



“The Week that Changed the World”
3rd Church of Christ, Scientist, New York City
Good Friday Talk – March 30, 2018
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I. Introduction

- Passion Week: Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday (Resurrection)
- “Good Friday” - from earlier meaning of ‘good’ meaning ‘holy and pious’, i.e. ‘Holy Friday’, marking the crucifixion.
- Celebrated by 2.2+ billion Christians globally in 38,000 church groups –an example of ‘mustard seed’ growth.
- The resurrection unites all Christians regardless of theological differences.
- Christianity not about history so much as the starting point of our own lives in following Christ Jesus’ teachings.

II. The Gospel and the Four Gospel Versions

- *Paul, a servant^{of} of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...*” (Romans 1:1, NRSV).
- Four accounts of Jesus’ life (Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), by 4 different authors, but one Gospel, one Good News: God provided humanity with a savior – Christ Jesus.
- Each evangelist (Gospel writer) showed it was the power of God controlling every event of Jesus’ career.
- Beware of so much familiarity with the Gospel message that we forget its actuality.
- Sign on Anglican Church, New Zealand: “What if it’s true?”

III. Chronology of Passion Week

- Gospels record different incidents at different times so the best we can do is a general accounting of events.

Event #1 – Anointing by Mary of Bethany prior to Palm Sunday. Jesus’ rebuke to Judas who finds her oil usage on his feet wasteful:

“Leave her alone. She has kept it for the day of my burial. For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me!” (John 12:1-8)

Question for today: What do I sacrifice of great cost to show my gratitude and love for Christ?

Event #2 – Palm Sunday. Relayed in all four Gospels: *So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!* (John 12:12, NRSV). How one perceived Jesus had everything to do with their commitment. If only a prophet, then another could replace him. But if understood as the prophesied Son of God, announcing a Kingdom where Love prevails over hate, life over death, then perhaps these followers will become disciples rather than the mercurial ‘crowds’ calling for his crucifixion a few days later.

Question for today: How do I understand who Jesus was, who and what Christ is? How can I honor that with my daily life?

Event #3 – Jesus overturns moneychangers’ tables. *Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves* (Matt. 21:12,13, NRSV). Here is the Messiah who came ‘*not to send peace, but a sword*’ (Matt. 10:34). Jesus saves individuals but also the concept of worship – purifying the Temple and the future concept of Church. Question for today: How do I remove from thought and actions whatever downgrades and contaminates church’s highest healing mission, i.e. commercialism, criticism, hierarchy, Pharisee-ism, resistance to change, theological snobbery, etc.?

Event #4 - Challenge to Jesus’ authority and attempted entrapment. *“Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God”* (Luke 20:22, 25). Although the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with their question, What belongs to Caesar bears Caesar’s image. What belongs to God bears God’s image – and that is everyone, the sons and daughters of God. Serve Caesar paying taxes; serve God in every aspect of your life. Jesus helped people understand they are the salt of the earth and light of the world, as God’s children. What a counter to modern entrapments

Question for today: What spiritual logic do I need to understand and apply in order to avoid the snares of contemporary traps around identity?

Event #5 – Religious leaders’ hypocrisy and Curse of the fig tree. Jesus calls out the religious leaders’ duplicity: *“How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs.”* Scribes were a professional class, like today’s lawyers, and Pharisees mostly laypeople, living by religious rules. Jesus rebukes their words not backed up by works, just as sepulchers which might be painted fresh and white but had dead bones inside.

Jesus stayed in Bethany during the Passover festival, returns to the Temple and passes a fruitless fig tree. Although able to grow in rocky soil and bear fruit for 50 years, this one doesn’t. Jesus declares: *“You’ll never again bear fruit”* (Matt. 21:19). Note the parallel to the Temple leaders that appear to be do work through rituals and observance of the Law but are empty and vain within, providing no spiritual comfort and uplift for the people, only hypocrisy. Question for today: How do I ensure that I’m not just following the letter of the law but its Spirit?

Event #6 – The Gentiles seek Christ. *Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, ²¹paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, “Sir, we want to meet Jesus”* (John 12:20, NLT). The Greeks (i.e. Gentiles) are a new chapter of Christianity, told vividly in the Book of Acts. Who are the ‘Greeks’ in our lives today, those that are outside our normal social, political, economic circles? Question for today: Is there *anyone* whose path we cross that is not ‘appropriate’ for the saving message of God’s love for man as lived by Christ Jesus?

Event #7 – The Betrayal of Judas. *Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot...*” (Luke 22: 3) Luke wants to be sure the reader understands the demonic power underlying Judas’ actions as Judas’ action reminds us of the earlier experience at the launch of Jesus’ ministry in the wilderness. *“When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came”* (Luke 4:13, NLT). What a lesson in mental vigilance. Question for today: How can I be more alert to identify and arrest what would try and undermine my followership of Christ, in loving both myself and others?

Event #8 – The Last Supper. *Just as I have loved you, so you must love one another* (John 13:34, JB Phillips). All four Gospels share this important closing story of Jesus’ ministry, but John alone devotes five chapters to it and includes washing the disciples’ feet which immediately

precedes Jesus' new commandment. Here is the Christian's marching orders: love as Jesus loved and love all. Read John 17 often – Jesus' prayer. *"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one"* (John 17:15, NLT). Question for today: How can I best fulfill this Christian directive not to isolate from the world but bear witness to Truth *in* the world?

Event #9 - Jesus' Arrest and Peter's Denial. *No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again* (John 10:18). Jesus is in control throughout this 4-part drama: arrest, interrogation, trial, crucifixion/burial.

Note the parallel 'trial' of Jesus with High Priest and Peter in garden, examples of fidelity and betrayal.

Event #10 – The Trial before Pilate. While all 4 Gospels convey the trial, only John's Gospel says why: because the Romans could sentence them to death. Seven times Pilate determines Jesus' innocence but eventually capitulates to Jewish demands when they admit the real charge: that he claims he is the Son of God (see John 19:7). John's Gospel differs from the synoptics in areas such as when the flogging takes place, indicating Pilate's efforts to dissuade the Jews from their demand for Jesus' execution. Wouldn't flogging be enough? Not for these Jewish leaders. Meanwhile, Jesus may be on trial for his life but so is the world – each one called to defend his own spiritual Sonship. Question for today: How can I demonstrate greater fidelity to Christ in my daily walk?

Event #11– Crucifixion and Burial. *Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* (John 19:19). Jewish leaders wanted Pilate to change his sign to read 'he claimed' to be King of the Jews but Pilate refused, indicating this Gentile Roman understood who Jesus was when the Jews did not. The crosses of Lampadusa, created by an artisan who tried to help refugees make the dangerous Mediterranean crossing, capture both the pain and hope of life. *We must resolve to take up the cross, and go forth with honest hearts to work and watch for wisdom, Truth, and Love* (Science and Health, p. 15). Question for today: What does the cross mean to me? How can I learn its lessons more deeply?

Event #12 – Resurrection and Appearances

Mary Magdalene recognizes him when the risen Jesus calls her name, like the Good Shepherd: *“He calls his own by name, and they know his voice”* (John 10:3, 4). John believed when he saw the empty tomb (see John 20:8,9). Jesus eats with disciples and Thomas feels the wounds, perhaps ways to prove he wasn’t a spirit or ghost but the man, Jesus, now resurrected. The Emmaus dinner teaches he is more than a prophet, as they believe, but the Son of God, prophesied throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, now fulfilled. Mary Baker Eddy’s definitions of “Jesus” and “Christ” helps sort out the dual nature of Jesus Christ.

Event #13 – Ascension *Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17).* Story of Titian painting, “Nole me Tangere” (Touch me Not) at British National Gallery, Mary Magdalene reaching out to touch the risen Christ Jesus. Question for today: What does the risen Christ mean to me?

Benediction:

May this glad Easter morn find the members of this dear church having a pure peace, a fresh joy, a clear vision of heaven here, — heaven within us, — and an awakened sense of the risen Christ (Mary Baker Eddy, My p.155).

BIO: Madelon Maupin graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary with a Masters in Theological Studies, from Principia College with a BA in Biblical Studies, has lectured for Princess Cruises on trips to the Middle East, and written numerous articles for the *Christian Science Sentinel* and *CS Journal*. She is a member of the national ecumenical team of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston and shares her love of the Bible through her Biblical education company, BibleRoads. Madelon is married to George Birdsong, C.S., and lives in Newport Beach CA with their cocker spaniel, Parker.