



# HINES MEMORIAL

## CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

408 North Madison Street  
Albany, Georgia 31701  
Church Email: [hinesmemorial@bellsouth.net](mailto:hinesmemorial@bellsouth.net)

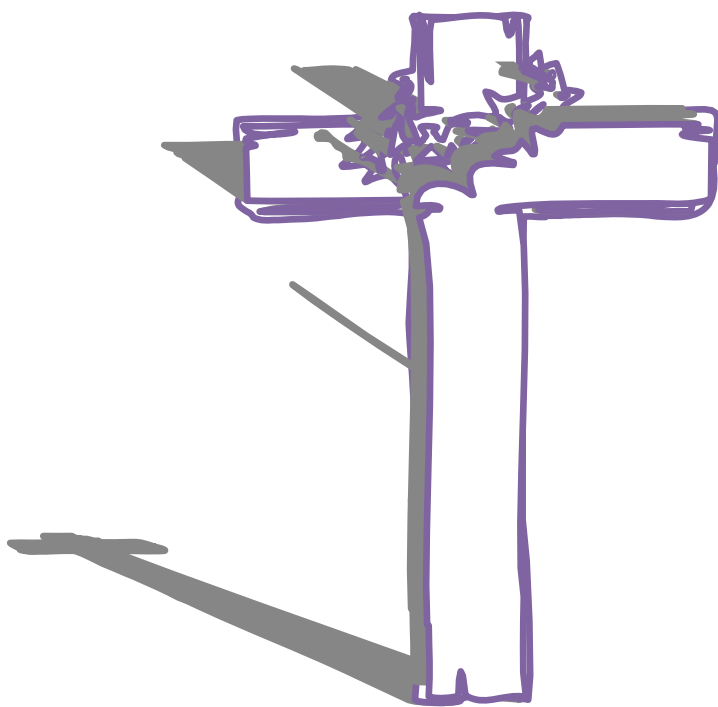
Pastoral Residence: 229-639-1237  
Telephone 229-432-1277  
Church Website: [www.hinesmemorialcmechurch.org](http://www.hinesmemorialcmechurch.org)

# LENT 2009

FEBRUARY 25- APRIL 11

A 40 DAY PILGRIMAGE TO THE CROSS:

FORGIVENESS, HUMILITY, PRAYER,  
FAITH, COMPASSION, SERVICE



CHURCH OFFICE: MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY, 3.30 P.M. – 5.30 P.M.

1<sup>ST</sup>, 2<sup>ND</sup>, 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAYS: SOI, 8.45 A.M., CHURCH SCHOOL, 9:30 A.M., WORSHIP, 11:00 A.M.

3<sup>RD</sup>, 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAYS: WORSHIP, 8:45 A.M., SOI, 9:15 A.M., CHURCH SCHOOL, 9:45 A.M.

WEDNESDAYS: FAMILY NIGHT, 5:15 P.M.:

SUPPER, ADULT BIBLE STUDY, CHRISTIAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

HOLY WEEK: APRIL 10-14, NOON, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



**\*WARMER** THROUGH FELLOWSHIP\***DEEPER** THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

**\*STRONGER** THROUGH WORSHIP\***BROADER** THROUGH MINISTRY\***LARGER** THROUGH EVANGELISM

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	3
SUNDAY WORSHIP/FROM THE PULPIT/WEDNESDAY FAMILY NIGHT/DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING (THURSDAYS)	4
THE SEASON OF LENT	5
THE JOURNEY OF LENT	6
REFLECTIONS ON LENT	6
THE DAYS OF HOLY WEEK	7
PALM SUNDAY	8
MAUNDY THURSDAY	8
GOOD FRIDAY	9
HOLY SATURDAY	10
FASTING AND PRAYING: THE PURPOSE, THE POWER, THE RESULTS	11-13
DAILY DEVOTIONAL READINGS FOR LENT 2009	14-15

# AN OVERVIEW OF LENT 2009: FEBRUARY 25- APRIL 11

## A 40 DAY PILGRIMAGE TO THE CROSS: FORGIVENESS, HUMILITY, PRAYER, FAITH, COMPASSION, SERVICE

- **ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE**, February 25, 5:30 P.M.
- **SUNDAY LENTEN MEDITATIONS** continue each Sunday both in Church School and during the hour of worship and praise. Note that we enter the Lenten season with all seven candles lighted on the Lenten wreath in the sanctuary and in the Family Life Center: six purple candles for each of the six Sundays of Lent and the Christ candle in the center. Each Sunday during our journey to the cross, one of the six candles will be extinguished during the meditation period. The Christ Candle will be extinguished during the Maundy Thursday Service.
- **DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING: Reviewing and Starting:** this year, we will conduct a mini course in *Discipleship Training* on Thursdays (5 weeks) for those who have previously completed either phase I, phases I and II, or who have not engaged in any of the previous trainings. *Discipleship Training* is designed for persons who are seriously interested in taking your relationship with Jesus Christ to a deeper level and who are interested in not only becoming a more committed disciple but learning to become a "maker" of disciples as well. The sessions are open to all members but require a commitment so that all phases of study may be completed.
- **THE PULPIT ON SUNDAYS:** A Pilgrimage to the Cross: Forgiveness, Humility, Prayer, Faith, Compassion, Service
- **THE LENTEN FAST 2009:** The entire church family, extended family, friends, etc. are asked to join us during this six week period in fasting from deserts (a number of us will also be giving up meat during this period (please feel free to join us). If you do not wish to use this fast, please observe a fast as agreed upon by God and you. If for some reason, you are late starting, start immediately.

**IN THE BIBLE, FASTING IS MENTIONED IN BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS AND WAS UTILIZED FOR A NUMBER OF PURPOSES:**

1. To aid in the development of a humble attitude (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10) ,
2. To gain guidance and help from God (Exodus 34:28; II Samuel 12:16-23; II Chronicles 20:3-4),
3. To express earnest supplication in times of mourning or distress (Ezra 8:21-23),
4. As a means of expressing one's devotion to God (Matthew 6:16-18; Luke 18:9-14),
5. To recognize Special Days (Acts 27:9; Luke 18:12)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT IN EACH SITUATION WHERE FASTING IS MENTIONED, THERE IS A SPECIFIC PURPOSE FOR THAT FAST. A SINCERITY AND COMMITTED ATTITUDE IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE PARTICIPANT. IF THE FAST IS WITHOUT PURPOSE, SINCERITY OR COMMITMENT, IT IS DONE IN VAIN AND BRINGS NO POSITIVE RESULTS. HOWEVER, FASTING WITH SOUND PURPOSE AND GENUINE COMMITMENT REAPS MANY BENEFITS (ISAIAH 58:3-9). PLEASE SEE PAGES 12-14 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND A REVIEW OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF ONE OF OUR STUDIES ON FASTING FROM 2005

- **DOWNTOWN HOLY WEEK SERVICES 2009**, Daily, April 6-10, 12.00 Noon, First Presbyterian Church; lunch is served at a cost of \$5 from 11.30 A.M. until Noon and again following the service from 12.30 P.M. until 1.00 P.M.

MONDAY	GARRETT ANDREW, PASTOR, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
TUESDAY	MARK JONES, RECTOR, ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WEDNESDAY	KENNETH D. McMILLIAN, PASTOR, HINES MEMORIAL C.M.E. CHURCH
THURSDAY	MIKE MCAFEE, PASTOR FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
FRIDAY	ERNEST DAVIS, PASTOR, BETHEL A.M. E. CHURCH

- **MAUNDY THURSDAY HOLY EUCHARIST WITH CRAY CHAPEL (AT HINES MEMORIAL): APRIL 9, 5:30 P.M.**

## SUNDAY WORSHIP/FROM THE PULPIT DURING LENT 2009

### A PILGRIMAGE TO THE CROSS: FORGIVENESS, HUMILITY, PRAYER, FAITH, COMPASSION, SERVICE

MARCH 1	FORGIVENESS	EPHESIANS 1.7
	<i>In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.</i>	
MARCH 8	HUMILITY	EPHESIANS 4.2
	<i>With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.</i>	
MARCH 15	PRAYER	MATTHEW 21.22
	<i>For truly I tell you, if you have faith . . . nothing will be impossible for you.</i>	
MARCH 22	FAITH	MATTHEW 17.20
	<i>Whatever you ask in prayer with faith, you will receive.</i>	
MARCH 29	COMPASSION	COLOSSIANS 3.12
	<i>As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion.</i>	
APRIL 5	SERVICE	MATTHEW 20.28
	<i>Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many</i>	

## WEDNESDAY FAMILY NIGHTS DURING LENT 2009, 5.15 P.M.

SUPPER, ADULT BIBLE STUDY, CHRISTIAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

FEBRUARY 25	ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE (5:30 P.M.); NO SUPPER
MARCH 4	MARK 3.1-19
MARCH 11	MARK 3.20-35
MARCH 18	MARK 4.1-20
MARCH 25	MARK 4.21-41
APRIL 1	MARK 5.1-20
APRIL 8	NO FAMILY NIGHT

## THURSDAY DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING DURING LENT 2009

HUMILITY, FAITH, PRAYER, COMPASSION, SERVICE, FORGIVENESS

MARCH 5	FORGIVENESS
MARCH 12	HUMILITY
MARCH 19	PRAYER AND FAITH
MARCH 26	COMPASSION
APRIL 2	SERVICE
APRIL 9	MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE, 5:30 P.M.

# THE SEASON OF LENT

Dennis Bratcher

The season of Lent has not been well observed in much of evangelical Christianity, largely because it was associated with "high church" liturgical worship that some churches were eager to reject. However, much of the background of evangelical Christianity, for example the heritage of John Wesley, was very "high church." Many of the churches that had originally rejected more formal and deliberate liturgy are now recovering aspects of a larger Christian tradition as a means to refocus on spirituality in a culture that is increasingly secular.

Originating in the fourth century of the church, the season of **Lent** spans 40 weekdays beginning on Ash Wednesday and climaxing during Holy Week with Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday), Good Friday, and concluding Saturday before Easter. Lent was originally the time of preparation for those who were to be baptized, a time of concentrated study and prayer before their baptism at the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord early on Easter Sunday. But since these new members were to be received into a living community of Faith, the entire community was called to preparation. Also, this was the time when those who had been separated from the Church would prepare to rejoin the community.

Today, Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent, and are referred to as the **Sundays in Lent**. The number 40 is connected with many biblical events, but especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling. Christians today use this period of time for introspection, self examination, and repentance. This season of the year is equal only to the Season of Advent in importance in the Christian year, and is part of the second major grouping of Christian festivals and sacred time that includes Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost.

Lent has traditionally been marked by penitential prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Some churches today still observe a rigid schedule of fasting on certain days during Lent, especially the giving up of meat, alcohol, sweets, and other types of food. Other traditions do not place as great an emphasis on fasting, but focus on charitable deeds, especially helping those in physical need with food and clothing, or simply the giving of money to charities. Most Christian churches that observe Lent at all focus on it as a time of prayer, especially penance, repenting for failures and sin as a way to focus on the need for God's grace. It is really a preparation to celebrate God's marvelous redemption at Easter, and the resurrected life that we live, and hope for, as Christians.

**Carnival**, which comes from a Latin phrase meaning "removal of meat," is the three day period preceding the beginning of Lent, the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday immediately before **Ash Wednesday**, which is the first day of the Lenten Season (some traditions count Carnival as the entire period of time between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday). The three days before Ash Wednesday are also known as **Shrovetide** ("shrove" is an Old English word meaning "to repent"). The Tuesday just before Ash Wednesday is called **Shrove Tuesday**, or is more popularly known by the French term **Mardi Gras**, meaning "Fat Tuesday," contrasting to the fasting during Lent. The entire three day period has now come to be known in many areas as Mardi Gras.

Carnival or Mardi Gras is usually a period of celebration, originally a festival before the fasting during the season of Lent. Now it is celebrated in many places with parades, costumes, dancing, and music. Many Christians' discomfort with Lent originates with a distaste for Mardi Gras, which in some cultures, especially the Portuguese culture of Brazil and the French culture of Louisiana, has tended to take on the excesses of wild and drunken revelry. There has been some attempt in recent years to change this aspect of the season, such as using Brazilian Carnival parades to focus on national and cultural history. Many churches now observe Mardi Gras with a church pancake breakfast or other church meal, eating together as a community before the symbolic fasting of Lent begins.

**Ash Wednesday**, the seventh Wednesday before Easter Sunday, is the first day of the season of Lent. Its name comes from the ancient practice of placing ashes on worshippers' heads or foreheads as a sign of humility before God, a symbol of mourning and sorrow at the death that sin brings into the world. It not only prefigures the mourning at the death of Jesus, but also places the worshipper in a position to realize the consequences of sin.

The color used in the sanctuary for most of Lent is purple or dark violet. These colors symbolize both the pain and suffering leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus as well as the suffering of humanity and the world under sin. But purple is also the color of royalty, and so anticipates through the suffering and death of Jesus the coming resurrection and hope of newness that will be celebrated in the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Some church traditions change the sanctuary colors to red for Maundy Thursday, a symbol of the disciples and through them the community of the church. Since Eucharist or communion is often observed on Maundy Thursday in the context of Passover, the emphasis is on the gathered community in the presence of Jesus the Christ.

Traditionally, the sanctuary colors of Good Friday are black, symbolizing the darkness brought into the world by sin. It also symbolizes death, not only the death of Jesus but the death of the whole world under the burden of sin. In this sense, it also represents the hopelessness and the endings that come as human beings try to make their own way in the world without God. (See The Days of Holy Week). Black is used through Holy Saturday, although it is always replaced by white before sunrise of Easter Sunday.

## THE JOURNEY OF LENT

There are many ways for a congregation to mark the journey of Lent. One of the most effective ways that can be expanded in many variations is to use a rough wooden cross as a focal point for the season. The type of cross and how it is constructed will depend on exactly how it will be used. The cross is usually erected in the Sanctuary on Ash Wednesday as a visible symbol of the beginning of Lent. It is usually draped in black on Good Friday. The same cross can also become a part of the congregation's Easter celebration as it is then draped in white or gold, or covered with flowers (see The Flowering Cross).

One effective way to make use of the cross is to use it as a Prayer Cross during Lent. A hammer, square nails, and small pieces of paper are made available near the cross. At a designated time of prayer during the Sundays in Lent, people are invited to write their prayer requests on the paper, and then nail them to the cross. The quiet time of prayer with only the sounds of the hammer striking the nails can be a moving time for reflection on the meaning of Lent, and a powerful call to prayer. The prayer requests can be removed and burned as part of a Tenebrae or Stations of the Cross service during Holy Week to symbolize releasing the needs to God.

## REFLECTIONS ON LENT

We enjoy celebrating Palm Sunday. The children get to make paper palm branches and for many is one of the few times they get to take an active role in "big church." We wave the palm branches and celebrate. And we all love Easter Sunday! It is a happy time, with flowers, new clothes, and the expectation of Spring in the air.

But it is too easy and promotes too cheap a grace to focus only on the high points of Palm Sunday and Easter without walking with Jesus through the darkness of Good Friday, a journey that begins on Ash Wednesday. Lent is a way to place ourselves before God humbled, bringing in our hands no price whereby we can ourselves purchase our salvation. It is a way to confess our total inadequacy before God, to strip ourselves bare of all pretense to righteousness, to come before God in dust and ashes. It is a way to empty ourselves of our false pride, of our rationalizations that prevent us from seeing ourselves as needy creatures, of our "perfectionist" tendencies that blind us to the beam in our own eyes.

Through prayer that gives up self, we seek to open ourselves up before God, and to hear anew the call "Come unto me!" We seek to recognize and respond afresh to God's presence in our lives and in our world. We seek to place our needs, our fears, our failures, our hopes, our very lives in God's hands, again. And we seek by abandoning ourselves in Jesus' death to recognize again who God is, to allow His transforming grace to work in us once more, and to come to worship Him on Easter Sunday with a fresh victory and hope that goes beyond the new clothes, the Spring flowers, the happy music.

But it begins in ashes. And it journeys through darkness. It is a spiritual pilgrimage that I am convinced we must make one way or the other for genuine spiritual renewal to come. I have heard the passage in 2 Chronicles 7:14 quoted a lot: ". . .if my

people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." This usually is quoted in the context of wanting revival or renewal in the church, and the prayer is interpreted as intercessory prayer for others. But a careful reading of the passage will reveal that the prayer that is called for here is not intercessory prayer for others; it is penitential prayer for the faith community, for **us**. It is not to call for others to repent; it is a call for **us**, God's people, to repent. It is **our** land that needs healed, it is **our** wicked ways from which we need to turn, **we** are the ones who need to seek God's face.

Perhaps during the Lenten season we should stop praying for others as if we were virtuous enough to do so. Perhaps we should take off our righteous robes just long enough during this 40 days to put ashes on our own heads, to come before God with a new humility that is willing to confess, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." Maybe we should be willing to prostrate ourselves before God and plead, "Lord, in my hand no price I bring; simply to the cross I cling." That might put us in a position to hear God in ways that we have not heard Him in a long time. And it may be the beginning of a healing for which we have so longed.

O Lord, begin with me. Here. Now.

## THE DAYS OF HOLY WEEK

☉ [Palm Sunday](#) ☉ [Maundy Thursday](#) ☉ [Good Friday](#) ☉ [Holy Saturday](#)

Holy Week is the last week of [Lent](#), the week immediately preceding Easter Sunday. It is observed in many Christian churches as a time to commemorate and enact the suffering (Passion) and death of Jesus through various observances and services of worship. While some church traditions focus specifically on the events of the last week of Jesus' life, many of the liturgies symbolize larger themes that marked Jesus' entire ministry. Observances during this week range from daily liturgical services in churches to informal meetings in homes to participate in a [Christian version of the Passover Seder](#).

In Catholic traditions, the conclusion to the week is called the Easter Triduum (a *triduum* is a space of three days usually accompanying a church festival or holy days, that are devoted to special prayer and observance). The Easter Triduum begins Thursday evening of Holy Week with Eucharist and concludes with evening prayers Easter Sunday.

Increasingly, evangelical churches that have tended to look with suspicion on traditional "High-Church" observances of Holy Week are now realizing the value of Holy Week services, especially on Good Friday (see [Low Church and High Church](#)). This has a solid theological basis both in Scripture and in the traditions of the Faith. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who was executed by the Nazis, wrote of the *Cost of Discipleship* and warned of "cheap grace" that did not take seriously either the gravity of sin or the radical call to servanthood: "When Jesus bids a man come, he bids him come and die."

It is this dimension that is well served by Holy Week observances, as they call us to move behind the joyful celebrations of Palm Sunday and Easter, and focus on the suffering, humiliation, and death that is part of Holy Week. It is important to place the hope of the Resurrection, the promise of newness and life, against the background of death and endings. It is only in walking through the shadows and darkness of Holy Week and Good Friday, only in realizing the horror and magnitude of sin and its consequences in the world incarnated in the dying Jesus on the cross, only in contemplating the ending and despair that the disciples felt on Holy Saturday, that we can truly understand the light and hope of Sunday morning!

In observing this truth, that new beginnings come from endings, many people are able to draw a parable of their own lives and faith journey from the observances of Holy Week. In providing people with the opportunity to experience this truth in liturgy and symbol, the services become a powerful proclamation of the transformative power of the Gospel, and God at work in the lives of people.

The entire week between Palm Sunday and Holy Saturday is included in Holy Week, and some church traditions have daily services during the week. However, usually only Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday are times of special observance in most churches.

## PALM SUNDAY (OR PASSION SUNDAY)

This Sunday observes the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, that was marked by the crowds who were in Jerusalem for Passover waving palm branches and proclaiming him as the messianic king. The Gospels tell us that Jesus rode into the city on a donkey, enacting the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, and in so doing emphasized the humility that was to characterize the Kingdom he proclaimed. The irony of his acceptance as the new Davidic King (Mark 11:10) by the crowds that would only five days later cry for his execution should be a sobering reminder of the human tendency to want God on our own terms.

Traditionally, worshippers enact the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem by the waving of palm branches and singing songs of celebration. Sometimes this is accompanied by a processional into the church. In many churches, children are an integral part of this service since they enjoy processions and activity as a part of worship. This provides a good opportunity to involve them in the worship life of the community of Faith.

This Sunday is also known as **Passion Sunday** to commemorate the beginning of Holy Week and Jesus' final agonizing journey to the cross. The English word *passion* comes from a Latin word that means "to suffer," the same word from which we derive the English word *patient*. Increasingly, many churches are incorporating an emphasis on the Passion of Jesus into services on this Sunday as a way to balance the celebration of Easter Sunday. Rather than having the two Sundays both focus on triumph, Passion Sunday is presented as a time to reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus in a Sunday service of worship. This provides an opportunity for people who do not or cannot attend a Good Friday Service to experience the contrast of Jesus' death and the Resurrection, rather than celebrating the Resurrection in isolation from Jesus' suffering. However, since Sunday services are always celebrations of the Resurrection of Jesus during the entire year, even an emphasis on the Passion of Jesus on this Sunday should not be mournful or end on a negative note, as do most Good Friday Services (which is the reason Eucharist or Communion is not normally celebrated on Good Friday).

## MAUNDY THURSDAY, OR HOLY THURSDAY

There are a variety of events that are clustered on this last day before Jesus was arrested that are commemorated in various ways in services of worship. These include the last meal together, which was probably a Passover meal, the institution of Eucharist or Communion, the betrayal by Judas (because of the exchange with Jesus at the meal), and Jesus praying in Gethsemane while the disciples fell asleep. Most liturgies, however, focus on the meal and communion as a way to commemorate this day.

During the last few days, Jesus and His disciples had steadily journeyed from Galilee toward Jerusalem. On the sunlit hillsides of Galilee, Jesus was popular, the crowds were friendly and the future was bright. Even his entry into Jerusalem had been marked by a joyous welcome. But in Jerusalem there was a growing darkness as the crowds began to draw back from the man who spoke of commitment and servanthood. There was an ominous tone in the murmuring of the Sadducees and Pharisees who were threatened by the new future Jesus proclaimed.

Even as Jesus and his disciples came together to share this meal, they already stood in the shadow of the cross. It was later that night, after the meal, as Jesus and His disciples were praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, that Jesus was arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest. On Friday He would die.

There is some difference in the chronology of these events between the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and John's account (see [Synoptic Problem](#)). In the Synoptics, this last meal was a Passover meal, observing the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt when death "passed over" the Hebrew homes as the 10th plague fell upon the Egyptians. Yet, in John's account the Passover would not be celebrated until the next day. And while the Synoptics recount the institution of Communion during this final meal, John instead tells us about Jesus' washing the disciples' feet as a sign of servanthood.

In any case, this Thursday of Holy Week is remembered as the time Jesus ate a final meal together with the men who had followed him for so long. We do not have to solve these questions to remember and celebrate in worship what Jesus did and taught and modeled for us here, what God was doing in Jesus the Christ. And the questions should not shift our attention from the real focus of the story: the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Traditionally in the Christian Church, this day is known as Maundy Thursday. The term **Maundy** comes from the Latin word *mandatum* (from which we get our English word *mandate*), from a verb that means "to give," "to entrust," or "to order." The term is usually translated "commandment," from John's account of this Thursday night. According to the Fourth Gospel, as Jesus and the Disciples were eating their final meal together before Jesus' arrest, he washed the disciples' feet to illustrate humility and the spirit of servanthood. After they had finished the meal, as they walked into the night toward Gethsemane, Jesus taught his disciples a "new" **commandment** that was not really new (John 13:34-35):

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, you also ought to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

The colors for Maundy Thursday are usually the colors of Lent, royal purple. Some traditions, however, use red for Maundy Thursday, the color of the church, in order to identify with the community of disciples that followed Jesus. Along the same line, some use this day to honor the apostles who were commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world.

The sharing of the Eucharist, or sacrament of thanksgiving, on Maundy Thursday is the means by which most Christians observe this day. There is a great variety in exactly how the service is conducted, however. In some churches, it is traditional for the pastor or priest to wash the feet of members of the congregation as part of the service. Increasingly, churches are observing some form of the Passover Seder as a setting for the Eucharist of Maundy Thursday (see [Introduction to a Christian Seder](#) and [Haggadah for a Christian Seder](#)). Some churches simply have a "pot-luck" dinner together concluded with a short time of singing and communion.

In some church traditions all of the altar coverings and decorations are removed after the Eucharist is served on Maundy Thursday. Since the altar in these traditions symbolize the Christ, the "stripping of the altar" symbolizes the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples and the stripping of Jesus by the soldiers prior to his crucifixion. This, like the darkness often incorporated into a Good Friday service, represents the humiliation of Jesus and the consequences of sin as a preparation for the celebration of new life and hope that is to come on Resurrection Day. Some churches only leave the altar bare until the Good Friday Service, when the normal coverings are replaced with black.

However it is celebrated, the Eucharist of Maundy Thursday is especially tied to the theme of remembering. As Jesus and his disciples followed the instructions in the Torah to remember God's acts of deliverance in their history as they shared the Passover meal together, so Jesus calls us to remember the new act of deliverance in our history that unfolds on these last days of Holy week

## GOOD FRIDAY, OR HOLY FRIDAY

Friday of Holy Week has been traditionally been called Good Friday or Holy Friday. On this day, the church commemorates Jesus' arrest (since by Jewish customs of counting days from sundown to sundown it was already Friday), his trial, crucifixion and suffering, death, and burial. Since services on this day are to observe Jesus' death, and since Eucharist is a celebration, there is traditionally no Communion observed on Good Friday. Also, depending on how the services are conducted on this day, all pictures, statues, and the cross are covered in mourning black, the chancel and altar coverings are replaced with black, and altar candles are extinguished. They are left this way through Saturday, but are always replaced with white before sunrise on Sunday.

There are a variety of services of worship for Good Friday, all aimed at allowing worshippers to experience some sense of the pain, humiliation, and ending in the journey to the cross. The traditional Catholic service for Good Friday was held in mid-afternoon to correspond to the final words of Jesus from the cross (c. 3 PM, Matt 27:46-50). However, modern schedules have led many churches to move the service to the evening to allow more people to participate. Usually, a Good Friday service is a series of Scripture readings, a short homily, and a time of meditation and prayer. One traditional use of Scripture is to base the homily or devotional on the **Seven Last Words of Jesus** as recorded in the Gospel tradition.

Father, forgive them . . . (Luke 23:34)  
This day you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43)  
Woman, behold your son . . .(John 19:26-27)  
My God, my God . . . (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)  
I thirst. (John 19:28)  
It is finished! (John 19:30)  
Father into your hands . . . (Luke 23:46)

Some churches use the Stations of the Cross as part of the Good Friday Service. This service uses paintings or banners to represent various scenes from Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial, and death, and the worshippers move to the various stations to sing hymns or pray as the story is told. There is a great variety in how this service is conducted, and various traditions use different numbers of stations to tell the story.

Another common service for Good Friday is **Tenebrae** (Latin for "shadows" or "darkness"). Sometimes this term is applied generally to all church services on the last three days of Holy week. More specifically, however, it is used of the **Service of Darkness** or **Service of Shadows**, usually held in the evening of Good Friday. Again, there are varieties of this service, but it is usually characterized by a series of Scripture readings and meditation done in stages while lights and/or candles are gradually extinguished to symbolize the growing darkness not only of Jesus' death but of hopelessness in the world without God. The service ends in darkness, sometimes with a final candle, the Christ candle, carried out of the sanctuary, symbolizing the death of Jesus. Often the service concludes with a loud noise symbolizing the closing of Jesus' tomb (see The Empty Tomb). The worshippers then leave in silence to wait.

Some churches observe communion on Good Friday. However, traditionally Eucharist is not served on Good Friday since it is a celebration of thanksgiving. Good Friday is not a day of celebration but of mourning, both for the death of Jesus and for the sins of the world that his death represents. Yet, although Friday is a solemn time, it is not without its own joy. For while it is important to place the Resurrection against the darkness of Good Friday, likewise the somberness of Good Friday should always be seen with the hope of Resurrection Sunday. As the well-known sermon title vividly illustrates: "It's Friday. But Sunday's a'comin'!"

## HOLY SATURDAY

This is the seventh day of the week, the day Jesus rested in the tomb. In the first three Gospel accounts this was the Jewish Sabbath, which provided appropriate symbolism of the seventh day rest. While some church traditions continue daily services on Saturday, there is no communion served on this day.

Some traditions suspend services and Scripture readings during the day on Saturday, to be resumed at the Easter Vigil after sundown Saturday. It is traditionally a day of quiet meditation as Christians contemplate the darkness of a world without a future and without hope apart from God and his grace.

It is also a time to remember family and the faithful who have died as we await the resurrection, or to honor the martyrs who have given their lives for the cause of Christ in the world. While Good Friday is a traditional day of fasting, some also fast on Saturday as the climax of the season of Lent. An ancient tradition dating to the first centuries of the church calls for no food of any kind to be eaten on Holy Saturday, or for 40 hours before sunrise on Sunday. However it is observed, Holy Saturday has traditionally been a time of reflection and waiting, the time of weeping that lasts for the night while awaiting the joy that comes in the morning (Psa 30:5).

# FASTING AND PRAYING: THE PURPOSE, THE POWER, THE RESULTS

From the pulpit during Lent 2005 – Time for fasting again – fasting now more than one each year:

## *Isaiah 58 (Contemporary English Version)*

## *True Religion*

<sup>1</sup>Shout the message! Don't hold back. Say to my people Israel: You've sinned! You've turned against the LORD. <sup>2</sup>Day after day, you worship him and seem eager to learn his teachings. You act like a nation that wants to do right by obeying his laws. You ask him about justice, and say you enjoy worshiping the LORD. <sup>3</sup>You wonder why the LORD pays no attention when you go *without eating and act humble. But on those same days that you give up eating, you think only of yourselves and abuse your workers.* <sup>4</sup>You even get angry and ready to fight. No wonder God won't listen to your prayers! <sup>5</sup>Do you think the LORD wants you to *give up eating and to act as humble as a bent-over bush? Or to dress in sackcloth and sit in ashes?* Is this really what he wants on a day of worship? <sup>6</sup>I'll tell you what it really means to worship the LORD. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused! <sup>7</sup>Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need; don't turn away your relatives. <sup>8</sup>Then your light will shine like the dawning sun, and you will quickly be healed.

## *I Timothy 4:6-13(Contemporary English Version)*

## *Paul's Advice to Timothy*

<sup>6</sup>If you teach these things to other followers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus. You will show that you have grown up on the teachings about our faith and on the good instructions you have obeyed. <sup>7</sup>Don't have anything to do with worthless, senseless stories. Work hard to be truly religious. <sup>8-9</sup>As the saying goes, "Exercise is good for your body, but religion helps you in every way. It promises life now and forever." These words are worthwhile and should not be forgotten. <sup>10</sup>We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of everyone, but especially of those who have faith. That's why we work and struggle so hard. <sup>11</sup>Teach these things and tell everyone to do what you say. <sup>12</sup>Don't let anyone make fun of you, just because you are young. Set an example for other followers by what you say and do, as well as by your love, faith, and purity. <sup>13</sup>Until I arrive, be sure to keep on reading the Scriptures in worship, and don't stop preaching and teaching. <sup>14</sup>Use the gift you were given when the prophets spoke and the group of church leaders blessed you by placing their hands on you. <sup>15</sup>Remember these things and think about them, so everyone can see how well you are doing. <sup>16</sup>Be careful about the way you live and about what you teach. Keep on doing this, and you will save not only yourself, but the people who hear you.

## *Matthew 17:14-21 (New American Standard Bible)*

## *The Demonic*

<sup>14</sup>When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, <sup>15</sup>"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. <sup>16</sup>"I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." <sup>18</sup>And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. <sup>19</sup>Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" <sup>20</sup>And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. <sup>21</sup>***But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.***"

## Introduction

- Many of us look at fasting as a convenient way to twist God's arm to do something or earn enough spiritual points to get what we want.
- Some of us fast out of a sense of Lenten piety.
- Some fast just because it what you do during Lenten
- And of course, some fast for all the right reasons
- Whatever the reason, it seems fitting on this the first Sunday in Lent and as we continue our series of sermons on prayer that we look more closely at fasting and praying.
- Some of us fast but do no more praying than we do during any other time of year. Fasting and praying go together.
- What about our prayer lives – are we spending more quality time praying? If prayer changes things . . . then why don't we do more of it.
- Today, we look at Fasting and Praying: the Purpose, the power, the results.

## FIRST, THE PURPOSE OF FASTING: Why do we fast:

### THE FIRST PURPOSE OF FASTING IS TO GET OUR FLESH OUT OF THE WAY SO THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAN MOVE IN OUR LIVES.

James 4:1-3: <sup>1</sup>Why do you fight and argue with each other? Isn't it because you are full of selfish desires that fight to control your body? <sup>2</sup>You want something you don't have, and you will do anything to get it. You will even kill! But you still cannot get what you want, and you won't get it by fighting and arguing. You should pray for it. <sup>3</sup>Yet even when you do pray, your prayers are not answered, because you pray just for selfish reasons.

- Fasting removes the barriers to communication with God and strengthens the spiritual man
- It is a determination to remove the obstacles between us and God and to totally submit our lives to the will of God.
- Romans 8:6 -- Mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace
- 1 Cor. 9:27 -- But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (NKJV)
- 9:25--Athlete disciplines himself... like wrestling.
- Satan wants us to be poor, to give free reign to our appetites.
- Food industry, drug, entertainment all pander to the runaway appetites in our society
- In our prosperous nation, we have problems with fasting and praying because everything around us is designed to appeal to our flesh and carnal desires.
- When we earnestly seek God through fasting and praying, we push flesh aside, deny the appetites, the control they seek to have over us, and allow our spirit man who desires God to develop and be strengthened
- Fasting enables us to break hold of the flesh... opens us to the Spirit of God... when this happens, we get answers to prayers we did not get before.
- James 4:1-3 gives 2 reasons we don't have: (1) we don't ask... we try our own plans and procedures, handle it ourselves. (2) We ask amiss ... with the wrong motives...to consume it on our lusts.
- Some of our requests come from flesh, selfish, not spirit man.
- Even in fasting, we sometimes want to give up the things that are easy for us to sacrifice.

### THE SECOND PURPOSE FOR FASTING IS SO THAT WE MAY HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD

- In Daniel 9:2,3,21,22 -- Daniel fasted to hear the voice of God

Some years later, Darius the Mede, <sup>1</sup> who was the son of Xerxes, <sup>2</sup> had become king of Babylonia. And during his first year as king, I found out from studying the writings of the prophets that the LORD had said to Jeremiah, "Jerusalem will lie in ruins for seventy years." <sup>3-4</sup> Then, to show my sorrow, I went without eating and dressed in sackcloth <sup>5</sup> and sat in ashes. I confessed my sins and earnestly prayed to the LORD my God:

- Acts 2:17-- We are to have visions and dreams by the Spirit of God. *We give up food to FEAST on God.*

### THE THIRD PURPOSE OF FASTING IS SO THAT WE MAY DENY OUR PHYSICAL DESIRES IN ORDER TO SATISFY OUR CRAVINGS FOR GOD.

- Fasting provides disciples opportunities to truly seek God.
- Psalm 42:1-2 "A white-tailed deer drinks from the creek; I want to drink God, deep draughts of God. I'm thirsty for God alive. I wonder, "Will I ever make it – arrive and drink in God's presence?"
- Fast to "drink God".
- Fasting enables the believer to feast on God.
- We "eat the Lord" – CRAVING, desiring Him, wanting Him, receiving Him, enjoying Him.
- God is the most desirable being in the whole universe. He is good, merciful, compassionate, forgiving, saving, restoring, healing, providing, strengthening, rebuilding, renewing, reversing our fortune from horrible to the best, fun, creative, wonderful, incredibly amazing, awesome, great to be with, life, joy, peace.
- Every time our stomach growls or our cravings come, we are reminded how hungry we are for God.

#### THE FOURTH REASON FOR FASTING IS TO HUMBLE OURSELVES BEFORE GOD

- The Bible records two instances when people fasted. First, people fasted to express sorrow over their sin. Unlike today where repentance is often sadly understood as nothing more than "sorry Lord", true repentance involves deep sorrow over sin. (See Paul's example in Acts 9).
- Second, people, especially God's people fasted to plead God's mercy. People in dire need fasted. Nations sought God's mercy through fasting and prayer.

#### FINALLY, WE FAST TO BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

- Fasting, is like defragmenting a computer. It is a necessary process.
  - Defragmenting the computer enhances performance.
  - Fasting provides a similar effect to the spiritual life of a believer.
  - Isaiah 58 quotes God's promises to those who fast the right way. We find nine promises when we truly fast: (Refer to Old Testament text)
1. Spiritual breakthrough – revelation-truth takes over demon-darkness in our lives (v. 8a, 10b: then light will shine like the dawning sun – your light will shine in the dark.
  2. Wholeness and Strength (v. 8b,11b: your honesty will protect you as you advance; the Lord will always guide you and provide good things
  3. God-filled life!!! (v. 8c: The Lord will defend you from behind
  4. Answered Prayer (v. 9: When you beg the Lord for help, He will answer
  5. Divine Guidance (v. 11: The Lord will always guide you
  6. Satisfaction (v. 11b: He will make you healthy; you will be like a garden that has plenty of water or like a stream that never runs dry.
  7. Freshness and Growth:
  8. Effective Life and Ministry (v. 12: You will rebuild those houses left in ruins for years; you will be known as a builder and repairer of city walls and streets.
  9. Joy in the Lord (v. 14: <sup>14</sup>Then you will truly enjoy knowing the LORD. He will let you rule from the highest mountains and bless you with the land of your ancestor Jacob. The LORD has spoken!

## Daily Scripture Readings: February 25 to April 4, 2009

These readings are adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*, Daily Readings for Year One.

DATE	PSALM	OLD TESTAMENT	EPISTLE	GOSPEL
WED FEB 25	AM: 95, 32, 143 PM: 102, 130	JON 3:1-4:11	HEB 12:1-14	LUKE 18:9-14
THUR FEB 26	AM: 37:1-18 PM: 37:19-42	DEUT 7:6-11	TITUS 1:1-16	JOHN 1:29-34
FRI FEB 27	AM: 95, 31 PM: 35	DEUT 7:12-16	TITUS 2:1-15	JOHN 1:35-42
SAT FEB 28	AM: 30, 32 PM: 42, 43	DEUT 7:17-26	TITUS 3:1-15	JOHN 1:43-51
SUN 1 MAR 1	AM: 63, 98 PM: 103	DEUT 8:1-10	1 COR 1:17-31	MARK 2:18-22
MON MAR 2	AM: 41, 52 PM: 44	DEUT 8:11-18	HEB 2:11-18	JOHN 2:1-12
TUES MAR 3	AM: 45 PM: 47, 48	DEUT 9:4-12	HEB 3:1-11	JOHN 2:13-22
WED MAR 4	AM: 119:49-72 PM: 49, 53	DEUT 9:13-21	HEB 3:12-19	JOHN 2:23-3:15
THUR MAR 5	AM: 50, 59, 60 PM: 19, 46	DEUT 9:23-10:5	HEB 4:1-10	JOHN 3:16-21
FRI MAR 6	AM: 40, 54 PM: 51	DEUT 10:12-22	HEB 4:11-16	JOHN 3:22-36
SAT MAR 7	AM: 55 PM: 138, 139	DEUT 11:18-28	HEB 5:1-10	JOHN 4:1-26
SUN 2 MAR 8	AM: 24, 29 PM: 8, 84	JERE 1:1-10	1 COR 3:11-23	MARK 3:31-4:9
MON MAR 9	AM: 56, 57, 58 PM: 64, 65	JERE 1:11-19	ROM 1:1-15	JOHN 4:27-42
TUES MAR 10	AM: 61, 62 PM: 68	JERE 2:1-13	ROM 1:16-25	JOHN 4:43-54
WED MAR 11	AM: 72 PM: 119:73-96	JERE 3:6-18	ROM 1:28-2:11	JOHN 5:1-18
THUR MAR 12	AM: 70, 71 PM: 74	JERE 4:9-10, 19-28	ROM 2:12-24	JOHN 5:19-29
FRI MAR 13	AM: 69 PM: 73	JERE 5:1-9	ROM 2:25-3:18	JOHN 5:30-47
SAT MAR 14	AM: 75, 76 PM: 23, 27	JERE 5:20-31	ROM 3:19-31	JOHN 7:1-13
SUN 3 MAR 15	AM: 93, 96 PM: 34	JERE 6:9-15	1 COR 6:12-20	MARK 5:1-20
MON MAR 16	AM: 80 PM: 77, 79	JERE 7:1-15	ROM 4:1-12	JOHN 7:14-36
TUE MAR 17	AM: 78:1-39 PM: 78:40-72	JERE 7:21-34	ROM 4:13-25	JOHN 7:37-52
WED MAR 18	AM: 119:97-120 PM: 81, 82	JERE 8:18-9:6	ROM 5:1-11	JOHN 8:12-20

THUR MAR 19	AM: 42, 43 PM: 85, 86	JERE 10:11-24	ROM 5:12-21	JOHN 8:21-32
FRI MAR 20	AM: 88 PM: 91, 92	JERE 11:1-8, 14-20	ROM 6:1-11	JOHN 8:33-47
SAT MAR 21	AM: 87, 90 PM: 136	JERE 13:1-11	ROM 6:12-23	JOHN 8:47-59
SUN 4 MAR 22	AM: 66, 67 PM: 19, 46	JERE 14:1-9, 17-22	GAL 4:21-5:1	MARK 8:11-21
MON MAR 23	AM: 89:1-18 PM: 89:19-52	JERE 16:10-21	ROM 7:1-12	JOHN 6:1-15
TUE MAR 24	AM: 97, 99, 100 PM: 94, 95	JERE 17:19-27	ROM 7:13-25	JOHN 6:16-27
WED MAR 25	AM: 101, 109 PM: 119:121-144	JERE 18:1-11	ROM 8:1-11	JOHN 6:27-40
THUR MAR 26	AM: 69 PM: 73	JERE 22:13-23	ROM 8:12-27	JOHN 6:41-51
FRI MAR 27	AM: 107:1-32 PM: 107:33-43	JERE 23:1-8	ROM 8:28-39	JOHN 6:52-59
SAT MAR 28	AM: 102, 108 PM: 33	JERE 23:9-15	ROM 9:1-18	JOHN 6:60-71
SUN 5 MAR 29	AM: 118 PM: 145	JERE 23:16-32	1 COR 9:19-27	MARK 8:31-9:1
MON MAR 30	AM: 31 PM: 35	JERE 24:1-10	ROM 9:19-33	JOHN 9:1-17
TUES MAR 31	AM:121,122,123 PM: 124, 125, 126	JERE 25:8-17	ROM 10:1-13	JOHN 9:18-41
WED APR 1	AM:119:145-176 PM: 128, 129, 130	JERE 25:30-38	ROM 10:14-21	JOHN 10:1-18
THUR APR 2	AM: 131, 132, 133 PM: 140, 142	JERE 26:1-16	ROM 11:1-12	JOHN 10:19-42
FRI APR 3	AM: 22 PM: 141, 143	JERE 29:1, 4-13	ROM 11:13-24	JOHN 11:1-27 OR 12:1-10
SAT APR 4	AM: 137, 144 PM: 42, 43	JERE 31:27-34	ROM 11:25-36	JOHN 11:28-44 OR 12:37-50

**HOLY WEEK: APRIL 5 TO APRIL 11, 2009**

DATE	PSALM	OT	EPISTLE	GOSPEL
SUN, APR 5	AM: 24, 29; PM: 103	AM: ZECH 9:9-12 PM: ZECH 12:9-13:9	1 TIM 6:12-16	MATT 21:12-17
MON, APR 6	AM: 51; PM: 69:1-23	JER 12:1-16	PHIL 3:1-14	JOHN 12:9-19
TUES, APR 7	AM: 6; PM: 94	JER 15:10-21	PHIL 3:15-21	JOHN 12:20-26
WED, APR 8	AM: 55; PM: 74	JER 17:5-10, 14-17	PHIL 4:1-13	JOHN 12:27-36
THUR, APR 9	AM: 102; PM: 142, 143	JER 20:7-11	1 COR 10:14-17, 11:27-32	JOHN 17
FRI, APR 10	AM: 95, 22; PM: 40, 54	GEN 22:1-14	1 PET 1:10-20	AM: JN 13:36-38 PM: JN 19:38-42
SAT, APR 11	AM: 95, 88; PM 27	JOB 19:21-27A	AM: HEB 4:1-16 PM: ROM 8:1-11	