

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL FOR LENT

Prayer Tuesdays at 6:30pm except the week of Good Friday

Lent 1: The Crown of Thorns (2/18/18) Mark 1:9-15, 15:16-20

Today we place the crown of thorns upon the cross. With a crown of thorns You were mocked and marred the one who proclaimed a Kingdom that many did not want. But today we also remember a redemption that came to us through suffering.

Lord Jesus, with a crown of thorns the Kingdom you proclaimed was mocked. With a crown of thorns You were rejected as our King. Help us say "no" to our private notions of how the Kingdom of God should look. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Throughout the centuries we have ascribed greatness to those who bring quick resolutions to our political conflicts. We want immediate results with little cost.

Lord Jesus, we confess we are often disappointed in the Kingdom You reveal. Your Kingdom reflects your patience with creation. Your Kingdom requires our participation. Help us say "no" to our craving for ease and luxury. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Our world honors kings who enforce peace by destroying their enemies. The King we crowned with thorns established peace by dying for his enemies---the righteous for the unrighteous, to reconcile us to God.

Lord Jesus, we still look for leaders to bring peace through power. To the mighty, the strong, and the beautiful we grant our places of honor. Help us say "no" to our dread of weakness. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Lent 2: The Nails (2/25/18) Mark 8:31-38; Acts 2:22-23

We lay before the cross today the nails which pierced the hands and feet of God's Son. Nails are usually used for

construction. These nails, however, were used for destruction. They forever symbolize an attempt to destroy God's true temple.

Lord Jesus, have mercy upon us. Forgive us for our violent rejection of Your truth. Help us say "no" to destroying one another. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

The nail-scars on Christ's hands and feet remind us of a Suffering Servant who brought redemption through His obedience unto death, even death on a cross. He allowed Himself to be fastened to a cross, that we might never be separated from His love.

Lord Jesus, have mercy upon us. We cannot grasp Your love that suffers for us. We often fail to love like that; we turn from the suffering of others. Help us say "no" to our self-centered nature. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

With nails we implemented our condemnation of our Lord. They remind us of our bent to condemnation, our frequent inability to forgive ourselves and to extend forgiveness to others.

Lord Jesus, You have had mercy on us! There is now no condemnation, for You, our God, are for us. We cannot lose Your love. Help us say "no" to our condemnation of others. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Lent 3: The Whip (3/4/18) John 2:13-22; Mark 15:15

The symbol we lay before the cross today is the soldier's whip, an instrument of punishment and coercion. Of the elements before the cross, the whip is the only one used by Christ as well. With a whip Jesus purified the temple; with a whip the temple of His body was beaten.

Lord, Jesus Christ, we confess our frequent misuse of power. You granted us dominion over creation, but we have too often used this gift for domination. Help us say "no" to immoral coercion of others. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

The whip was used to punish Jesus for failing to fit preconceived notions of holiness. Still today, we sometimes threaten those on the outside to behave according to the expectations of those on the inside.

Lord, Jesus Christ, we confess our blindness to Your Holiness. We are so busy protecting the God of our own construction that we try to destroy the God You reveal. Help us say "no" to squeezing you into our mold. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

The whip also reminds people – with pain and scars – of their trespasses. Jesus cleansed the temple so that we might meet freely in prayer with a God who forgives.

Lord, Jesus Christ, when we are tempted constantly to remind our neighbors of their sin and wound them by rehearsing their past, help us say "no" to keeping a record of wrongs. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Lent 4: The Placard (3/11/18) John 3:14-17; Mark 15:22-32

We have added to the cross today the mocking sign that hung above the head of our Lord, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." This sign forever symbolizes our spiritual deadness. In disobedience and death Your unwanted Kingdom was mocked---while through His death the Ruler of that Kingdom offers us life.

Lord Jesus, deliver us from our spiritual deadness. We do not know what it means to live the life of Your Kingdom, to walk in step with Your Spirit. Help us say "no" to our desire for earthly kingdoms. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

The sign was meant to mock a "king" whose life ended, absurdly, on a cross. Instead, it signifies our inability---or unwillingness---to believe in a Messiah who suffers, because we want a Messiah who conquers.

Lord Jesus, in our desire for power and prestige we miss out on Your coming Kingdom. We think being seated with You means having positions of power. Help us say "no" to our passion for earthly success. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

With this sign we passed judgment upon God's nature as revealed in Christ. But the sign actually reveals our true nature as children of wrath.

Lord Jesus, Your cross exposes all the ways we are not like You. We confess the difference between Your life and ours. Help us say "no" to our self-confident boastings. Help say "yes" to the cross.

Lent 5: The Coins (3/18/18) John 12:20-33; Matthew 26:1-16, 47-50

We lay before the cross today the bag of silver coins, payment given for betrayal of our Lord. Judas handed Jesus over to the authorities because of his greed. The mission of Judas succeeded, but he could not bear it.

Lord Jesus, it is easier to be unfaithful to You than to give up our desire for earthly power. Help us say "no" to our quest for this world's kingdoms. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Jesus established the Kingdom in humility and service, with forgiveness, and with sacrifice. God's Kingdom came, strangely enough, not through the shedding of enemy blood, but through the shed blood of its Ruler.

Lord Jesus, when we are tempted to reshape the Kingdom of God for our own prestige, profit, or power, help us say "no" to the thirty pieces of silver. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Judas wanted a king to take away his country's suffering. He received a High Priest who chooses to participate in those sufferings.

Lord Jesus, the world seeks a life free from suffering. You lived a life made perfect in suffering. Help us say "no" to the way of the world. Help us say "yes" to the way of the cross.

Lent 6: The Palms (3/25/18) Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

Prayer - Friday at 6:30pm

We place at the cross today the palm branches that welcomed Jesus as He rode the donkey's colt triumphantly into Jerusalem. The people loudly shouting, "Hosanna!" expected to be saved by a conquering hero. Palm Sunday reminds us of our self-centered expectations.

Lord Jesus, we confess our misguided, impatient expectations. We expect You to deliver us from suffering. We expect You to bless our materialism. We expect You to destroy our enemies. Help us say "no" to our self-centered, unholy expectations. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Palm Sunday is about worship. We worship the One most holy. We worship the One for whom we are willing to die.

Lord Jesus, Holy Week reminds us that, although we worshiped You on Sunday, we denied You on Friday. Like Peter we promised to die for You; You have died for us. Help us say "no" to worship without sacrifice. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Palm Sunday is about worship. But the people turned the triumphal entry into a political parade.

Lord Jesus, Holy Week reminds us that the heroes we most admire ride in chariots pulled by white horses. We confess that we don't want to follow leaders who empty themselves of power, and ride on donkeys. Help us say "no" to "might making right." Help us say "yes" to the cross.

Palm Sunday is about worship. But we follow Jesus, hoping for positions of power on his right and on his left.

Lord Jesus, Holy Week reminds us that we want Your power without accepting the cup of suffering that You drank, without the obedience to the point of death. We want your Kingdom to come, but we fear it will cost us too much. Help us say "no" to our weak disobedience. Help us say "yes" to the cross.

The Empty Cross (4/1/18) John 20:1-22 or Mark 16:1-8

The Lenten symbols have been removed from the cross today. The stone has been rolled aside—the tomb is empty—death is swallowed up in victory! What was intended for evil, God has transformed into good. Our lives have been redeemed. Because Jesus said "yes" to the cross, we now live through the power of His resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that with a crown of thorns we mocked Your Lordship. But You participate in our sufferings. By Your stripes we are healed—we are reconciled to God. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that with nails we destroyed Your hands, hands that touched the outcast, healed the sick and fed the hungry. But Your resurrected hands now embrace even Your condemners. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that we used the whip to punish you for not fitting into our systems of might. But Your patient, enduring love exposes our misuse of power. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that in our deadness we hung a sign above Your head, mocking a Kingdom we did not want. Yet our earthly kingdoms crumble, while Your Kingdom of life remains. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that we sold Your betrayal for earthly treasure we could not keep. But you have bought us with a price; You give us the treasure of life that cannot be taken away. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that with palm branches we worshiped You, hoping You would conquer our enemies. Holy Week has reminded us that we are too often your enemies. Yet You have conquered us with Your self-emptying love. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

Lord Jesus, we confess that the cross embodies our sin, our violence, and our inability to make peace with You and with each other. But You have now made the cross an eternal reminder of Your love, Your mercy, and Your ability to be our peace. Help us continue to say "yes" to the cross, that we might be made alive in Your resurrection.

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