



# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR EASTER

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We reveal to ourselves and others what is important to us by the way we celebrate. Is the season before Easter mainly a hassle to get to the mall and a strain on our budget, as we purchase clothes, candy, cards, and groceries for a big dinner? Or is it several days or weeks of considering God's work in our lives through Jesus, along with special activities to help us think about Jesus' death and resurrection?

Over the course of the Lenten and Easter season, we are remembering the lowest points of sin and the highest peaks of what God has done for us through Jesus. We have a way, the only way, to the Father through Jesus. That's worth celebrating!

And yet every year it's so easy for Easter to slip up on us, and suddenly we're saying, "Oh, my goodness, it's Palm Sunday already!"

**If that's the case for you, here are a few ways you can begin today to prepare your heart for Easter:**

### 1. Read the Easter story.

Don't wait until Easter Sunday to get reacquainted with the good news of Jesus Christ. Each of the four gospels tells the story a little differently. Here's where you can find the Easter story in each gospel:

*Matthew 26-28*

*Mark 14-16*

*Luke 22-24*

*John 18-20*

### 2. Listen to worship music.

Pull out all your CDs or tapes of Easter music. Have them handy to pop into your player.

### 3. Read books that will deepen your spiritual life and your understanding of what God has done.

Ideas might include missionary biographies or *The Pleasures of God* (John Piper), in particular the chapter entitled *God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son*. You could use *The Man Born to Be King* (Dorothy L. Sayers), a radio play, for an evening of aloud with friends.

### 4. Find a quiet place to reflect.

Set aside a special place for your family's devotional times.

### 5. Attend your church's services that are held during this season.

Prepare yourself and your children for the focus and mood of each service.

### 6. Pray the following prayers, each day of Holy Week.

# 8 Prayers to Pray Each Day of Holy Week

Here are eight prayers to take you – and me – through Holy Week. There's one for each day, beginning with Palm Sunday, and each of them is based on one of traditional Scripture readings given to that day in church lectionaries.

## Palm Sunday Prayer // *Matthew 21:1-11 • Psalm 118:1-2 • Psalm 118:19-29*

Lord God,  
I give you thanks, for you are good, and your mercy is endless.  
Here I stand, at the start of this holy week,  
This week in which your church remembers Jesus' passion and death,  
And I am distracted by many things.  
Turn my eyes now to the One who comes in your name  
The one who opens the gates of righteousness  
The one who answers when we call.  
I bless you, Lord, for shining your light upon me,  
And for sending your son to us, in human frailty.  
To walk the road we walk.  
Open my eyes that I may see him coming,  
And may praise him with a pure heart.  
And may walk in the way of his suffering,  
And share also in his resurrection.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Monday // *Matthew 21:10-17 • John 12:1-8*

Lord God,  
Six days before his death, your son sat with Lazarus,  
Whom he had raised from the dead,  
And ate dinner with his friends.  
Once again, your gospel tells us, Martha served,  
And Mary knelt at Jesus' feet  
To anoint them with costly perfume.  
The disciple who was about to betray him  
Said that it was a waste.  
He didn't care about the poor, really –  
He just wanted to fill his own pockets  
And make Mary feel ashamed.  
Lord God,  
Often we cannot discern what is best:  
When to pour out costly perfume for your sake,  
Even if the world thinks it a waste.  
When to be busy serving,  
Or when to rest at your Son's feet and learn.  
Give us ears to hear you and eyes to see.  
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

**Tuesday** // *Matthew 26:36-46 • Hebrews 5:7-9*

Lord God,  
The message of the cross is difficult to take.  
How can death give way to life? How can weakness be strength?  
Yet your word says that Jesus, being God,  
Took on human flesh  
And suffered the worst kind of death.  
How can this be?  
This message is indeed difficult to take.  
But your foolishness is wiser than our wisdom.  
Your weakness is greater than our strength.  
Help us to know that none of us can boast before you.  
It is only in Christ Jesus that we can boast.  
In his name, we ask you to help our unbelief.  
That we may love you, and walk in the way Jesus taught us.  
In his name,  
Amen.

**Wednesday** // *Matthew 26:27-56 • 1 Corinthians 1:18*

Lord God,  
We tremble to think  
That it was one of Jesus' own friends who betrayed him.  
One who sat by him, who broke bread with him.  
Give us strength, we pray,  
To walk faithfully with Jesus,  
Even when the road we walk is rocky  
Even when the message of the cross seems like foolishness  
And even when we feel betrayed.  
You, Lord, are always faithful.  
We stumble, we become lost,  
But you are steady and sure.  
Give us the grace to endure our troubles,  
And reveal to us the glory of your kingdom,  
Through your son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## Maundy Thursday // *John 13:1-17 • John 13:34-35*

Lord God,  
You sent your Son into the world,  
And before his hour had come,  
He washed his disciples' feet.  
You had given all things into his hands.  
He had come from you, and was going to you,  
And what did he do?  
He knelt down on the floor,  
And washed his friends' feet.  
He was their teacher and their Lord,  
Yet he washed their feet.  
Lord God, help us learn from his example;  
Help us to do as he has done for us.  
The world will know we are his disciples  
If we love one another.  
Strengthen our hands and our wills for love  
And for service.  
Keep before our eyes the image of your Son,  
Who, being God, became a Servant for our sake.  
All glory be to him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and forever.  
Amen.

## Good Friday // *John 18:1-40 • John 19:1-42 • Isaiah 52:13-15 • Isaiah 53:1-12 • Hebrews 10:16-25 • Psalm 22*

Lord God,  
Jesus cried out to you on the cross,  
"Why have you forsaken me?"  
You seemed so far from his cry  
And from his distress.  
Those who stood at the foot of the cross  
Wondered where you were,  
As they saw Jesus mocked and shamed and killed.  
Where were you then?  
Lord God,  
We, too, ask where you are,  
When there is trouble and suffering and death,  
And we cry out to you for help.  
Be near to us, and save us  
So that we may praise you for your deliverance.  
Lord God,  
We wait, on Friday, for the resurrection of Sunday  
And sometimes our lives seem a succession of Fridays  
And we cannot see what is "Good."  
Teach us to call your name  
As Jesus did.  
Make us to trust in you like little children.  
In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

## Holy Saturday // *Matthew 17:1-6 • Lamentations 3:1-9 • Lamentations 3:19-24*

Lord God,  
On the Sabbath,  
Jesus rested.  
He was in the grave.  
He had finished his work.  
To most people's eyes,  
It looked as if it were all over.  
He was dead and buried.  
But only as a seed dies when it is planted in the earth,  
Not to decay, but to spring to new life.  
Teach us to take refuge in you when we are afraid  
Teach us that death is not our end  
Teach us to hope always in you  
And in the resurrection, the making of all things  
New.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

## Resurrection Sunday // *Matthew 28 • Revelation 5:11-14 • Psalm 118:1-2 • Psalm 118:14-24*

Lord God,  
You loved this world so much,  
That you gave your one and only Son,  
That we might be called your children too.  
Lord, help us to live in the gladness and grace  
Of Easter Sunday, everyday.  
Let us have hearts of thankfulness  
For your sacrifice.  
Let us have eyes that look upon  
Your grace and rejoice in our salvation.  
Help us to walk in that mighty grace  
And tell your good news to the world.  
All for your glory do we pray, Lord,  
Amen.

*Portions of pages 3-6 were taken from Rachel Marie Stone's 8 Prayers to Pray Each Day of Holy Week on Crosswalk.com.*