wonder of it all. From the cross and from your heart came these two impassioned cries: "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34) and "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). The first required the second. The second secured the first. Together they humble our hearts and fuel our worship.

And then there's the third cry: "It is finished." Nothing is left undone concerning our salvation and for the transformation of our world. Once and for all, perfectly and fully, we have been reconciled to God. You became sin for us that in you, we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21) – the Just for the unjust, the Beautiful One for the broken ones, the Lamb of God for the rebels from God.

Lord Jesus, a million years into our life in the new heaven and new earth, we will still be stunned with awe, worship, and gratitude for the greatness of your sacrifice and love for us. Because you were fully forsaken, we are forever forgiven. Because you exhausted God's judgment against our numberless sins, we now live by the gift of your perfect righteousness. Bow our heads in humility and raise our hands in praise. We pray in your all-glorious, all-grace-full name. Amen.



<sup>50</sup>Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, <sup>51</sup>who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. <sup>52</sup>This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>53</sup>Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. <sup>54</sup>It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. <sup>55</sup>The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. <sup>56</sup>Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 23:50-56

<sup>62</sup>The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup>and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' <sup>64</sup>Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first."

Matthew 27:62-64

### Reflection

Easter Saturday. A day of in between. A grave is about to be emptied, but not yet. The joy of knowing what's coming; the pain of having to wait for it. An analogy for the whole Christian life.

Sam Allberry

Written on the walls of an easement in Köln by someone hiding from the Nazis: "I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when feeling it not. I believe in God even when God is silent." This is Holy Saturday.

Holy Saturday is a time of reverence, stillness, and expectation. On the eve of Easter, between death and resurrection, we confront the silence of the tomb. While Holy Saturday is a solemn day, it is also a day of great anticipation as the dawn of Easter is about to break.

## Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, how could your family and followers have slept the night of Good Friday? I can only imagine the depth of sadness that seized their hearts. And yet others were euphoric and relieved that you, "the deceiver," could no longer threaten the status quo of the religious community.

As the sun rose on Saturday, no one understood that the most undeserved death imaginable would yield the greatest return calculable. As you were nailed to the cross, the written code – God's law, with all its regulations and requirements – lost all its condemning power over us. With your last breath, you disarmed the powers of darkness, triumphing over all authorities marshalled against God's kingdom (Colossians 2:14-15).

No one realized that your mortal punishment would bring our eternal peace; that your fatal wounding would secure our everlasting healing; that your being crushed under God's judgment would lead to our being cherished by the thrice-holy God (Isaiah 53). Though they had the Scriptures, they had no clue.

And yet the chief priests and the Pharisees did remember your promise of resurrection. They weren't sad about your death; they were mad with fear about the possibility of your life. Having planned to put to death a resurrected Lazarus (John 12:10), they weren't about to include a resurrected Jesus.

Oh, silly, sinful men – they'd sooner hold back the rising of the sun than the rising of the Son of God. Resurrection Sunday was coming, and there was absolutely nothing they could do about it. The sadness of Saturday would soon be shattered with the shouts of Sunday: "The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!" In your triumphant and loving name we pray. Amen.



<sup>9</sup>Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5:9-11

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup>In this you rejoice.

1 Peter 1:3-6

### Reflection

If the resurrection is true, then it's all true. If the resurrection is not true, then none of it is true. If Christ literally was raised from the grave, then we have all the reason in the world to have hope and to live transformed lives. If he did not rise from the grave, then the Bible itself says we are to be pitied above all men.

**Matt Chandler** 

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he wrought surprising feats. He was the Christ. When Pilate condemned him to be crucified, those who had come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared restored to life and the tribe of Christians has not disappeared.

**Josephus** (Jewish historian, 93AD)

#### Resurrection

alorified.

O God of my Exodus,

Great was the joy of Israel's sons, when Egypt died upon the shore, far greater the joy when the Redeemer's foe lay crushed in the dust.

Jesus strides forth as the victor, conqueror of death, hell, and all opposing might;

He bursts the bands of death, tramples the powers of darkness down, and lives for ever.

He, my gracious surety, apprehended for payment of my debt, comes forth from the prison house of the grave free, and triumphant over sin, Satan, and death.

Show me herein the proof that his vicarious offering is accepted, that the claims of justice are satisfied, that the devil's sceptre is shivered, that his wrongful throne is levelled. Give me the assurance that in Christ I died, in him I rose, in his life I live, in his victory I triumph, in his ascension I shall be

Adorable Redeemer, thou who was lifted up upon a cross art ascended to highest heaven.

Thou, who as Man of sorrows wast crowned with thorns, art now as Lord of life wreathed with glory.

Once, no shame more deep than thine, no agony more bitter, no death more cruel.

Now, no exaltation more high, no life more glorious, no advocate more effective.

Thou art in the triumph car leading captive thine enemies behind thee.

What more could be done than thou hast done! Thy death is my life, thy resurrection my peace, thy ascension my hope, thy prayers my comfort.

# **Easter Sunday Services**

Chilliwack Campus: 9 + 10:45 AM
Promontory Campus: 10:30 AM
Agassiz Campus: 10:30 AM
Lake Errock Campus: 10:30 AM

## Prayer

Exalted and resurrected Jesus, we join the apostle Peter's bold declaration of living hope and great joy. For you have risen from the dead, and this good news changes everything.

Because of your resurrection, we're neither afraid to die nor afraid to live; we're not hapless vagabonds on earth but hope-filled children of God. We're no longer enslaved to our sins; we're now wrapped in your righteousness. Those who have "gone to sleep" in you aren't slumbering in the void; they're rejoicing in your presence. Hallelujah!

Because of your resurrection, we're less to be pitied than anybody and more to be grateful than anybody (1 Corinthians 15:14-19). You are the first fruits and guarantee of a whole new order – the "new creation" dominion of redemption and restoration. Everything sad will come untrue, and all things broken will be made new. How we long for that day!

Because of your resurrection, you are already reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords: All evil dominions, wicked authorities, and malevolent powers now stand defeated, and one day they will be fully eradicated. Hallelujah, many times over!

Jesus, your death is the death of death, and your resurrection is the resurrection of all things. You died for our sins and have been raised for our justification. Oh, the wonder, marvel, and gratitude that fills our hearts today. We are forgiven, we are beloved, and we are yours!

In light of this living hope and compelling love, this measureless grace and eternal inheritance, free us for spending the rest of our days living and loving to your glory. We pray, Jesus, in your resurrected and reigning name. Amen.





## **Bible Translation**

The English Standard Version (ESV)

# Prayers

Scotty Smith, "Every Season Prayers: Gospel-Centered Prayers for the Whole of Life"

## **Poems**

The Valley of Vision: Puritan Prayers and Devotions



This resource was created by and for Central Community Church Chilliwack | Promontory | Agassiz | Harrison | Lake Errock 46100 Chilliwack Central Road, Chilliwack, BC.

You are permitted to use and share this Study Guide, as long as you do not change or add to it in any way, or charge for the guide.



## **MISSION:**

WE EXIST TO BE AUTHENTIC FOLLOWERS OF **JESUS** WHO LEAD OTHERS TO **FOLLOW HIM**.

### **VISION:**

WE AIM TO SEE THE ENTIRE EASTERN FRASER VALLEY **TRANSFORMED** BY THE **GOSPEL** FOR THE **GLORY OF GOD** AND GOOD OF **ALL PEOPLE**.

## **VALUES:**

CENTRED ON THE GOSPEL.
ROOTED IN THE BIBLE.
GATHERED IN COMMUNITY.
EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT.
EQUIPPED FOR MINISTRY.
SENT ON MISSION.



