

**Six Devotions for Holy Week Collected from Previous LEA Devotions**

**Reflecting on Palm Sunday**

Read this first: 1 Cor. 1:26–31

**Huzzah!**

“Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord’” (1 Cor. 1:31).

What results would you hope for if you rode a donkey around your neighborhood while shouting (you, not the donkey) blessings to bystanders? You know you’re not worthy of hosannas, hallelujahs, or, if you prefer Latin, alleluias. But maybe you would settle for a little less ancient “huzzah,” which translated loosely is something like, “I hope you’re carrying a BIG plastic bag.”

No, Merriam-Webster assures us that the word has no such guttural origins. Instead, it’s an old cheer, so next time I go to a White Sox game, I plan to shout, “Huzzah,” when something exciting or heroic happens. (I probably don’t have to worry much about fans or security questioning my vocabulary.)

Anyway…

Has anyone huzzahed you lately? You know, for your exciting and clear catechetical teachings or for masterfully securing a science lesson in a blanket of biblical, Christian worldview? Has your Bible class huzzahed you as you led intense discussion of current events? Well, maybe if you rode a donkey into class, things would change! On second thought, the Trustees would probably give you more than a huzzah and a big plastic bag, so don’t even think of trying such a strategy.

We know what happened when Jesus rode a donkey into town. The crowds adored Him that Sunday and screamed for His death that Friday. Oh, you can probably bet that Satan and his legions were sing-songing loud huzzahs on that Friday afternoon. Of course, in the end, you know the hallelujahs, alleluias, and maybe even a few hilarious huzzahs rang through the streets again just a week after His donkey ride.

But back to you. What would you do if your class or congregation huzzahed you? Would you feel successful and self-satisfied? Or would you think back to today’s Bible reading—the parts about not being wise, influential, or socially connected? The parts about being weak and lowly?

Oh yes, that’s something to huzzah about indeed! The Triune God entrusted you with faith that astounds the high and the mighty. As Paul might say if he read this devotion, “Let the one who huzzahs huzzah in the Lord!”
Lagniappe for your devotional experience.

Written by Edward Grube, LL.D.
Director of Publications & Communications
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Quoted Scripture: NIV®
Maundy Thursday

Extended reading: John 18:1-14

Leadership?

“So Judas led the way to the garden, and the Roman soldiers and police sent by the high priests and Pharisees followed. They arrived there with lanterns and torches and swords” (John 18:3 MSG).

The Lord be with you.

Leadership is among the fashionable phrases flitting (sorry—take a moment to untangle your tongue) around the church today. And well it should be. Leadership—servant leadership when referring to Christians—is a blessing that contributes to a positive future for the Church on Earth. Of course, leadership can take perverse as well as positive directions.

Among the bedeviled leaders in world history, we find names old and new. One of the oldest is Judas—a name so villainous that you probably haven’t seen it tagged to any of your students. Judas, as you know, led a ferocious mob to Jesus, with intent to betray and slay. (The timing of this devotional and National Geographic’s release of the “Gospel of Judas” is purely coincidental—but fortuitous. Unless NG got wind of this devotional; but the winds normally don’t blow in that direction!)

But let’s shift sentiments for a moment. Can you imagine Judas as a Sunday schooler? Did anyone ever find it suspicious that Judas always insisted on carrying the offering to the Sunday school office? And then, in third grade, wasn’t it Judas who sneaked from desk to desk trying to work a deal for a better lunch? And then there was the adolescent Judas who made a practice of betraying his friends by telling their secrets. Judas was active in youth group and had some of the best ideas for fundraising! Oh, yes, Judas was in church every Sunday—perfect attendance for 18 years! Is it true that Judas was at one of the Concordias, preparing for a career in Lutheran education?

Okay, before you become incensed, this isn’t about you. But too often, Judas is a historical scoundrel too awful to comprehend. Yet, he had an infancy filled with cute coos and first steps. At one time, he was as old as the students you teach. He was real.

How would you relate to Judas as your student? What would you say and feel many years later when you read the headlines about him? (Okay, so why all this attention on a spiritual rogue?)
We’re closer to Judas than we care to think. Our perpetual inclination to sin betrays Christ’s suffering, death, and victory, which He did for us. Our own sins led the murderous mob to Jesus as much as Judas’s treachery.

Praise God that despite our similarities to Judas, we are different! Thanks to the Holy Spirit, faith enables us to answer the question (often phrased by mothers everywhere to fit myriad situations), “If Judas jumped off a cliff, would you do it too?”

The answer is obvious to us blessed by faith. Judases though we were, Christ died for our sins. We can throw our sins off a cliff instead of ourselves—and we can do it daily. Thus blessed by God, we can do more.

We can lead a mob to Jesus.

Okay, so you don’t want parents or the board hearing you call your class a mob. (Obviously, they never led a field trip!) But our mob is different. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can lead them to Jesus. We can show them His power, not as He knocks them off their feet but as He shows us the empty cross and the vacant tomb.

Praise to You, Lord Christ for the Gospel’s power!

Pray. Thank You, dear Savior, for taking our sins away. Empower us not to betray You by what we say or the way we live. Help us to be true servant-leaders that bring glory to Your name. Amen.

Written by Ed Grube
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GOOD FRIDAY

Read this first: Is. 53:4–11

You Know

“Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities” (Is. 53:11).

You know it’s Good Friday when ...

- you go to worship and the altar has been stripped of its splendor.
- you struggle with a decision to endure a Tre Ore or wait for the traditional evening worship—or maybe even go to both (even if you’re not the church organist).
- your mood rightly runs from gray to black.
- you are intensely hungry for a hot dog (because your family decided to fast on Good Friday.
- you are greatly grateful that we can call Good Friday good.

Too many poor souls don’t get it. Their only relevant context clings to the worldly TGIF brand of good Fridays. Thanks to God’s will, Jesus’ sacrifice and victory, and the Holy Spirit’s manifestations through faith, Christians have made this particular good Friday into a capital idea.

Linger around the cross today, no matter how it grieves your heart or frustrates your routines. Quietly ponder all that puts the Good in this Friday.

Think about it: It’s not only Good Friday but it’s the best one ever. Even without hot dogs.

Lagniappe for your devotional experience.

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Quoted Scripture: ESV®

The heart overflows with gladness and leaps and dances for the joy it has found in God. In this experience, the Holy Spirit is active, and has taught us in the flash of a moment the deep secret of joy. You will have as much joy and laughter in life as you have faith in God. – Martin Luther
Easter Saturday

Where Are You Going After the Show?

Bible Reading: Luke 24:13-16 and 32-33
That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

Back and forth they talked. “Didn’t we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?” They didn’t waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. (The Message)

A couple of weeks ago I had the enjoyable experience of being part of the first ever LSAC administrators conference, which included three major LCMS education groups. The conference was held in Orlando at a property very close to Disney World. In addition to the conference, we stayed a couple of extra days and enjoyed different parks that are part of the Magic.

One of the things all Disney parks have in common is a “culminating experience” at the end of the day. The Magic Kingdom has the “Happily Ever After” fireworks, EPCOT has the “Illuminations” fireworks and laser show, Hollywood Studios has the “Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular” fireworks show with Star Wars music and the Animal Kingdom has the “Rivers of Light” water and lights show. All of the shows work hard to keep you entertained and excited while providing the final memories of what was probably an exhausting day. What they also have in common is that immediately following there is a mass exodus out of the park with people rushing out to get to the transportation that will get them home. It is a crazy scene as people of every size (and strollers and wheelchairs) compete to get to the gate as fast as possible. No magic here, just chaos.

As I write this it is Tuesday of Holy Week and the journey that will take us to the cross and ultimately the victory that is ours because of Easter Morning. While Disney shows will never approach the glory that is Easter morning (although one could argue there were plenty of fireworks that day; Matthew 28), it is the aftermath that got me thinking.

In the reading, our two men were deep in conversation about what had happened in Jerusalem. I imagine many of the thousands of people leaving Disney were also talking about their day. But, unlike the Disney patrons, these men took the time to converse with Christ and then rush back, filled with joy to share their story.

I’m sure all of us have, at some point, had such an invigorating experience that we couldn’t wait to get home or back to school and share our exciting memories. Will that happen to you this Easter Sunday?

How are you feeling right now? Is there something in your life that is dragging you down and just won’t go away? Are you tired and exhausted and can’t wait for this weekend
since you may have a three or four day break? What is heavy on your heart? Is it your health or that of a loved one? Is it a relationship that concerns you? Or, is it just the stress of everyday life? Being a parent or child or grandparent or friend can sometimes cause us to try and sprint away from whatever is bugging us.

This Sunday there is another choice. After Sunday’s “show” (the amazing story of God’s love for us that literally comes alive in the Easter story), will you be in a hurry to run home for ham and other food? Or will you be in a hurry to walk the road of your life sharing the joy that is yours with whomever you come in contact with during the days following?

There will still be chaos, that’s part of the world we live in, but there can be a special peace as well. A peace that comes from knowing that you are a loved and redeemed Child of God assured through Christ’s death and resurrection.

Disney hopes for a 30-minute show that is exciting but eventually will fade from memory. God provides us with a day that is so bright and clear that it will never fade from our lives. His Spirit makes sure of that for us.

So, this Easter, walk, don’t run to the exit. But, when you get there, make sure everyone knows of the joy that is yours.

Have a Blessed Easter!

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Easter

He is Risen!

Remember this?

Alleluia! Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia
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He is risen!

They all got away!

He is risen indeed!

Lagniappe for your devotional experience.

And for your never-get-tired-of-hearing-it meditation.

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Easter Monday

**Read Psalm 22**

Forget Easter?

The smell of spring flowers has disappeared from the nave. Attendance has dropped after reaching one of the year's two record crowds. Only half the colored eggs remain to be eaten. Newspapers hawk Mother's Day, leaving Easter stuff to clearance aisles. Yes, Easter festivities must end sometime, but now we must take care to not forget one of the two greatest days in world history.

Psalm 22, today's reading, seems to de-emphasize our Easter joy. One week we're cheering, "He is risen indeed," and the next we're groaning, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" What happened to change things so radically?

Sin. Sin always has potential to wilt high spirits. We know the devil lulls believers into drab routine, only to pepper them with global violence and events that insurance companies brazenly label "Acts of God." And so it's sinful human nature, nurtured by Satan, that pushes Easter into the background, despite our attempts to make every Sunday a replay of Easter.

Psalm 22 reminds us, necessarily, that our sins caused Jesus to quote the Psalm while suffering on the cross. Easter's triumphant Gospel would have little impact without the stark suffering and sacrifice of Good Friday. Readers of Psalm 22, who give up after the first few verses, get trapped in Good Friday. Going to the end of Psalm 22, however, leaves us with the indelible joy of the resurrection.

We who serve in Lutheran educational ministries may find the last words of Psalm 22 especially meaningful. Speaking of the risen Jesus, David says, "**Posterity will serve Him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn—for He has done it**" (Psalm 22:30–31).

We can count ourselves as those charged with telling future generations—people yet unborn—about the Lord. This responsibility and privilege is the most significant thing we do. And we must take care how we do it.

Teaching and sharing the faith easily slips into moralism or focuses on God's Law. Knowledge of the Law is important, and we know that it's easily learned because it's written in the hearts of all people. Therefore, we must take care not to forget Easter and its pure Gospel message. And after teaching and sharing the Gospel, comes the hard part: living it out in our relationships—especially our relationship with students, colleagues, and family.
May you reap the joy of Easter not only on Sunday but also on every day of the week. May the Holy Spirit bless you with a life that demonstrates what God has done for you through Jesus Christ.

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Quoted Scripture: NIV®

Editor’s note: I collected these devotions from previous years, so the formats differ slightly. References and citations were timely at the original writing, and I made no attempt to modify them to the present.