

Holy Week

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina means divine reading. It is a way of reflecting on Scripture with a focus on enjoying God's presence and listening for His personal Word in the moment.

There are five steps:

Silence: Slow down, quiet your heart, release distractions, turn your mind toward God.

Read: Read a Scripture passage out loud slowly. Linger over words or phrases that catch your attention or resonate with your heart needs.

Meditate: Read the passage again, pondering especially the words or phrases that caught your attention. Listen for how the Holy Spirit may be speaking to you through the Word.

Pray: Read the passage a third time, entering into a personal dialogue of prayer with God based on this portion of Scripture.

Contemplate: Rest and wait in God's presence. Allow time for the Word to sink deeply into your soul.

Monday, March 30

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said,

‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.’”

John 17:1

When Jesus Had Spoken

When Jesus had spoken these words. When was that? What words had He spoken? Rewind several chapters in the Gospel of John, and you will encounter Christ’s final teachings. Some were spoken to large groups—seekers and doubters, Jews and Gentiles, religious rulers and ordinary folks. In these settings, Jesus continued revealing His identity and the purpose for which God had sent Him. He didn’t miss any opportunity to speak the truth and to invite people to believe.

As passion week continued, Jesus spoke to His own small group of disciples. He spoke through words and through actions, washing their feet and sharing a meal with them. He foretold Judas’ betrayal, and He promised the remaining disciples that, though He would be away from them for a while, He would not leave them comfortless.

Jesus also spoke through word pictures:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (John 15:5, 9).

As Holy Week unfolds, listen carefully to the words Jesus has spoken. Let them bring you clarity and comfort. Hear them as a gracious invitation from the One who died so you might live.

Dear Savior, May Your words be a lamp for my feet and a light for my path during Holy Week and always. Amen.

Tuesday, March 31

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.’” John 17:1

Eyes Lifted Up

Jesus is about to pray. He is gathered with His disciples in the upper room. Our Lord has exposed Judas as a traitor. He predicted Peter’s denial. And still, He has a lot more to say. He gives them the new commandment to love one another. He declares that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He tells how loving God and obeying God are intertwined. He explains about the gift of the Holy Spirit. He bestows on them a rich kind of peace; a peace the world cannot give and cannot take away.

Now He is ready to pray. He lifts up His eyes to heaven and says, “Father.” Does that sound familiar? Of course! We have witnessed similar scenes before, when Jesus lifted His eyes to heaven before blessing the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude and before calling Lazarus forth from the grave. Perhaps, especially, it reminds us of the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father, who art in heaven”

At this crucial moment, in this final fellowship with His closest friends, Jesus lifted up His eyes and called God, “Father.” Then He prayed to the Father for those He loved—for His disciples and for you and for me.

Gracious Lord, May I lift my eyes always to the Heavenly Father, pouring out my heart in thanks, praise and prayer. Amen.

Wednesday, April 1

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.’” John 17:1

The Hour Has Come

This is the hour. This is what it has all been leading up to. Jesus knew exactly what was coming—betrayal, arrest, torture, abandonment, death. What a conglomeration of thoughts and emotions must have flooded Jesus as He prayed, “Father, the hour has come!”

Jesus’ prayer continues, “Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.” This glory was going to come in a strange way indeed. Jesus would not be seated on a royal dais with crowds acclaiming Him but hanging on a lonely cross outside the city gates. It would happen just as He foretold: “*When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.*” *He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die* (John 12:32-33). After Jesus explained this, He ended with a plea: “*While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light*” (John 12:36).

Jesus’ words during Holy Week echo the beginning of John’s Gospel: “*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world ... to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*” (John 1:9, 11-12).

This is the reason that Jesus, the Light of the World, came to earth. This is the reason that Jesus said, “The hour has come.” So that all who believe in His name become children of God.

Jesus, Thank You for facing the hour of suffering and death to redeem me and make me God’s own child. Amen.

Maundy Thursday, April 2

“For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” John 17:8-9

Kept In God’s Name

It is one thing to have someone say they will pray for you. It is another thing to have them take your hand and pray right then and there, while you can hear the petitions they bring before the Lord.

That is what John 17 gives us—the very words Jesus used when He prayed for His disciples gathered in the upper room and for all of us down through the ages who believe. His requests on our behalf are so meaningful, so precious!

He prays:

That we may be one.

That we may have the joy of Christ.

That we be kept safe from the evil one.

That we be sanctified through the truth found in God’s Word.

That we be kept in the Father’s name and remain His forever.

Tonight, we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper. We will come forward to the table. We will take the bread and wine. We will receive His body and blood. And our hearts will remember. Oh, yes! This is the assurance that Jesus paid it all. This is the security of knowing we belong to the Father. Yes, this is one of the ways God keeps us safe in His grace until we reach our heavenly home.

O living Bread from heaven, how well You feed Your guest! The gifts that You have given have filled my heart with rest. Amen. (Lutheran Service Book #642)

Good Friday, April 3

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

John 17:20-21

Now May God

Have you ever been prayed for in a moment of great need? Perhaps after hearing bad news or facing a deep loss? If so, you know what a sweet and tender moment that is. It reveals the heart of someone who loves you enough to carry you to the throne of grace.

Even more so, Jesus' prayer in John 17 reveals His heart. Yesterday, we considered some of His requests for His followers. Today, on Good Friday, we pause to remember what Jesus most desires: *“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24).

Jesus wants all to believe and to be with Him forever. Jesus wants you to be with Him forever. He wants you to see His glory and to be wrapped up in the eternal love of God.

Good Friday makes it possible. In our worship service this day, we will sit in the darkened sanctuary, hearing the passion story and singing somber hymns with humble thankfulness. Tomorrow we will wait in silent anticipation. And on Easter Sunday, we will celebrate His resurrection with light and wonder and shouts of joy!

Dearest Savior, May I never lose the wonder that You want me to be with You forever, and You died and rose to make it so! Amen.