

Holy Week: The Week of Jesus' Death

DARRELL DELANEY

Imagine you are standing at the base of a hill, holding a lantern in the darkness. As you climb, you come to a fork in the path. One road is crowded with celebration and cheers and the other is shadowed and lonely. The lantern flickers, showing only glimpses of what is ahead. The question is: Which path do you follow? As we journey through Holy Week in this episode of *Groundwork*, we will see how Jesus chose the hard road, the road that leads to the cross. Together, we will walk with him on Palm Sunday to Good Friday, reflecting on what his sacrifice means for us today, next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in the third episode of our four-part series, where we have been journeying to the cross with Jesus; and this is our Lent series and today we are reflecting on Jesus' path to the cross, and what it means for our lives today—that it is in Holy Week that we are going to talk about in this episode.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Holy Week, I think, goes way back in Church history. Indeed, it is from, really, it also includes Holy Saturday, so it is really from Palm Sunday...and then we are going to talk about Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and we could probably even mention a little bit about Holy Saturday...that day of waiting in anticipation between Jesus' death and his resurrection on Easter. So, lots of Church traditions around the world have different ways of marking this. We don't have anything particularly associated with Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of that week, just the Sunday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday; but of course, Jesus was in Jerusalem Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and everything was headed in that direction. So, Holy Week is when we mark that.

DARRELL DELANEY

Essentially, this is the last week of Jesus' life; and so, the gospels slow way down and make sure they get every detail. All four gospels are putting these details in so that no one misses that this is the most important and climax of Jesus' life. It is the end of our Lenten series, and it is the end of our Lenten worship. When we have been doing forty days, and this is the last part of that forty-day journey. We are journeying with Jesus to the cross, and it all culminates especially on Easter Sunday, when we get to celebrate his resurrection.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have noted before that some in Church history have called the gospels *passion narratives* with long introductions. Sort of like, everything that came up to Palm Sunday was all the intro, and now we are coming to the heart of it; and that does begin on Palm Sunday. So, we've got four accounts of Palm Sunday. Let's go to the one in Matthew: Matthew 21, where we read this: As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone say anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you,

gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (That is, by the way, from Zechariah 9:9). So: ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this starts out with some strange instructions that they have to follow, but then it is definitely a triumphant scene. This is called the *Triumphal Entry*, in different gospel accounts; and a lot of us remember on Palm Sunday when the little children in our churches are waving these palm branches and they are saying: Hosanna; hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And hosanna means Lord save us...save us now; and they are laying them down as a symbol of victory. I mean, it looks like on the surface that they understand that: Here it is! Jesus is the Messiah; he has come to save us; but the way he comes in is not the way you would expect him to come in, because Jesus comes in on a donkey and not on a horse or any other strength animal; he comes in contrary to the way they expect.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is right. If the Caesar were coming into town, they would literally probably roll out the red carpet, not just coats on a road, or palm branches; and he would be on a white stallion, you know; he would be on a majestic animal of war, right? A horse. Jesus is a symbol of humility; and you know, for a grownup to ride on a donkey or on a colt would look a little funny, you know, because Jesus was probably about as big as the colt. It looks a little funny; but it is definitely undermining the idea that he is a political ruler; but that is what they meant. When they said: Hosanna—save us—they meant save us from the Romans; not from our sins, but from the Romans. So, they are looking for political freedom here. So, it looks like they are saying...well, they are saying the right things...and it looks like they are saying them for the right reasons, but it turns out they were saying them for the wrong reasons.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and they don't get what Jesus is doing here. He is not giving them what they expect. Expectations can be very strong. It reminds me of a story about a father who knows his son wants a bicycle, and the kid is so excited. He is thinking about it; he is asking his dad for this bike; he is thinking about riding through the neighborhood and everybody is thinking he is cool; and he is enjoying the wind in his hair and things of that nature; and when he gets the gift, it is a journal; and the kid has this puzzled look on his face: This is not what I expected; this is not what I wanted. But then, when he starts to use the journal, he realizes that: Oh, journaling is a spiritual practice that I can use for the rest of my life. I don't know how long the bike would have lasted, but this journaling thing...I am still doing it. So, it was a gift that kept on giving. So, the father didn't give him what he wanted, but he gave him what he needed; and that is exactly what Jesus is doing here. He is not giving them the political overthrow that they want; he is giving them the eternal salvation that they need.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; freedom from sin and from death; and again, that reference to Zechariah 9, you know, Matthew is the most Jewish of the four gospels. He was writing for a literate Jewish audience, so he is constantly quoting the Hebrew scriptures; and here Zechariah 9 says he is fulfilling this prophecy about the Messiah coming in the humble way on a donkey and on a colt; and Jesus is not going to live up to those political aspirations, which is why these same people, Darrell, in the span of about...four days, five days...are going to go from hosanna to crucify him! The same people are going to...you know, when Jesus does not meet their expectations, the crowds are going to turn on them; and Jesus knows this. You know, we read Matthew's account just now, but if we were to read Luke's account, we know that Jesus weeps out loud in that particular version. I mean, it is this party going on in high gear, and all of a sudden, the man of the hour, the man who would be king, starts to weep and lament because he knows they are crying out to him for the wrong

reasons—they are saying the right things for the wrong reasons, and it makes Jesus weep.

DARRELL DELANEY

It makes me wonder, too, if, you know, you talked about how they say hosanna in the beginning of the week and just a few days later they are going to be saying: Crucify him; because he does not meet their expectations. I am wondering how many times do we do that? How we sometimes come to our own expectation, have our own agenda: Can you just bless my thing, Jesus? I have it all set; all I need is your blessing. And he doesn't do what...because his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts...and then we don't like that. We want him to save us, but we want him to save us our way; and we need to repent of that kind of self-centered behavior.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I mean, I remember a pastor I used to know used to say: Instead of asking God always to bless what you are doing, why don't you look to see what God is blessing and do those things? Follow God's lead; follow Jesus' lead, and not your own lead. So, you know, Palm Sunday, as you just said, Darrell, invites us to take a hard look at what are our expectations of Jesus? When do we project our preferences...our political preferences...the way we vote...the stores we shop at. Do we think Jesus would be just like us? He would live in our neighborhood, shop at our stores, vote for our candidates? Are we sure that that is right? Or are we projecting onto Jesus just like the crowd? So, Palm Sunday, at the head of Holy Week, kind of gives us a chance to check ourselves on that; and instead, to celebrate the king who actually came in humility to bring peace with God through the forgiveness of sins and the defeat of death.

Well, that is Palm Sunday. In a minute, Darrell, ah, we'll discuss Maundy Thursday. So, stay tuned for that.
Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, in this episode so far, where we are looking at Holy Week, we have done Palm Sunday, and now we move on three days later to the Thursday of the week, which we call Maundy Thursday. It brings us to the upper room in John's gospel. It brings us to foot washing, and in all the gospels also to the foundation...the founding...of the Lord's Supper as our holy sacrament. Maundy Thursday, you know, until not very long ago, I actually did not know what that meant, but now I have found out. It is from the Latin word: *Mandatum*, from which we get our English word *mandate*, and it means commandment; and the reason is because it was on Maundy Thursday that Jesus says: A new commandment I have for you: Love one another. That is where we get the name *maundy* for Maundy Thursday.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it makes sense; this is the night where there were a lot of intimate moments going on. There was deep tension, there was grief, and then the story pivots dramatically toward the betrayal and sacrifice that Jesus is going to endure. So, we have some scripture here from John 13. We will pick up the first part in 1-17, and then read verses 34 and 35.

It starts:

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁵He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” ⁷Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” ⁸“No, said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, Unless I wash you, you will have no part with me.” ⁹“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” ¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. (Then Jesus said:) “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” ³⁴“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I guess we could do a little bit of a cultural lesson about feet here, Scott. Feet...in this culture, feet are...you know, you don’t show anyone the bottom of your feet. It is like the middle finger is disrespectful; feet don’t... People don’t like touching feet; people don’t like associating with feet; and so, for Jesus to grab their feet and to wash them was an ultimate sign of humility, especially if he is their master...their rabbi...their teacher. They look up to him. So, they don’t expect him to ever do anything like this, and he totally shows the servant’s heart; and it shocks them, especially Peter, when he does this.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you know, sometimes, even though we actually don’t have this in our culture anymore, but a lot of times sometimes when a minister is installed in a church or, you know, like when our seminary president was inaugurated, the minister or the president does a foot-washing thing, right? There are people who had been preselected who are going to do that and I always kind of laughed at myself because I think: those people came to church today with the cleanest feet they have ever had in their lives! They do not want their feet to stink. They are not going to wear socks that are going to leave little balls of lint on their feet. These people [disciples] come with...These feet from the disciples have been frankly kind of gross...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They would have been very dirty; they might have been kind of smelly; that is why, you know, only the lowliest of servants would do this, because it was kind of a menial task; and Jesus says: I did it for you so that you know this is what you are supposed be, the lowliest of the low; which in our previous program, we said: You know, Jesus was always trying to teach them that; bringing forth little children; and the disciples just never got that; but here, Jesus gives them a tangible object lesson.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is, I think, the reason why Peter resists like he does. He is like: this job is way beneath you, Jesus. There is no way that you are going to touch my feet. And he says: No, no, no; I am showing you the servant heart of love that you need to be demonstrating. I am going to model this for you; I want you to show this same love to one another. It just reminds me of a story of a retired pastor who moved into this town, and there is this janitor who is cleaning, and he decides to join the janitor, roll up his sleeves, and clean with him. The janitor says: Wait, wait, wait; you are the pastor. You don’t have to do this; and the pastor says: No, no; this is serving—this is how we serve. This is how we show our love to people. This is what we do; and so, Jesus is doing this with the disciples in mind, but he is also showing them the model: this is how you serve. It doesn’t matter how humiliating the job is, that is not the point; the point is this is the way you do it; do it for one another.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is how you serve; this is how you love one another, which was the new mandate on Maundy Thursday. We also get the institution of the Lord's Supper here. Let's go to Matthew 26. We are just in John 13 now. Matthew 26, in that upper room, the night in which Jesus is going to be betrayed: ²⁵While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." ²⁷Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

DARRELL DELANEY

So, communion is one of the richest traditions that flows from Maundy Thursday. It was so important, that John Calvin wanted to do it every Sunday in his church in Geneva. They had some contention points about that. But the idea is that it is a beautiful sacrament that shows Jesus' sacrifice. His body, his blood, broken, spilled...blood spilled for you and for me; and he wanted to institute this, and that is why we do it every time, so we can commemorate his death until he returns.

SCOTT HOEZEE

One thing we forget sometimes, Darrell, is that one of the things that made this really startling for the disciples...and striking...is that he did this in the midst of Passover. So, he was doing the Passover meal that had been...ever since the exodus from Egypt...you know, a long, long time before...centuries and centuries before...everybody was super familiar with Passover; and then in the middle of it, Jesus mixes things up, and now the bread that they eat and the wine that they drink don't mean...they don't tie in with what happened back in Egypt. Now it is going to tie with the new thing Jesus is going to do. It is part of the covenant, but now it is a new covenant in his blood. So, just imagine if we were in the middle of a ritual that we were super familiar with and somebody, all of a sudden in the middle of it, changes everything, and changes the imagery. Boy, we would really pay attention; and that is what happened here. Passover got transformed into this sacrament, that you just said, Darrell, ties us in with Jesus' broken body and poured out blood.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, what is interesting about this section is that Jesus knows Judas' heart; and so, the betrayal is right there too. It says...when we read this passage, that Satan had already entered and tempted him to betray Jesus...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, there is a deep set of somber betrayal in the midst of Jesus showing this love and this sacrifice that is happening. It is a really intense moment.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As you said, Darrell, it is an intimate moment with Jesus and his disciples. It is sort of the last regular night of his life on earth, until he gets his life back again on Easter, of course. So, there is...you know, we sing about the cross: Sorrow and love flowing mingled down. This is sort of what is going on here. There is sorrow and there is love. There is love...Jesus...in John's gospel: He loved them to the end; even though he also knows what Judas is going to do, and even though, if we were to read a little bit more, he knows that Peter is going to deny him, too. So, there is a lot of sorrow here; and speaking of that, it gets worse, because next in Holy Week is Good Friday, and we are going to take that up next. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As we wrap up this episode on Holy Week, we get to almost the end. There is really actually Holy Saturday. We are not going to talk a lot about that, but Holy Saturday is the day between Good Friday and Easter; a day of meditation; a day of anticipation; a day of being mournful for what happened to Jesus, but also anticipating the new life of Easter.

We are going to finish the program now with Good Friday. We know that after we leave the upper room, Jesus and the disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus prays—he is in agony. Judas and his band of followers show up and he betrays Jesus with a kiss. Jesus is then arrested, and then through the night and into the next day, Jesus is brought before the High Priest and the religious authorities. He is brought before Pontius Pilate, sort of the governor of the area. He is mocked and he is beaten. All of that is what is leading up the crucifixion.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is the darkest part of the Holy Week, and this is actually the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. The plan that he spoke about way back in Genesis: ^{3:15} paraphrased I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; (and this) he will strike your heel but you will crush his head. This is it. This is right when it happens. This is Good Friday, and it is good because it is the greatest display of God's love shown to the world, for Jesus giving his life for our sins; and that is why we call it Good Friday, because the weight of sin that we have has been nailed to the cross and forgiveness is made possible for everybody.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I was also thinking it is kind of interesting to see what other languages call this day. So, Spanish, French and Italian all call it...so, in Spanish it is *Viernes Santo*, then *Vendredi Saint* in French, *Venerdì Santo* in Italian. It means Holy Friday, so those languages have holy. German is *Karfreitag*, which means Sorrowful Friday; and interestingly, Danish and Norwegian call it *Lang Fredag* or Long Friday. So, different languages get at the events of this day in different ways. We call it Good Friday, the Dutch call it Good Friday; or it is Holy Friday, or it is Long Friday or Sorrowful Friday. It all encapsulates the events on the cross.

DARRELL DELANEY

And every gospel has this account in it, of the suffering that Jesus goes through, his death; and we pick up the story here in Matthew Chapter 27, where it says: ³²As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull") ³⁴There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁸And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁸Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²"He saved others," they said, "but he cannot save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁴⁴In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. ⁴⁵From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). ⁴⁷When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "He is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹The

rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we see here this is the agony and the finale of the cross. He is enduring physical suffering, and he is also feeling, for the first time, being separated from his Father. The abandonment that sin separated him from the Father. The world’s sin is on him, and this is the reason why we meditate on Good Friday, because it shows how deep the cost was, and how deep God’s love is for us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is interesting that in Matthew here, some of the crowd is saying: *If you are the Son of God, then come down.* Where did we hear that before? Oh, wait...

DARRELL DELANEY

Satan.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Satan in the wilderness. The forty days of temptation: *If you are the Son of God.* This is often called the last temptation of Christ because he was probably tempted. He did have the divine power to jump down off that cross, but he stayed there for us and for our salvation; and that is what we reflect on on Good Friday. We sometimes hold Tenebrae services marked by the gradual extinguishing of candles and the light to symbolize that encroaching darkness. We sing hymns like *Were You There*; we sing in a minor key to get at the great, great emotional depth of that day.

DARRELL DELANEY

O Sacred Head Now Wounded; yes. It really gets to the point, but we need to understand, too, that Good Friday is not just sorrow, it is recognizing that his death accomplished the eternal atonement that we have that we needed. In Isaiah 53:5 it says: But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. That prophecy was fulfilled that day on the cross.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and now, you know, as we reflect on the significance of that day, and of all of Holy Week, which we have been looking at in this episode, let’s talk about some practical ways to engage with Good Friday and Holy Week as a whole. Darrell, we will start with: One, let’s pause to reflect. During Holy Week, set aside intentional time to read the crucifixion narratives in all four of the gospels; and as you read, pay attention to the emotions and the responses of the people in the story: the mockers, the weeping women, the Centurian, Jesus himself; and then reflect on what the cross means for you personally.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is powerful when you can sit with and think about what Christ has done for you and how much God loves us. It is really powerful. Another thing you can do...we mentioned the Tenebrae services earlier. Attend a Good Friday service; participate in worship, because there are many different services that are going on around this time around the world, where people are gathering to sit in the tension of Good Friday. The worship goes on with hymns, meditation goes on with scripture; and this is a way for us to remain engaged as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and also, as we said with Tenebrae services, there is a lot of symbolism that goes into it to help us appreciate the gravity of this day. So, take pause to meditate; participate in worship; and then thirdly, practice silence and gratitude during Holy Week. Take a portion, maybe, of Good Friday to fast, maybe to observe silence. Focus on the gratitude you have for Jesus for what he endured on your behalf. Maybe write out your own prayer of thanksgiving, or just be quiet in awe of Jesus’ sacrifice.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; Good Friday is a day of paradox. It is deep sorrow mixed with profound hope, and it prepares us for the joy of Easter; but we have to walk through the pain of the cross; because without Good Friday, there is no resurrection; and without the resurrection, of course, our faith is in vain; but I am so glad that this story does not end there, Scott. The goodness coming after that—the radiant hope of Easter morning is coming, even after the silence of the tomb. So that when we reflect on these moments, we don't rush past the sorrow or the weight of the week. We let it draw us into worship and gratitude, and we remember death is defeated, thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we study the resurrection story and rejoice together, because Christ is risen.

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DARRELL DELANEY

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