

Trinity Tribune: March

Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church
Paola, Kansas

“The Passion Narratives in the Gospels”

The Four Gospels seem to slow down when they get closer to Jesus’s suffering, death, and resurrection. If you counted word-for-word, nearly a quarter to a third of each Gospel is on the last week of Jesus. This is important for each Gospel writer, and it’s important for our Christian faith, and it is the reason Holy Week is such a big deal for us.

For each of the Gospel writers, the crucifixion is where you see Jesus’s true identity come forth. I know many people may point to his conception or birth or baptism or transfiguration or the resurrection as Jesus’ true identity. There’s a point that could be made about his resurrection, but it is in his crucifixion where you truly know God became man. No other religion has their God dying in such a shameful way.

Each Gospel Passion narrative is worth reading in its own right. There are unique aspects to each Gospel writer. Imagine four people seeing a car accident; each person will see the same thing but from different perspectives, and they will tell different details that are helpful. The same is true for the Gospels. While a “synopsis,” or combination, of all the Passions can be good and helpful to have everything in chronological order, we can sometimes gain greater insight by focusing on each Gospel writers individually.

St. Matthew’s Passion (Matthew 26–27)

Matthew wrote for the Jews. He includes many references to the Old Testament. He wants you to know that Jesus is for sure the Messiah of the Old Testament. He says things like, “Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah” (27:9).

One major thing that is unique to Matthew is that the Jews shout “His blood be on us and on our children” (27:25). At the same time as lambs are being slaughtered and offered in the temple a mile away, the true Lamb of God is sentenced to death, and the people ask that his blood be on them and their children. This, ironically, is what happens. His blood was shed for us and cleanses us from all sin.

Matthew is the only Gospel writer to mention:
Judas’s hanging himself as a fulfillment of Jeremiah
Pilate’s wife having a dream about Jesus
Pilate washing his hands, declaring himself innocent
The tombs opening and an earthquake at Jesus’s death.

Finally, Matthew is the only one who emphasizes guards being set at the tomb. This is probably because Matthew is

writing to a very Jewish audience, and he knows that he needs to get ahead of some arguments that Jesus’s body was stolen. No doubt some of the Jewish Christians would have had family members challenging them on Jesus’ resurrection, and he needed to impress on his listeners that even the Pharisees were worried about Jesus’s body being stolen.

Words from the Cross:

“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 27:46)

St. Mark’s Passion (Mark 14–15)

This Passion is very similar to Matthew. However, Matthew assumes a Jewish audience, but Mark writes towards Gentiles as well. He gives descriptions of things that Gentiles would not know about, such as a description of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, “when they sacrificed the Passover lamb,” (14:12) or “it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (15:42).

As with the rest of the Gospel, the humanity of Jesus is brought to the fore. He prays more. More of his feelings are described, and he needs sleep. There are times when he seems weak or unable to act due to unbelief. This is certainly the case in this Passion. And yet, at his death, it is a Gentile, Roman centurion who exclaims: “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (15:29).

Things to notice in Mark:

Mark himself is probably the young man who flees naked from the Garden (14:31).

The sons of Simon the Cyrene are mentioned, Rufus and Alexander, perhaps because they were still living at the time that this Gospel was published. People could go and ask them what they saw.

After his death, there is more detail on the women who watched from afar, and that Pilate was surprised at the speed of his death, for a quick death was rare.

Words from the Cross:

“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (15:34)

St. Luke’s Passion (Luke 22–23)

Luke differs from Matthew and Mark because he is writing to a totally Gentile audience. Whereas Matthew and Mark portray Jesus as a silent man enduring shame and torture, Luke portrays him as an innocent man who faces death

with courage and nobility. In fact, Pilate declares Jesus' innocence three times, and Herod once, and even the centurion at the foot of the cross (23:47)!

Luke also emphasizes the words and mercy of Christ. Jesus heals the servant's ear that was cut off by Peter. He promises paradise to the criminal by his side. He speaks words of forgiveness from the cross, not only to those who put him there, but to all of us.

Ignorance is a theme of Luke. The disciples are ignorant, and those crucifying Jesus are ignorant, but Jesus is the one knowing all, even that the thief on the cross will soon see him in paradise.

Two other minor notes: Luke does not mention Golgotha but rather calls it "the place that is called The Skull" (23:33). Also, there is an End Times note to this passion, with Jesus's words to the weeping women right before he is crucified (23:28–31).

Words from the Cross:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (23:34)

"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (23:43)

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (23:46)

St. John's Passion (John 18–19)

John's Passion could begin in chapter 13 as Jesus speaks with his disciples in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. However, he and the eleven disciples head to Gethsemane in chapter 18, and the Passion continues through chapter 19.

John has far more details because it comes from an eyewitness of the whole Passion. At the same time, John skips over things that we have already seen in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). This is very common for John: he does not see it necessary to repeat what two or three others have already written. What he does say tends to be deeper theologically. For example, at the arrest of Jesus, Jesus says "I AM" (the divine name of the Old Testament, Yahweh) three times, and the guards fall away twice (18:5–6).

There are more details about Jesus's trial before the Sanhedrin, perhaps because John himself had special access there (18:15). John also gives us more details of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus; it feels like John himself was there too! Pilate speaks those famous words, "What is truth?" (18:38).

There are more interactions between Pilate and the Jews, heightening Pilate's precarious political position. He first declares to them, "Behold the man!" (19:5) then later "Behold your King!" (19:14). To both acclamations, the Jews demand crucifixion.

There is much from the Synoptics that John leaves out (Simon of Cyrene, whipping, mocking, etc.). But we get the

inscription above Jesus's head, reading "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" in three languages—and the chief priests' opposition to that title.

The three words from the cross in John are significant:

"Woman, behold, your son! ... Behold, your mother!" (19:26–27) Jesus is obedient to his Father and at the same time knows of his obligations to his mother. John now serves as the protector of Mary.

"I thirst" (19:28). Psalm 69:21 is in mind here, "for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink." On the surface, Jesus could have needed something to wet his lips for his last word. There could be a deeper meaning, that he is thirsty to drink the last drop of the dregs of his Father's wrath. He is thirsty for your salvation.

"It is finished" (19:30). The work of salvation is finished and done. The Father's will is done. All that Jesus came to earth to do is summed up in one Greek word: *tetelestai*!

After Jesus's death, John points out that his legs were not broken to hasten suffocation, as was done to the thieves. When the spear entered his side to see if he was dead, blood and water came out. Not only does this prove that the pericardium around his heart was swollen in death, but blood and water have great theological significance. Water of baptism and blood of the Lord's Supper, coming from His body are all sacramental gifts to us.

John mentions key details about Jesus's burial: Nicodemus participated, Jesus is bound in linen with seventy-five pounds of spices, and a garden is mentioned as the place of a new tomb—perhaps reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.

Finally, John wanted to tie up loose ends. There are a few Old Testament prophecies that aren't specifically mentioned in the Synoptics, and John wants to make sure you know that Jesus fulfilled these.

He uses Roman time reckoning instead of Jewish, so things may seem three hours off.

Conclusion

Each of the Gospel writers bring something to this most important event. It's good to hear them speak for themselves and learn what they care about, what they want you to see. Consider spending some time in Holy Week reading through each Passion. In fact, this is an ancient tradition. Read Matthew on Monday, Mark on Tuesday, Luke on Wednesday, and John on Good Friday. However you hear of Christ's Passion, even if that is only on Good Friday, I wish you God's blessings as you contemplate what Jesus's death means to you—your sins are covered by His blood, and you have the promise of salvation. April's column will tell "the rest of the story": the Gospel writers' accounts of the Resurrection.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Woelmer

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- March 1 Devan Boydston
- March 1 Guylene Klein
- March 1 Johnny Prothe
- March 2 Lance Elliott
- March 3 Justin Hieber
- March 3 Addison Kettler
- March 3 Mark Minden
- March 5 Lorranda Baldrige
- March 5 Billy Green
- March 5 Joshua Pemberton
- March 5 Aaron Maisch
- March 6 Gary Prothe
- March 6 Sandra Schultz
- March 7 Andrew Thompson
- March 7 Jackie Thompson-Dillon
- March 8 Megan Prothe
- March 9 Faith Ordonez
- March 10 Jim Mueller
- March 11 Diana Deering
- March 12 Dylan Shoemaker
- March 13 Karen Garrison
- March 14 Darrel Rodewald
- March 15 Allyssa Henry
- March 15 Jacob Henry
- March 15 Kyle Kettler
- March 15 Judy Parks
- March 15 Randy Rausch
- March 17 Steve Cook
- March 17 Breanna Strawder
- March 17 Marcia Raines
- March 17 Roger Smith
- March 17 Robyn Weatherbie
- March 17 Emersyn Chapman
- March 18 Jennifer Rethman
- March 18 Chris Smith
- March 19 Jordan Harper
- March 20 Paul Haley
- March 21 Rusty Morton
- March 21 Harry Stubbs
- March 21 Becky Stutzman
- March 23 Arnold Debrick
- March 23 Karla Debrick
- March 23 Elizabeth Kettler
- March 23 John Schlegel Jr.
- March 25 Laura Prothe

- March 26 Loren Windler
- March 28 Joyce Brown
- March 28 Zach Holtz
- March 28 Justine Prothe
- March 28 Tyler Tesar
- March 28 Kendall Karrow
- March 29 Wilda Bunch
- March 29 Lauren Wood
- March 31 Alvin Thoden

Anniversaries

- March 6 Steve and Bobbi Debrick (25)
- March 7 Dave and Suzie Prothe (32)
- March 9 Rich and Sally Wood (33)
- March 10 Jim and Shelisa Mueller (45)
- March 20 Mike and Linda Giager (38)
- March 21 Sean and Robyn Weatherbie (26)
- March 28 Tom and Nancy Green (45)
- March 28 Arlin and Venita Prothe (59)

Lenten Services: The Blessings and Opportunity of Prayer

For our midweek Wednesday services during Lent this year we are learning from our Lord how, when, where, to whom, and why to pray. Everyone is invited to join us beginning at 5:30 p.m. for supper downstairs and 7:00 for the service.

March 6
"The Lord's Prayer"
 Matthew 27:27-33

March 13
"If You Will"
 Luke 23:33

March 20
"Answers in Christ"
 John 19:38-42



Holy Week Schedule



Palm Sunday
March 24th
10:00 a.m.



Maundy Thursday
March 28th
7:00 p.m.

Good Friday
March 29th
Tenebrae: 7:00 p.m.



Easter
March 31st
Sunrise: 7:00 a.m.

Divine Service:
10:00 a.m.

EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, March 30, 4:00 pm
On Shelter House grounds
Sponsored by Twin Valley 4-H
All Children Invited!

EASTER BREAKFAST

Join us between the Easter services for the
Easter breakfast!
Easter Sunday, March 31
8:00 am

COFFEE HOUR

Everyone is invited to stay for Coffee Hour in the Gathering Room following worship. Our thanks to those that provide snacks each Sunday. The signup sheet to provide snacks for Coffee Hour in 2023 is on the counter in the Gathering Room. Consider signing up to honor birthdays, wedding anniversaries, etc.

BIBLE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES:

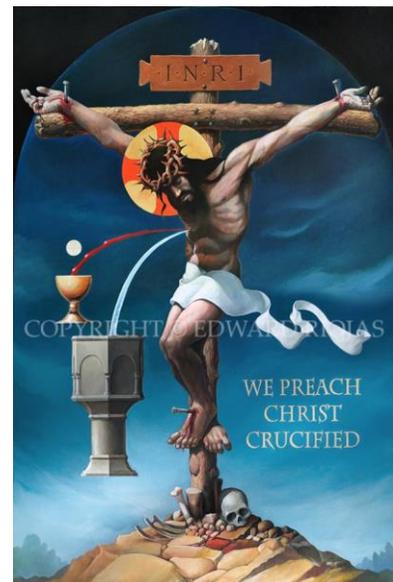
“Cyle of Unbelief and Salvation”

This often-overlooked book tells us much about human nature and the tendency of man to fall away from the faith and come back. It gives us many pictures of Jesus.

Join the Adult Bible Class at 9:00 a.m. on Sundays in the Heritage Room to learn more!

LUTHERAN RESOURCES

Ed Riojas is a Lutheran painter and illustrator. He has brought to life many biblical narratives in his own unique style. You have seen some his artwork already; I have used it in a few bulletins. He draws from classical Christian art and iconography, weaving in symbolism from the Old and New Testaments.



NURSING HOME SERVICES

You are invited to help Trinity provide brief worship services for nursing home residents this month. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length at each home. This month, we are scheduled for Sunday, **March 17th**. We will begin at 1:30 pm at North Point, and then go to Medicalodges around 2:15 for the second service. The residents really enjoy these services, especially singing their favorite hymns. It's great to have church members there to greet the residents and sing along. We have a few members who help but we could use your help too!

HOMESCHOOLING SYMPOSIUM

Have you been hearing about the homeschool co-op that is starting? There will be an informational meeting called a "Symposium" that will answer the following questions: What is Classical Education? What is Lutheran Education? What is Homeschooling? This is intended for the general public, especially members of the three Miami County Lutheran Churches (Trinity, First, and Christ Our Savior). It will be on March 9th at Christ Our Savior, Louisburg, from 9 to noon.

Trinity Tribune

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VALENTINE'S DAY DINNER

February 10, 2024

Thank you to the youth and youth parents for putting on such a great dinner!

