

Pearl Church

2010 Holy Week Devotional Guide



introduction

monday

- "music for holy week" by thomas hwang

tuesday

- "peter's prayer" by gino cuneo

wednesday

- "obedience" by linda bergquist
- "music for holy week" continued

thursday

- "peter's prayer" continued

friday

- "sacrifice" by melissa monner
- "on resurrection" by dave duff
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saturday

- "burial pantoum" by monique hawthorne
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Holy Week is in many ways the pinnacle of the church calendar. Advent and Christmas anticipate and lead to this moment, 40 days of Lent prepare us for this entrance into the Savior's suffering, and Pentecost and Ordinary Time draw their significance and precedent from the events we remember this Holy Week.

We begin this week with the crowds, excitedly welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem, secretly hoping he will change his mind and be the kind of King and Hero for which our worldly selves long. But by Thursday, it is clear this Messiah is not bringing his Kingdom by force, rather he is entering into unjust and unimaginable suffering with eyes wide open.

Friday we remember Jesus' death on a Roman cross. We remember his betrayal by Judas and his denial by Peter. But we also remember how frustrated we've been with Jesus at times throughout the gospel journey - we reflect in sobering honesty how much easier it is for us to cry out with the crowd "crucify him!" than it is for us to submit to and believe in the message of a Messiah who sees everything upside down.

Saturday we wait in darkness and feel the weight of sin and death. But we also see glimpses of light, remembering that Sunday is on fact coming! At our Saturday Vigil service we begin celebrating victory of light over darkness and life over death.

Holy Week is also, in many ways, the entire Lenten journey condensed into one roller-coaster week. We invite all to enter into this week reverently, with sober reflection leading both to deep sorrow and to unparalleled soaring joy and celebration come Sunday. We enter into the suffering of Holy Week well aware that we will soon speak, perhaps yell and shout the words, "He is risen indeed!"

Music for the Holy Week: Reflecting on the Suffering of Christ Through Music - Thomas Hwang

Music, like nothing else, helps me to connect to my feelings and my spirit. It seems to open a way to dwell in mystery, to understand unspeakable truths, and embrace raw emotions. Music necessarily takes place in time, and it eschews hurry. It invites us to experience the story, the idea, and the feeling more fully by using faculties that are beyond words and thoughts. In my thirty-some years learning, playing, listening to, and thinking about classical music, and trying to understand how it fits into a life of a Christ-follower, I have encountered many meaningful moments of reflection through music, where I felt like I experienced God and His narrative in a special way.

The story of Jesus through the last week of His life, in particular, has captured the imagination of some of the best talents in history. I would like to introduce three pieces that have meant much to me and share some of my thoughts.

Handel's Messiah

George Fredric Handel's (1685-1759) famous oratorio on Jesus' life hardly requires an introduction. However, its "Passion" cycle, describing the suffering of Jesus is an often neglected, and even skipped part of this 3 hour long work.

After the first part, which anticipates and celebrates the birth of Jesus, Part II opens with a somber chorus that calls attention to Jesus as the Lamb of God. The movements alternate between descriptions of Jesus' suffering, and the hard-hearted response of the people.

Listen to the chilling chorus "He trusted in God that he would deliver him." The different voices of the chorus come in at different times and in different keys (this is an example of a fugue), which vividly portrays the alienation that Jesus must have experienced on Good Friday as people hurled insults at Him. The final sequence, sung by a tenor, (movements 29-31) invite us to reflect on the suffering of Jesus Who was fully human even as He was fully God. None of these movements are included in the "The Best of Handel's Messiah" album. But they have helped me reflect on Jesus' suffering. My favorite recordings of the Messiah are by Sir George Solti and the Chicago Symphony and Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy at the St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Peter's Prayer - Gino Cuneo

In the Garden

Stumbling night of snarling branches,
Twisted roots, exposing motives
Of a brother's kiss. "Master", lips say,
War with Love's command to "Watch and pray."

What is this garden's temptation?
What so pulls to soul's destruction?
-To fight, to flee,
Abandon He
Who will not do but love?

Does not His own soul require relief?
His sweat as blood its mark would tell
Anguish such, as to break the spell
Of loves "self-giving".

Who then Messiah is?
Would love then stayed Pharaohs' arm?
Deliverance would not gentle be
Or would not gentle harm.

Do angel armies wait His word?
Will temple guards soon sheath their swords?
Does Elijah's wind still blow?
Will love His Judas slow?

Trembles my soul,
Shattering this body's steel.
I wish no harm to Him who loves,
Now powerless but to kneel.

This untrained sword,
These legs forged for seas
Are desperate for control.
Can this then be temptation
To fight, to fly, abandon?

Obedience: He Knew - Linda Bergquist

You have less than a week to live. While none of us knows our day or our hour, He knew. Our sins, the weight of every sin of every man, hung upon him. He laid down His life for His friends the disciples. He gave his life for the sins of Ghandi, Mother Teresa, and Billy Graham. But, He also gave His life for the sins of Hitler, Charles Manson, and Jeffrey Dahmer. Yes, he died even for those unspeakable sins. Sin, all sin, is the dark insidious thing that separates us from God.

He could have refused. Though fully man, He was fully God. He could have said, "No. Not this way, Not now." He could have cut a deal. "I'll do it but without the pain, the suffering, and the humiliation." He did ask once "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" Matt. 26:39. He knew there could be no surrogate. He knew what lay before Him.

He was obedient and He knew. He counted down the days. A day in prison; days of beatings; a crown of thorns while he struggled to carry the cross, seemingly endless hours of agony upon that cross; three days separated from the Father. He knew and, yet, He was obedient.

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

Confession: *Father, please forgive me for my rebellion, my indifference, and neglect. I confess all my sins to you. Thank you for laying down your life for me. Help me be obedient to you as you were obedient to the cross.*

Music for the Holy Week (continued)

St. John's Passion by J.S. Bach

Passion plays were a common tradition in Bach's time (1685-1750). The events of the Holy Week were acted out with different levels of sophistication and understanding as a way to reflect on the events of the Holy Week described by the different gospel writers. Johann Sebastian Bach's settings of Passion are the best known and perhaps of the highest artistry in its genre. He wrote St. Matthew's Passion and St. John's Passion. Both are very large works: St. Matthew's is nearly 3 hours long, requiring a double orchestra, double choir, double organs, and a cast of soloists that include the voice of Jesus, the narrator, Judas, Peter and many others. St. John's is a work with less monumental dimensions, shy of 2 hours in length, a normal orchestra and choir with soloists.

St. John's Passion opens with the strings pulsing with murmurings while the woodwinds sound out clashing tones that foreshadow the choir's entrance several measures later, crying out in dissonant harmonies "Lord, Lord, Thou Our Master." The text of the work weaves in and out between the text from John 18-19 and arias and chorales that respond to the events. It's more than a reenactment of the events of the Holy Week. It is a musical echoing of what meditating through these passages would look like. We begin with prayer, praying that God would reveal Himself to us. We read some of the text and place ourselves in it. Then we respond with praise or reflection. We go back and read more of the text and so on. What if we can borrow from Bach's music to more fully engage our senses, our imagination, our emotions to not only recount, but to respond to the events of the Holy Week?

The Monteverdi Choir led by John Eliot Gardiner has produced an amazing recording of this work.

Peter's Prayer (continued)

In the Courtyard

Once healing hands now chained,
Explode bright memories gained;
Of vacant eyes first light,
Crushed spirits new born flight.
Once leprous flesh now snow,
Numb lips sing Wisdoms' flow.

Were not His love so bold,
Or bite of night as cold,
This courtyard's fire
The only flame.
When did its attendees'
Attend my frame?

"Me forsake? – Absurd! ",
Once I crowed. Then a bird
Twice hailed denial third.

I, with all men cast my lot.
Led away, Loves' look I caught,
Striking this hearts' wall of fears,
Breaking a breast of bitter tears.



Sacrifice - Melissa Monner

I sat next to a couple listening to stories of their recent trip to Ethiopia. Their life had always seemed quite glamorous to me—weekend getaways to New York, family vacations in Italy. They never seemed to lack anything on a surgeon's income.

But as we finish dessert they told me of an American man who worked in the Ethiopian medical clinic they visited. He spent his days trying to raise funds or make connections to send kids abroad for medical care they couldn't get in Ethiopia. The couple spoke admirably of this man who, though single, had adopted 10 homeless kids. And then this couple looked at each other and laughed awkwardly saying, "we just had to ask ourselves....what are we doing with our lives?"

It was clear to me that what had gotten this couple's attention were not persuasive arguments, but sacrifice. It was a man giving up comfort and ease to self-sacrifice and love that made their own choices and values seem lacking. And yet at the same time, this couple felt a calling to what John MacArthur calls the "true gospel"—a call to self-denial, not a call to self-fulfillment.

"Follow me", Jesus says to Andrew and Simon casting their nets into the lake, "...and I will make you fishers of men." They threw down their nets (and their livelihood) and followed him (Mark 1:17)

"Follow me", Jesus says to the disciples in the upper room after he shows them the remnants of crucifixion--scars in his hands and on his side. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 19:20-21)

Jesus looked at him (the rich young ruler) and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Mark 10: 21)

These scriptures make me shift in my seat. I want the United Airlines-Jesus telling me to place the oxygen mask on myself first so that I'm better able to help the child in the seat next to me. I want the Financial Peace-Jesus telling me spend down the mortgage and have a year's reserve in my savings account. I don't want the "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" -Jesus. I don't know what to do with the "Leave your sick father and let the dead bury the dead"-Jesus who then, of course, wraps up these statement with "Follow me" (Matthew 8:20-22).

Jesus and his followers have a way of making me feel fearful of the sacrifice that is asked of me, but also a way of making me rightfully discontent. As a friend of mine says, "Jesus bugs me, this I know". Like the couple who traveled to Ethiopia, I read these scriptures and ask, "What am I doing with my life? And how is it that these things I thought I owned, now own me?"

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Indeed it seems that a life centered of self-fulfillment ends up in bondage, but a life of sacrifice bares the mark of God. And those who see it, see God....

Scripture Reading: Matthew 15: 33-34,37-38

**On Resurrection - Dave Duff**

"Except a grain of wheat..." Those were his words,
 Unless it fall into the ground some day,
 There never will be sprout or stalk or fruit.
 We didn't know he meant to show the way.
 We wondered at his words, they were so pure,
 Yet like a well were clear and cool and deep;
 Could quench your thirst, and satisfy like bread.
 We didn't know he came to feed His sheep.
 The morning of the ages softly came,
 Just welcomed by a weary guard or two;
 But then within the ground there something stirred...
 We didn't know what he was yet to do!

Music for the Holy Week (continued)**Seven Last Words of Christ by Franz Joseph Haydn**

Haydn (1732-1809) wrote a few different versions of this piece, one for choir and orchestra, one for orchestra without choir, and one for string quartet. The piece opens with a dramatic and dark overture, followed by seven "sonatas," which are musical descriptions of Jesus's seven last words on the cross. It closes with a frantic movement called "The Earthquake" which is recorded to have followed Jesus' death.

Each of the seven sonatas are slow and even ponderous in their conception. They create space for our imagination to place ourselves at the cross of Jesus and stay there for a while. Listen to the warmth and the gracious tone of the first sonata "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." My favorite is the sonata "It is finished," where painful and almost apocalyptic-sounding opening figures give way to tender, almost *romantic* melodies. It seems like a wonderful representation of what is happening on the cross—the most gruesome suffering of the Son of God as the most passionate expression of God's love for us. What could be better than thinking about God's passionate love for us and stay at that place for a while?



Burial Pantoum - Monique Hawthorne

The sun is setting as the night creeps in,
Robbing the world of light.
No matter how we try to distract ourselves,
Who buries the Truth?

Robbing the world of light,
Our life, our hope, our future,
Who buries the Truth?
Anointed with herbs, spices, and tears.

Our life, our hope, our future
Waiting for the stench of death.
Anointed with herbs, spices, and tears
Roll the stone closed.

Waiting for the stench of death,
The Vulture is hoping for heat.
Roll the stone closed
And seal the tomb shut.

The Vulture is hoping for heat,
A full stomach of death, he thrives.
And seal the tomb shut
Weeping women.

A full stomach of death, he thrives.
Forgotten the promises
Weeping women?
The Vulture promises a new feast of carnage.

Forgotten the promises?
The road of light.
The Vulture promises a new feast of carnage,
Forget the promised fruit, now rotting.

The road of light.
Cut off by hopelessness.
Forget the promised fruit, now rotting.
Not even salts of mourning can preserve.

Cut off by hopelessness,
Heaving, gasping, shudders of guilt,
Not even salts of mourning can preserve
The body.

Heaving, gasping, shudders of guilt,
Visions of that bloody brow, raw
The body,
The stiff.

Visions of that bloody brow, raw.
Lifeless hopeless endless
The sun is setting as the night creeps in.
Will it ever rise again?

Peter's Prayer (continued)

At the Beach

I row, I mend. I sail, I bend
My back to wave and oar.
My hands are formed by net and cold
A shepherd's staff they dare not hold.
"Tend my lambs".

Legs schooled on motions of the sea
A mountain will not know.
My eyes are trained for waters read
Not where pastures grow.
"Shepherd my sheep"

Born to search, to grasp and reap,
Not to nurture, tend and feed.
"Feed my sheep."

Forsake my early call? At fire
And waters side – Love said,
"Come have My fish and bread".

