

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

In view of the cross

How does each sermon connect to this theme?

This month, we walk with Jesus towards Jerusalem. **In view of the cross**, Jesus acts in many ways. He is always the protagonist; always the One in control of what is happening, always the One moving willingly toward His death. Every experience is interpreted through His coming sacrifice, for His disciples then and today.

March midweek: As the Great Physician, we come to understand that **Jesus heals** both body and soul, and He has come for all.

March 1: After hearing of his death, **Jesus calls** forth Lazarus from the tomb, to life and to fellowship.

March 8: On the mountaintop, **Jesus transfigures**, an encounter of revelation, response, and return.

March 15: Before celebrating the Passover meal with His disciples, **Jesus washes** their feet, sanctifying them and teaching them true salvation, fellowship, and service.

March 22: Prefiguring His death, **Jesus institutes** the Last Supper, and shares bread and wine, His body and blood, with the disciples.

March 29: On Palm Sunday, **Jesus enters** Jerusalem, the city of peace, revealing the tension between the people's expectations and what He has come to accomplish.

As we move through these holy moments of Lent, "*Turn your eyes to Christ. He is our King, our Priest, our Prophet. He is our justification, our sanctification, our wisdom, our redemption. He is our peace, our meditation, our atonement, our reconciliation, our all in all.*

Alas! I look on myself, and I see I am nothing; I have nothing without Jesus Christ. Here is temptation; I cannot resist it. Here is corruption; I cannot overcome it. Here is persecution; I cannot endure it. But Christ is mine...

Oh, the joy this brings my soul! My soul is nothing but Christ, and therefore I cannot but rejoice in Christ, or I must rejoice in nothing at all."

May these words of Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664) bring direction to your thoughts as we journey towards Good Friday and Easter.



John S. Schnabel

MARCH 2026

March 1

In view of the cross -
Jesus calls

March 8

In view of the cross -
Jesus transfigures

March 15

In view of the cross -
Jesus washes

March 22

In view of the cross -
Jesus institutes

March 29

Palm Sunday

In view of the cross -
Jesus enters

March midweek

In view of the cross -
Jesus heals

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR MARCH 1

IN VIEW OF THE CROSS - **Jesus calls**

Where are we in the Bible?

In John 11, near the end of Jesus' public ministry, just before the final week in Jerusalem, Jesus comes to Bethany, where Lazarus has been dead four days. Grief fills the scene, faith is tested, and opposition is growing. This miracle is not random; it is the seventh and climactic sign in John's Gospel, revealing Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. When Jesus cries out, "Lazarus, come forth," He speaks divine authority to death itself. It foreshadows the cross, the tomb, and the life He gives freely. In this encounter, we receive one of Jesus' "I Am..." statements in, "I am the resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25). Jesus' call to "Come forth!" applies to the living and the dead.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. "Come forth!" The call to life
 2. "Come forth!" The call that penetrates the grave
 3. "Come forth!" The call to fellowship
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Service for the Departed Liturgy

Following the celebration of Holy Communion, after the chalices have been covered, the minister invites the congregation to stand for a prayer of intercession which includes:

- **Thanksgiving** - that souls in the beyond have received grace through the sacrifice of Jesus; that they are united in fellowship with Jesus and His congregation through the sacraments; that access to the kingdom of God and eternal life is open to them.
- **Intercession** - may God strengthen them in their commitment to Him, and grant love and care to them.

This is followed by a musical contribution (max. 90 sec), the closing prayer, and benediction.

SERVICE FOR THE DEPARTED

John 11:43

Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

John 11:1-44

Catechism

4.4.2, 8.1.6

Discussion Questions

How does Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and the life," shape the way we understand suffering and loss today?

Lazarus is alive, yet still bound. What "graveclothes" might we carry even after receiving new life in Christ?

Why do you think Jesus invites others to help remove Lazarus' graveclothes instead of doing it Himself? What does that say about our responsibility to one another?

What might Jesus' call to "come forth" look like in a practical way in your life right now?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR MARCH 8

IN VIEW OF THE CROSS - Jesus transfigures

Where are we in the Bible?

Israel's history is brimming with mountaintop experiences with God, so much so that there is a specific word for the cloud that would appear, the *shechinach* (shuh-KEE-nuh), announcing God's presence and glory. This cloud appeared multiple times; as a pillar in the wilderness (Exodus 13), filling the tabernacle (Exodus 40), descending on Moses when the law was given (Exodus 40), and filling the temple at Solomon's dedication (1 Kings 8). Here, in our Bible verse, the *shechinach* brightly overshadows them, thundering with God's voice. **Up on the mountaintop is a place set apart; a location that gives perspective, inspires wonder, and often involves revelation.** Mountaintop experiences are times when God's presence is near, to assure or challenge us. Jesus' transfiguration is clearly a revelation, for the disciples and even for Jesus. In this account, we also learn of the response of the disciples and what happens as they return to level ground. These three aspects will frame the sermon.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

On the mountaintop, we experience...

1. Revelation (17:1-3)
2. Response (17:4-6)
3. Return (17:7-9)

Matthew 17:5

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud over-shadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 16:13-28

Matthew 17:1-8

Catechism

3.4.3, 3.4.9.7

Discussion Questions

What do mountaintop experiences with God look like in Scripture, and why do you think God so often reveals Himself in these set-apart moments?

In the transfiguration, God commands the disciples to "Hear Him." What might it mean to truly hear Jesus - rather than interpret His words in ways that are more comfortable or convenient?

Why do you think the disciples could not fully understand the transfiguration until after the cross?

Where do you experience "mountaintop" moments in your own faith life (worship, Holy Communion, prayer, community, conversation)?

How does Holy Communion both assure you of God's grace and challenge you in how you live, forgive, and reconcile?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR MARCH 15

IN VIEW OF THE CROSS - **Jesus washes**

Where are we in the Bible?

We are in John chapter 13, at the beginning of the Passion narrative. Jesus is gathered with His disciples at the Last Supper. He knows that *"His hour had come"* - that His suffering and death are imminent. He knows that *"He should depart from this world to the Father"* - that He is returning to His Father. He knows that He *"loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"* (13:1).

Although the salvation of humankind depends on what He is about to do, in view of the cross Jesus acts with calm, confidence, and humility, fully trusting in the Father's help. In this setting, He performs an unexpected and shocking act: He washes the feet of His disciples, taking the role of the lowest household servant.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. True salvation
2. True fellowship
3. True service

John 13:5

After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
John 13

Catechism
3.4.8.8

Discussion Questions

What does this moment at the Last Supper reveal about how Jesus chooses to love "to the end"?

Peter resists being washed and then tries to redefine what Jesus should do. Where do we sometimes resist God's work in our lives or try to set the terms for how He should act?

Judas receives the same outward act as the others, yet remains outside true fellowship. What does this teach us about the difference between outward participation and inward obedience?

How does Jesus' example redefine what it means to "serve" within the congregation and in everyday relationships?

In what ways does Jesus' foot-washing encourage you to respond to trials, misunderstandings, or injustice with trust rather than control?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR MARCH 22

IN VIEW OF THE CROSS - **Jesus institutes**

Where are we in the Bible?

We are in the upper room, on the night before the cross, as Jesus keeps the Passover with His disciples. This moment stands at a turning point in redemptive history. Christ faithfully observes the ordinances of the Mosaic Law, especially Passover; not to preserve them indefinitely, but to fulfill them and to teach His followers how His teachings would now be “remembered” - through a new fully actualized institution: the Lord’s Supper. Everything is prepared according to Jesus’ word, and the disciples find no disappointment in trusting Him. Jesus welcomes this Passover, not because it is easy, but because it is necessary. He knows suffering will immediately follow, yet He desires this meal which foreshadows His sacrifice, which serves His Father’s glory and secures humanity’s redemption. Here, Jesus takes His final leave of the Passover, signaling the coming destruction of the temple and the end of the sacrificial system. The ancient rituals are laid aside because the substance of ultimate sacrifice has arrived. What the Passover pointed toward, deliverance through blood, is now about to be accomplished in Him.

When Jesus speaks of not drinking again of the “fruit of the vine” until He drinks it “new” in His Father’s kingdom, He is lifting the disciples’ eyes beyond the table and toward the kingdom of God. The wine no longer points to the past and Israel’s exodus alone, but forward to a greater feast: the joy, fellowship, and triumph of redemption fully realized. He is where we will be and is waiting to have this meal with us (John 14:2). So in this passage, we stand between the old covenant and the new, between their Passover and the first Lord’s Supper, between the present celebration of Holy Communion and the eschatological hope of eternal fellowship in God’s kingdom.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. Consecration
2. Communion
3. Calling

Matthew 26:29

But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 26:26-30

Mark 14:22-26

Luke 22:14-23

Catechism

2.4.7, 8.2.8, 8.2.12-13

Discussion Questions

Why is it significant that Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper on the night before the cross, in the context of the Passover?

What does it mean to you that Christ's sacrifice is "once brought, eternally valid," and yet made present to us in Holy Communion?

How does the confession that "Christ is here" influence your reverence, gratitude, or preparation for Communion?

How does Communion help hold together remembrance of the cross and anticipation of Christ's return?

Paul says that in eating and drinking we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." How do we proclaim Christ - not only with words, but through how we live?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR MARCH 29

Where are we in the Bible?

After extensive travels, Jesus finally arrives at the goal of His journeying: Jerusalem. The Gospel of Luke provokes an interesting flashback to its second chapter, where Jesus was also in Jerusalem, teaching in the temple as a 12 year old boy. This time, instead of amazement, the response of the ruling elite will turn lethal. Yet, Jesus does not sneak into the city under cover of darkness; He enters with celebration, in full view of the cross that stands before Him.

As Jesus draws near, He weeps over Jerusalem (19:41-44). The name Jerusalem (in Hebrew, *Yerushalayim*), means foundation or vision (*yeru*) of peace (*shalem/shalom*). The "city of peace" did not know "the things that make for your peace" and did not recognize the King of Peace, the divine agent of its deliverance entering on a donkey. Some of those who celebrated Jesus' arrival hoped for peace on earth; His disciples sang of peace in heaven. We will enter Jerusalem with Jesus to explore the tension in-between.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. Peace on earth
2. Peace in heaven
3. The tension in-between earth and heaven

IN VIEW OF THE CROSS - Jesus enters

PALM SUNDAY

Luke 19:36-37

And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen.

Bible Reading

Mark 11:1-11

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

**Luke 19:28-44; Zechariah 9:9
John 18:33-37**

Catechism

12.5.2, 3.4.7.1

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Jesus weeps over Jerusalem instead of rejoicing in the crowd's celebration?

How do the expectations of the crowd for "peace on earth" differ from Jesus' purpose of bringing "peace in heaven"?

Palm Sunday is filled with celebration, yet the cross already casts its shadow. Why is it important to hold both together?

In what ways might we celebrate Jesus while still resisting His reign in certain areas of life?

The disciples only understood Palm Sunday after Easter. How does living "between" Christ's victory and the fulfillment of His kingdom shape the way we live today?

What would it look like for the peace of the Risen One to be "marvelous in our eyes" this week?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR MARCH 4/5
MIDWEEK SERVICE

IN VIEW OF THE CROSS - **Jesus heals**

Where are we in the Bible?

The calling of Matthew in verse 9 is a continuation of the call narrative found in Matthew 4:18-22. Both narratives make clear the power and attractiveness of the call to discipleship. As the fishermen immediately leave their boats to follow Jesus, so does the tax collector immediately leave his booth to follow Jesus. Just as Jesus saw something in Matthew, Matthew saw something in Jesus. In chapter 9 we also see the range of the call. Jesus' call is not only to the common fishermen; it also extends to someone despised by His own people - a tax collector.

In no time, Matthew and other tax collectors and "sinners" (those whose lives rendered them unrighteous in light of the Jewish law) are sitting with Jesus and His disciples at dinner. They are breaking bread, sharing in conversation, trusting one another, and dissolving boundaries of every kind (a nice description of small group!). And this is precisely what the Pharisees took issue with - the diversity of the table fellowship, and the overturning of the secure categories of their society.

In response, they ask the disciples: *"Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"* Perhaps stumped, the disciples remain silent, but Jesus hears them and responds. In His response, He refers to Himself as a physician - One who heals.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. Jesus, healer of the body
2. Jesus, healer of the soul
3. Jesus, healer of all

Matthew 9:12

When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Matthew 9

Catechism
3.4.8.5

Discussion Questions

Jesus describes Himself as a physician who comes for the sick. What kind of "sickness" do you think He is primarily addressing in this passage?

In the examples of the bleeding woman and the paralytic, Jesus addresses more than physical suffering. Why is it significant that forgiveness and peace come first?

How does recognizing our own need for healing change the way we view others - especially those on the margins?

If Jesus is both physician and remedy, what does it mean to "apply the gospel" to our daily lives?

How can our congregational life reflect Jesus' healing, welcoming presence more fully?