# At First Glance

FIRST BAPTIST NORMAN

## APRIL 2020 · VOLUME 16 · ISSUE 8

The story of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is one of the great stories of the Bible and kicks off the most important week in the history of the world — Holy Week.

There are so many parts of the story that we can focus. This year, however, my attention is drawn to the crowd. The crowd spreading their coats, the crowd cutting and waving palm branches, the crowd going ahead of Jesus, the crowd following Him, the crowd shouting Hosanna! Every part of the story testifies to the crowd and the response of the crowd to Jesus.

Crowds. Do you remember crowds? In these days of Covid-19, groups of less than 10 and social distancing of 6 feet or more, crowds have disappeared. I miss the crowds of March Madness and of Opening Day. I miss the crowd of the Spring Game. I miss the crowd of the All City Band and Orchestra concerts.

Mostly, I miss the crowd of gathering with you in worship each Sunday. I miss the crowd of sitting around the tables on Wednesday evening in Hallock Hall to enjoy a good meal and Christian fellowship. I look forward to the day we are reunited in worship and fellowship as the crowd of Christ-followers at FBCN.

In the meantime, I am reminded of Matthew 18:20 when Jesus promised that where two or three have gathered in My name, I am there in their midst. The Smiths have been blessed to gather as a family on Sunday mornings to worship online. We do so in the presence of the Holy Spirit, believing

that the Spirit of God unifies us with each of you as we worship together through the marvel of social media.

It can never take the place of us being together, but in this season of sickness and



sheltering in place, the Lord has worked together for good something meant to isolate and separate.

So, as Holy Week 2020 begins, we will miss the crowd, but we must not miss the object of the crowd — Jesus! Whether in a crowd or alone in our living rooms, we must sing our praises to the Lord. For if we become silent, the rocks will cry out! But not on our watch!

Let us be faithful to worship the Lord every day, especially as we reflect on Palm Sunday, Holy Week and anticipate the glory of Easter Sunday.

Your ministry staff continues to pray for you and look for creative ways to serve and minister during these days. Inside this newsletter you will find Holy Week devotions written by our ministry staff. Please take time to read, meditate and pray on them in preparation for Easter Sunday.

In addition, we are working on creative ways to have a presence on social media and to develop "front porch" ministry touches that honor our need for social distancing. Please

contact the church office to let us know how you are doing, especially if you and your family are impacted by sickness or need during these days.

I am so blessed to hear how so many of you are responding to build and strengthen community and to serve others during these days. Lifegroups are meeting by Zoom. Some of you have donated supplies and materials. Others are sewing and making gowns and masks for health care workers. The Spirit and Work of Christ is alive in you! Let us continue to love others. Let us continue to persevere. The days may grow long and we may become weary, but the Lord can renew our strength. In His presence, let us live each day with faith, strength and courage.

I look forward to worshiping with you again one day soon. In the meantime please join us on our website, Facebook and other social media outlets for worship as a new service is posted each Sunday morning at 10:30.

Pastor Wade



## PALM SUNDAY APRIL 5

Palm Sunday is the day we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem to the shouts of the crowds proclaiming him Lord and King. The people had seen the miracles Jesus performed, they heard him teach with authority, and they believed he was the one the prophets had foretold.

It was a day of great joy! All eyes were on Jesus as he rode into town on a colt. Crowds gathered along his path placing cloaks along the road and waving palm branches. They proclaimed in loud voices, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! When the Pharisees tried to quiet all that was happening, Jesus reminded them that if the people didn't rejoice, the very rocks would cry out.

Today, we need the same encouragement. As our world focuses on a pandemic, we find ourselves bombarded with messages of sickness, pain, and confusion. Even with all that is swirling about, we have the opportunity to refocus and proclaim truth.

On this Palm Sunday, let us turn our eyes on Jesus, our Lord and King! Let us lift up our hearts and voices in worship to the author and finisher of our faith! Hosanna! Hosanna!

> — Suzette Mason Luke 19:28-40; Zechariah 9:9

#### **HOLY MONDAY — APRIL 6**

Jesus was back in Jerusalem. After his triumphant entry on a colt, Jesus walked around the city. He was displeased with what He saw.

Using a fig tree as an example, Jesus teaches his disciples that hypocrisy and fruitlessness will not be condoned. He saw fruitlessness in God's people. Similar to the fig tree, they had life but were not producing godly fruit. What good is a fig tree that doesn't feed? What good is a believer that doesn't produce fruit?

Jesus then took the lesson to the temple. This was Jerusalem, the temple of temples for God and His people. Yet, these Israelites had normalized insincere worship and squandered their witness to the world.

The state of sinfulness had become so condoned within the temple. Leaders were

making a personal profit off of it. God was not a priority, they wanted to be seen at church, doing the right things, then be free to go about their lives.

Jesus condemns self-centeredness and insincere worship. Jesus came to call out the unfruitfulness and hypocrisy. Our sincere worship, sacrificial service, and unashamed witness to God's kingdom is the sweet fruit that Jesus desires. It's what we exist for.

When God looks at our lives, does He see a life that is self-serving or does He see true devotion to Him? Does He find a barren heart or does He find fruit? What ways do you attempt to make your worship to Christ convenient instead of sacrificial?

In what areas of your life would Christ find fruitfulness?

— Clint Taylor (Mark 11:12-19)

#### **HOLY TUESDAY — APRIL 7**

Luke 20:1-21:36 provides a glimpse of Jesus on Holy Tuesday. On this day, Jesus spent his day teaching and preaching in the temple courts. He was approached three different times, each time by a different group of people trying to trap him and turn the people against him.

The teachers of the law and chief priests arrived, questioning his authority. His reply silences them. They send spies to question him about whether or not they should pay taxes to Caesar, and again, his answer silences them. Finally, the Sadducees arrive and ask a convoluted question about whose wife a woman will be at resurrection. Again, his answer silences their questions.

This is a pattern Jesus had seen before. At the beginning of his ministry, as he fasted and prepared, Satan came to Jesus. He tempted Jesus to use his Godly powers to serve his own physical needs. He tempted him with all splendor and authority, and finally told Jesus to ask God and the angels to save him from his own destruction. Each time, Jesus replied and silenced Satan.

This day differs though, because Jesus is with the people, eager to learn from him. As he silences those who try to trap him, he uses the questions to teach. He warns them through a parable of the tenants who kill the master's son to take over the vineyard. He warns them to beware of the teachers of the law, who dress to impress and seek honor from all, and destroy the lives of the widows, while making a show of how religious they are. He despised their duplicity — and He despises our duplicity too. He sees through our attempts to make ourselves look impressive to others and follow our own authority. Instead he wants us to sit at his feet, eager to learn and be with Him.

—Angela Atkins (Luke 20:1-21:36)

#### SILENT WEDNESDAY — APRIL 8

The Holy Week activities of Jesus were remarkable, except for Wednesday. Nothing is recorded about Wednesday. Could it be that Silent Wednesday was Jesus' *Be still and know* day?

I believe that Wednesday was Jesus' day of rest, reflection and preparation for the denial, forsakenness and death of Good Friday.

And yet, here we are in the midst of our Silent Wednesday. We have been told to stay home. Schools are closed and many cannot go to work. We are fearful, even despairing. Yet, as we struggle to understand what is going on in our nation and world, I keep coming back to Psalm 46:10. This is our time to be still (to

cease striving) and to know that God is God.

In the stillness of these days, have you taken the opportunity to be still and to listen to the Lord? Quiet and still days before God are the source of wisdom, strength and perspective.

They open our eyes to the spiritual matters taking place around us. The stillness of today strengthens us for the betrayals and crosses of tomorrow.

The stillness of today reminds us that God is with us and that God will be exalted in all the earth. It is Wednesday. Will you take time to be still and to know that God is God?

— Wade Smith (Psalm 46:10)

#### **MAUNDY THURSDAY — APRIL 9**

Today is Maundy Thursday. *Mandatum* is Latin for *commandment* which has been shortened to Maundy. It is the day Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples for the last time and gave them a new commandment: *to love one another as he loved them.* 

Some are baffled by the strange name but also by the surprisingly simple instruction. Mostly because we are confused about love.

So often when we say *I love you*, it means *I love the way you make me feel* or *I love what you do for me*. See the problem? It's more about me than it is about you.

Jesus didn't have that problem. How do I know? Because Jesus' disciples did almost nothing for him, and yet he loved them. They

#### **GOOD FRIDAY — APRIL 10**

Good Friday. The day on which Christians commemorate one of the darkest moments in history: the crucifixion of Jesus and His death on the cross. The day on which, according to Luke's gospel, the sun stopped shining creating a darkness over the whole land.

Darkness, as defined by Webster, is a state in which little or no light can be seen. Another definition Webster provides is a state of distress or trouble. Both of these definitions can certainly be used to describe the day Jesus died. If darkness is characterized by little or no light and a state of distress and trouble, how do we see Jesus, who by very nature is everything opposite of darkness, in the darkness?

I think we need to understand that darkness is not inherently bad. It took the darkness of the crucifixion to open up our access to God. When Jesus breathed His last, the temple curtain ripped open to show us no barrier exists between God and humanity that cannot be removed by turning to God through Jesus. It's in the darkness of the night that we see the glory of God exposed in the heavens (Psalm 19:1).

It's in the darkness of sin that we find grace and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. It's in the darkness of Covid-19 that we see the Church meeting needs and expressing love and compassion to the sick and lonely. It's also in the darkness of Covid-19 that we see the Church finding new and creative ways to be the presence of Christ in these frightening and uncertain days. We are seeing Jesus in the darkness through this crisis perhaps more clearly than ever before.

As we journey through Holy Week I pray each of us would be able to see Jesus in the darkness, by His grace, and for His glory.

— Chad Smith (Matthew 27:1-62; Luke 22:63-23:56)

demonstrated a remarkable capacity for missing the point and Jesus still loved them. They grumbled, complained, and quarreled among themselves and he loved them. They fell asleep, in the hour of his greatest need, and Jesus loved them. The disciples betrayed, denied, and abandoned Jesus and he loved them anyway.

This should come as incredible news since we are no different. And Jesus still loves us! Now it's our turn to love like that, starting with yourself and concluding with that person that drives you crazy. Love them anyway! Give time today, to thank God for loving you anyway. Who, in your life, can you show love to today? They will know we are Christians by our love.

— Clint Taylor (John 13: 34-35)

#### **HOLY SATURDAY — APRIL 11**

On this day Jesus and his followers experienced sorrow, death, darkness and gloom. The sorrow of the Cross and the gloom of the tomb must have been devastating and overwhelming to the followers of Jesus.

According to John 19:38-42, Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus. They wrapped it with spices and strips of linen. The cross where Jesus was crucified was near a garden with a new tomb. Because it was close they laid Jesus there. It was the Day of Preparation, the day before Sabbath and they needed to get home.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how the body was laid in it. They, too went home and prepared perfume but they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

I can only imagine their day of Sabbath. It must have been filled with tears and prayers, deep emotions of loss or anger, feelings of helplessness and sadness and a sense of what next?

They had seen Jesus die an excruciating death. They had laid him in the tomb. It must have seemed so unreal to them. Their Sabbath may have seemed quiet and restful but yet their hearts were probably in turmoil and their minds full of thoughts of restlessness knowing they were going to take spices to the tomb the next day. Their thoughts probably went to questions similar to, what do we do now? What next? Or why? But soon they would be reminded of what Jesus had told them.

— Vickie Riggs (Luke 23:56; John 19:38-42)

## EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 12

I want to see Jesus! Isn't that what Easter is about, seeing Jesus? And yet, even Mary did not recognize Jesus on that first Easter Sunday.

How will you see Jesus this Easter? We are so accustomed to seeing Him in the marvelous worship services of Easter morning. Yet, Easter Sunday 2020 will be remembered as the Sunday that our churches were empty.

Jesus hinted that
He would be difficult to
see at times. When the
righteous (Matthew 25)
asked Jesus when they
saw Him, He replied,
When you did it to one of
these brothers of Mine,
even the least of them, you
did it to Me. It being feed
the hungry, give drink to
the thirsty and go to the
sick for example.

On this Easter
Sunday, we must see
Jesus in those that are
sick, quarantined and
alone. We must see Him
in those who are hungry,
thirsty and out of work.
And then we must act.
We must be the presence
of Christ. The world is
watching. The world
needs to know that Jesus
is risen!

Will you take a moment to pray and ask God to help you see Jesus clearly? And in doing so, will you commit to show His love, kindness, gentleness and generosity during these critical days.

Let there be no doubt that Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

— Wade Smith (Luke 24:1-1)

# **APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

**April 1:** Paul Hawkins, Glen Hubbel, Buzz Jensen, Kubra Karim, Stuart Rucker, Jim Stewart

**April 2:** Josh Edge, Hazel Jensen, Doug Upchurch

**April 3:** Ann Borden, Grant Cherry **April 4:** Mike Morris, Marley Rogers, Deena Standfast, Lauren Vanderburg

**April 5:** Roy Brown, Drew Hester, George Landreth II

**April 6:** Steve Vishanoff, Ernie Chen

**April 7:** Dan McMillen, Jay Turley

April 8: Marcus Dollard, Scott Rigney,

**April 9:** Janet Harp, Abigail Schutt, Ginger Shockley, Bella Sullivan

April 10: Trish Foor

**April 11:** Kathy Ferguson, Jonathan

Storm, Joshua Storm

April 12: Teagen Foster, Justin Turley

April 13: Patti Drennan, Barbara Stone

April 15: Chloe Ferguson, Mike Getto,

Peter Lee, Mary Varner

**April 17:** Fern Cockerham

**April 18:** Jack Green,

April 20: Lee Borden, Ann Hodges,

Janette Ketchum, June Shiau, Connie Smith

**April 23:** Betty Allen, Georgia Barnard, Gloria Murray

**April 24:** Penny Buchanan, Staci Rhea **April 25:** Young Jeon, Ming Kao, Dale White

**April 26:** Sandy Dismukes, Harold Emery, Kevin Sharp, Erica Wirth

**April 27:** Michael Klepper, Timothy Schaffner, Jamie Upchurch

**April 28:** Audra Evans, Dennis Swing, Phil Webb

**April 29:** Christine Dodd, Kelly Marcum, Patricia Morgan, Fleeta White

**April 30:** Conan Clough, Annette Meyers

# **SYMPATHIES**

The First Baptist Church family wishes to extend sympathies to:

Kerri Hudson, Paige Hudson, Tyler Hudson, Kody and Kole Hudson at the passing of Kenneth Hudson

The family and friends of Nina Patterson at her passing

The family and friends of Marge Morton

at her passing

Virginia Odell and Dylan Odell-Kesterson at the passing of their husband and grandfather, Jim Odell

Bruce and Tambra Gowin at the passing of his mother, Dorine Heflin

Larry and Bo Cory at the passing of Lee Cory

# **HOW WE GIVE**



211 WEST COMANCHE ST. NORMAN, OK 73069



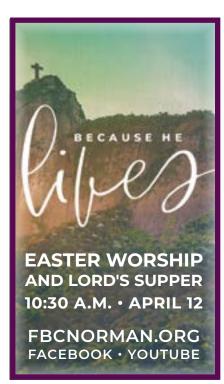
TEXT-TO-GIVE TO THE NUMBER 405-276-4200



ONLINE AT FBCNORMAN.ORG/ GIVEPAYMENT/

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

PLEASE CONTINUE TO FAITHFULLY SUPPORT THE CHURCH THROUGH YOUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS



AT FIRST GLANCE (USPS 008.741) is published monthly by the First Baptist Church, 211 W. Comanche St., Norman, OK (405)321-1753. Periodical postage paid at Norman, OK. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to AT FIRST GLANCE, 211 W. Comanche, Norman, OK 73069-5698.

# **LIVING THE JOURNEY**

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