

2021 Fall Spiritual Renewal

Redeemer Lutheran Church

The Church Lives

Week 4

Humbled and Exalted

The final week of Jesus' life was about as dark as life can get. The only-begotten Son of the Living God was betrayed into the hands of His enemies and abandoned by His friends. He was rejected by the crowds and condemned by the religious community. He was beaten by temple guards and Roman soldiers. Religious leaders and most of the people mocked Him mercilessly. Jesus experienced complete and utter darkness; relationally, physically, emotionally, and, in the abandonment by His Father, spiritually.

The One who was laid as a newborn infant in a humble manger was strung up on a scourging post at least three times and brutally beaten. He was forced to carry His own cross to Golgotha (Calvary, Skull Hill). He was nailed to the cross, His shoulders possibly dislocated, His wounds continually bleeding ... suffering one of the most intentionally painful deaths ever devised. Physically, Jesus was reduced to being a shell of a man.

When the Father abandoned His own Son, as Jesus cried in agony, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the darkness the sinless Son of God was made complete. The One who knew no sin became sin. As our substitute He took our punishment, the just judgment we deserve. "For the wages of sin is death ..."

Yet, in this darkest day of all of human history, on this Friday we call "Good," heavenly light broke through as never before. In Jesus' suffering and death, our hope began, our redemption was won, sin (and the serpent's head) was crushed. The brilliant light of God's love shone through the darkness ... the death of Jesus changed everything.

Talk About It

Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unHmAf7INk>. Tell about a time you experienced relational, emotional, or spiritual darkness and how the light of God still shone through.

Discussion

Read John 13:1-17. The Passover meal, called the *Seder*, is a meal filled with imagery. As Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples during Holy Week, He didn't stop teaching and showing His followers how to live. Describe the act of service Jesus offered His disciples and how they responded.

How does our willingness to serve reveal Jesus' presence in our life and in the world? Think of what one unexpected act of service you can offer in the coming week could be.

Read John 14:6. Jesus is emphatic that the only way back to a restored relationship with the Father was through Him alone. How do some (even Christians) push back on this exclusive claim of Jesus? What is it important for us to embrace this clear teaching from our Lord?

Read Matthew 26:36-46. After the *Seder* and before His arrest, Jesus took His disciples to Gethsemane to pray. What do you learn about the love and power of God, contrasted with human weakness and need, as you read this account?

Read Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1-10. How did the religious leaders and the Romans treat Jesus and how did Jesus respond?

Read Luke 22:54-62. Peter, part of the Inner Circle of disciples, emphatically denied Jesus three times. Though Jesus prophesied that Peter would do just this, how do you think it felt to Jesus when Peter denied Him? What are ways we deny Jesus and act like we don't know Him?

Read Luke 23:32-43 and John 19:25-27. What do we learn of Jesus' heart for people even as He hangs on the cross, dying?

One of the briefest, yet most powerful statements in the Passion are Jesus' words, "It is finished." (*Tetelestai*) On the surface, what do you think people thought when they heard these words? Deeper down, what did Jesus declare and what does it mean for us?

Read Hebrews 10:19-22. When we enter into relationship with Jesus three things happen:

- We are able to draw near to God in absolute confidence
- We no longer have a guilty conscience
- We live with a sense of being cleansed and pure

How have you experienced (or are experiencing) *one* of these in your life?

What can we do daily to walk with Jesus?

Reflection

The whole purpose of Jesus taking on human flesh was to be the one and only perfect sacrifice for sin. Share how Jesus' sacrifice for you has changed your life.