

April 18, 2014
God's Emotional Week
Devastated on Good Friday
John 19:38-42

Opening words: There are 52 weeks every year. Each one is important and not a single one should be wasted. Have you every stopped to consider how many weeks have occurred in the history of the world? However, there is one week that changed our world forever, Holy Week! On the Christian calendar Holy Week is the last week of Lent, beginning on Palm Sunday and ending at dawn on Easter. It is the week the church remembers the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry.

This year I have been looking at the role emotions played in Holy Week. Mark Twain once said, "*Any emotion, if it is sincere, is involuntary.*" Just think about it for a moment. Emotions do play a large part in the Holy Week drama. The crowd was excited on Palm Sunday. The disciples were perplexed on Maundy Thursday. Those who loved Jesus were devastated on Good Friday. The believers were overwhelmed with joy on Easter. Each one of these emotions played a large part in the Holy Week drama.

This is Good Friday, and on this day we remember Jesus's death. There is no other way to say it. The ones who loved Jesus were devastated. Being devastated means you are reduced to a state of hopelessness. That is how the crowd must have felt. They lost everything so quickly. Their hopes were high on Palm Sunday. The whole world came out to see Jesus. The handful who remained were silent because Jesus was dead. It was over before it began. Our scripture lesson for this evening is John 19:38-42. Let me call this message *Devastated on Good Friday*.

John 19:38-42 ³⁸ Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹ He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.^[e] ⁴⁰ Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹ At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴² Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The date was March 8, 2014. Malaysian Flight 370 took off for Beijing but it was never seen again. You know the story. The various news outlets can't give out enough information. The problem is there is really no information to give. We have a mountain of theories. We have a surplus of opinions. They have spent countless hours searching for any small clue. I hate to say it but it is true. Flight 370 is gone. No logical person could believe the 14 crew members and the 227 passengers from 14 different countries could still be alive. The images of the grieving family members are painful to watch. They aren't just sad. They are devastated.

The date was April 11, 2014. A bus carrying 44 southern California high school students and their 14 chaperones was traveling down Interstate 5. It must have been an exciting trip. It was a college tour trip. Everyone was thinking about their future. Then the unthinkable happened. A FedEx truck crossed the median and hit the bus head-on. In a matter of seconds, ten people were gone. The investigation drags on, but the outcome is the same. They are dead. The images of the grieving family members are painful to watch. They aren't just sad. They are devastated.

The date was April 13, 2014. The quiet town of Overland Park, Missouri was shocked when Frazier Glen Cross opened fire on the local Jewish Community Center. The former KKK member yelled anti-Semitic slogans as they drove him away. He may hate Jews, but he killed Christians, one Roman Catholic and two Methodists. Two of the victims were a fourteen-year-old boy and his grandfather. The images of the grieving family members and friends are painful to watch. They aren't just sad. They are devastated. I do not want to be ignorant of the current affairs in our world, but I try to limit my news intake. My emotions can't take it. There are so many devastating stories.

I do not know the exact date, but it was a Friday. The few that still cared about Jesus were not just sad. They were devastated. It hadn't been that long. A few days earlier they were excited. The week began with great promise. The crowds came out on Sunday morning and welcomed Jesus to the Golden City for the Passover. Their world was hungry for change and Jesus was just the man. He was a young charismatic leader, who seemed to have all the answers for their society's ills. Everyone was excited and was filled with anticipation. They were ready for political change. There was only one problem. Jesus didn't come for to liberate them from foreign domination; Jesus came to liberate them from their sins.

He was a spiritual Messiah. The Master tried to tell them. He tried to tell them that entire week, but they wouldn't listen. He tried to tell them when he rode on the donkey. He tried to tell them when he cleansed the temple. He tried to tell them when he cursed the fig tree. He tried to tell them when he taught about the Kingdom of God. He tried to tell them when he washed the disciples' feet and celebrated the last Seder with the disciples. Jesus kept trying to communicate about this spiritual liberation, but he might as well have been speaking to Sunday's donkey. They didn't get it. And before things really got going, Jesus was arrested.

From that moment on, it didn't look good for Jesus. On that evening, Jesus had the first of his two trials. First, he stood before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. They hated Jesus because he challenged their authority. His fate was determined before it began. They charged him with blasphemy, disrespecting God. So they ask him point blank, "*Are you the Son of God?*" Jesus responds, in so many words, "Yes!" Jesus has made his enemies' case. Second, Jesus stood before Pilate. The Sanhedrin wants to kill him, but they don't have the authority. It is for this reason they take Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate. He knows Jesus is innocent, but he wants to keep the crowd happy. He sentences Jesus to death by a Roman form of execution, the cross.

It is ironic. The same crowd that accepted Jesus on Sunday rejects Jesus on Friday. The week that started with great anticipation ends in great disappointment. Jesus, the son of God, the Messiah, the perfect one, is dead by 3:00 in the afternoon. His death was not pretty; it was hard to watch. His followers were overwhelmed with grief! They were not just sad. They were devastated.

The next time you see a cross, remember these three things. Maybe someday we will look at them in detail.

- 1. The cross reminds us of the ugliness of sin!**
- 2. The cross reminds us that the eternal is more important than the temporary!**
- 3. The cross reminds us of God's great commitment to us!**

If you think you can remember one of those three things, say, **"Amen!"**

The date was April 16, 2014. A ferry filled with 475 passengers began to sink in South Korea. Most of them were high school students. There are still many questions that need to be answered. No one knows the cause of the accident. No one knows the exact number of victims. Nine are confirmed dead. They are still looking for 287. The hope of finding any of them is shrinking. No one could survive those icy waters for a complete day. Can I be honest with you? I have found it difficult to watch those reports. Family members and friends are no looking for a miracle. They are not just sad. They are devastated.

This is Friday evening of Holy Week. We know Sunday is coming, and we know what happened on Sunday morning. Forget about what happened on Sunday and remember, instead, what happened on Friday. On that day, Jesus died. Those who loved Jesus weren't just sad. They were devastated. How devastated are you?

Will you pray with me?