

A Busy Week

People are busy. There's work and school, sports and music, restaurants and theatre. In fact, I can name some people who try to fit all these into a single day. While sometimes we can be busier than we prefer, staying active seems to be something we are designed for.

There is one week in Jesus' life that was incredibly busy. We know more about this particular week than any other in his life - the seven days before the Friday he died. During this hectic week he spent time with friends, taught in the temple, debated religious leaders, and declared his authority through words and actions. This week, each day of our study will focus on a particular day of that week. You might notice that we will not look at Saturday or Wednesday. That's because there is no record of Jesus' actions on those days; still, you might make some reasonable guesses as to what he did as you learn more about the other days. As we prepare ourselves for Easter, let's get busy learning about Jesus' busy week.

Monday – A Night in Bethany (Friday)

"The road to a friend's house is never long." Danish proverb

1. Please read John 12:1-11. Summarize in your own words the irony of Jesus spending time with Lazarus, when Jesus knew his own death was only a week away.
2. Why were Lazarus, Mary and Martha honoring Jesus? How did each of them do so?
3. Imagine you were with Jesus in that house. How would you have expected Jesus to respond to Judas?

Making it Personal: How can you give honor to Jesus in his burial and his resurrection?

Tuesday – The Ride into Jerusalem (Sunday)

"I love a parade!" Harold Arlen, 20th c. American songwriter, I Love a Parade

1. Please read Matthew 21:1-11 and Mark 11:1-11. How did the people respond to Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem? Why did Jesus allow them to do this?

Text Insight: Jews at that time thought that the Messiah would be a political and military leader who would defeat the Romans and deliver the Jewish people from foreign oppression.

2. How does the prophecy about Israel's Messiah in Zechariah 9:1-9 help you understand why the people were so excited about Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Psalm 118:1-29. Note that verse 26 is used by the people praising Jesus. Why would they use this psalm in particular?

Wednesday – Cleaning House (Monday)

"Certainly this is a duty, not a sin. 'Cleanliness is indeed next to godliness.'" John Wesley, 18th c. English theologian

1. Please read Matthew 21:12-17. What did the priests complain about? What do you think was really bothering them?

Text Insight: The area of the temple Jesus cleared was originally set aside for non-Jewish foreigners who wanted to experience temple worship in God's presence. The business activity prevented their ability to do so.

2. In Isaiah 56:1-8, what did God promise to do for those outside the nation of Israel? Why do you think Jesus was bothered so much by what he saw in the temple?
3. The priests would have been familiar with the passages Jesus quoted. Read Jeremiah 7:1-8, and describe what the priests might have felt in response to Jesus' accusations.

Prayer Focus: Ask God to enable us as his people to never impede others from coming to Christ. Ask God to help us let our light so shine that people praise God because of our good works.

Thursday – Teachable Moments (Tuesday)

"If you be a lover of instruction, you will be well instructed." Isocrates, 5th-4th c. BC Greek educator

1. Please read Luke 20:1-19. Why might the religious leaders have challenged Jesus' authority? Why do you think Jesus answered as he did?

Text Insight: Notice that verses 6 and 19 both speak of how fearful the leaders were of the people.

2. Read Luke 20:20-26, and keep in mind the expectations of the Jewish people for their Messiah. In what way (or ways) was Jesus' response astonishing?
3. In Luke 20:27-47, Jesus answered more questions and then declared his authority. How does he use the question on marriage (see v. 38) to support the truth that the Messiah has that authority?

Making it Personal: Spend time in God's word every day to experience teachable moments as the Holy Spirit guides you in understanding and honoring God.

Friday – One last night together (Thursday)

"Treason and murder ever kept together, as two yoke-devils sworn to either's purpose." William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 2 scene 2

1. Please read John 13:1-17. What did Jesus do that Peter found so remarkable? How would you have felt if Jesus had washed your feet in that room? According to verse 1, why was Jesus doing this?
2. What do you think Judas was thinking as Jesus spoke in John 13:18-30? Why was he able to leave without exciting comment from the other disciples?
3. What reassurance do you think the disciples felt from John 13:31-35? How would you have felt if you were Peter and heard Jesus' response in 13:36-38?

Making it Personal: Even though Jesus has not washed your feet, his death can cleanse you of all your sinfulness. If you do not yet belong to him, spend time now asking God to take you into his family.

For the Weekend: Read John 18:15-18 & 25-27 where Peter denied Jesus three times the night he was arrested. How did Jesus later show his reassuring love for Peter in John 21:15-21?