



# HOLY WEEK

NEW COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH

**Monday April 6, 2020**  
**Isaiah 42:1-9**

by Kevin Swanson

Today's passage is a message of warning and hope. The LORD takes the microphone twice, the prophet Isaiah, once. The LORD speaks first by introducing his servant, his chosen one. God declares that this servant, filled with God's Spirit, will be the LORD's agent of justice.

In verse 5 Isaiah reminds his readers who is speaking here. This is God, the LORD, the creator of all things, the giver of breath and life – pay attention!

The LORD further reveals his servant's assignment as covenant maker, light to the Gentiles, healer and liberator.

In the final 2 verses the LORD contrasts himself to the “less than nothing-worthless” idols that he addressed in verses 22-24 of the previous chapter, encouraging the reader to look back and see that God has always been faithful to his word and to look forward to the “new things” he now declares.

We all have the tendency to put our trust in things other than God, but he will have none of that. God's message to us this Easter season is to pay attention to his track record, the “former things”. The one who has made good on his promises and who declares “the new things” is the one we can trust.

God promised a savior and sent him. Jesus promised a resurrection and produced it. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit and he came. God promised justice on earth and he will establish it. Jesus promised to return for his church, and he will!

**Tuesday April 7, 2020**  
**John 12:20-36**

by Quilen Blackwell

Eleven years ago I drove a taxi (these were the pre-Uber days) at nights to make some extra money in my hometown of Madison, WI. Nights were particularly active because Madison is a vibrant college town where the nightlife buzzed with incoherent frat boys and tipsy college girls enjoying the club and bar scene. One night, I got a call to pick up a young lady, but when I arrived she refused the taxi despite clearly being inebriated. I urged her not to drive, but she insisted that she was sober enough to hit the road and her house was only a few minutes away so what was the big deal? I didn't want to be pushy (that Midwest niceness) so I left to pick up another passenger. Unfortunately, no more than 10 minutes later I saw this same girl's car crushed into the side of a tree. She survived the accident, but I learned that night a powerful lesson about what happens when we don't answer the bell.

In this passage in John, Jesus is being called to answer the biggest bell in human history. He is preparing his followers by letting them know what is required to live a life fully committed to the will of God. Although His soul was troubled, he refused to ask God to deliver Him from the weight of the moment. He understood that the heart wrenching circumstances he was soon to face would ultimately bring great glory to the Father and advance His will on earth. He then reveals the secret to embracing such impossible moments: Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Because Jesus was willing to lose His life for us, we now have eternal life.

Today, we are facing a crisis that is testing the mettle of His followers. The coronavirus pandemic is causing a lot of fear as things that once seemed certain and steady have become very uncertain and unsteady. The knee jerk response in times like this is to focus solely on self-preservation and this has been evidenced by the nonsensical hoarding of food, hand sanitizer, face masks, etc. over the last couple of weeks. However, the example that Jesus set for us is to live our lives willing to lose it in order to advance the will of our Father. Let's embrace this trying time by not letting fear stop us from seizing this unique moment to bring immense glory to His name by living with generosity, charity, and love to our neighbors. Will you answer the bell?

**Wednesday April 8, 2020**  
**Isaiah 50:4-9**

by Mark Tao

Anti-Asian hate is real. In its first 48 hours of existence of a new STOP AAPI Hate Reporting Center, 220 cases of hate violence were recorded, ballooning to 1000+ by the end of the first week. A recent attack on a family in Midland, TX left a 2 yr old and a 6 yr old child hospitalized with severe knife wounds from ear to eye, because they were mistaken to be Chinese spreading Covid-19. We are left to wonder, where is the justice for these individuals and families?

Isaiah 50 gives us an answer. The reality of God's liberation for his people will come through a new servant, as Israel remains in bondage to her own sin. This servant, who is fulfilled in Jesus, will endure unmerited beating, mocking and spitting, derision, facial lacerations and bodily death on an instrument of torture, crucified by the misdirected rage of oppressors. But insodoing, Jesus will not only receive vindication, but deliver vindication for all who share in His suffering. And in the end, it is the accusers, who will wear out like moth-eaten garments (50:9). The writer comforts us through this reminder that the Sovereign God will draw near to the victim and scapegoat, and protect from disgrace and shame (50:7).

As we continue through Holy Week, let us take heart that vindication will be secured for Vincent Chin, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, the attacked TX family, and all who have suffered unjust persecution whether presently or in the age to come.

**Thursday April 9, 2020**  
**Psalm 116: 1-2, 12-19**

by Amarachi Erondu

This week, I talked with an elderly patient who had recently found out that she had tested positive for the Coronavirus just a few days before. Because this patient had a lot of health conditions that prevented her from being able to do essential activities by herself and lacked close family and friends in the city, she had a homemaker come three times a week to cook and clean for her. Due to her COVID status, however, she was alerted that her homemaker could no longer visit due to risk of exposure. As I listened to this patient explain her lack of access to food over the phone, I was struck by her saying “I keep calling y’all, and no one is helping me. No one is listening. No one cares.” I couldn’t help but feel for this woman and how awful it must feel to not only worry deeply about your present circumstances, but to also feel that you are the only one who seems to care about what you are going through.

In this passage, David offers up a message of thanksgiving after being delivered from a distressing threat. In the current times, it can be quite hard to recognize all the things that we should be thankful for, but I think David lays out two very important examples that, I feel, are very salient today.

The first is the fact that God hears us. I love that verse 2 specifically states “[God] inclined his ear to me”. This phrase is used often in the Psalms, and suggests that God is an eager and willing listener to our cries to Him. This aspect of God’s character still baffles me at times- that a God who created the entire universe and is unbound to manly conceptions of time or space stops to eagerly listen to our cries of distress.

The second is that God not only listens to our pleas, He also cares deeply about the fears and emotions that engendered them. In verse 16, David writes “O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds.” I find it interesting that the phrase “I am your servant” gets repeated two times and then further emphasized with the phrase “the child of your serving girl”. It’s almost as if David is trying to emphasize how far removed his relationship appears to be from his master. However, in spite of this, God cares enough for him to set him free from his afflictions and loosen his bonds.

These last few weeks, we’ve been presented with a lot of things that may make us feel alone, afraid, or without hope. However, we truly have so much to be thankful for in this time, crazy as it sounds. We serve a God that listens intently to and empathizes with our fears and for that, our only response should be one of praise and thanksgiving that should be made in the “presence of all his people” as stated in verse 18. During Holy Week, how moving would it be to rally together giving praise that we are not a people crying out to deaf ears during this time? Our God has conquered death itself and through Him, has made us victors as well.

**Friday April 10, 2020**  
**John 18:1-19:42**

by Alicia Locher

As I read this passage, it struck me how urgently John needs his readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Five times in these two chapters, John recalls how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. I wonder if John is reminding them of this because Jesus was not the political leader for which the Jewish people had hoped. He had certainly challenged authority, but when given the opportunity to speak directly to Pontius Pilate, he challenged his faith, not his politics. Could this be the Messiah?

I wonder if Jesus had arrived today in public ministry how he might not rescue us from our oppressors in the way we imagine. Would he cure coronavirus, overthrow capitalism & racism or raise the dead? We know that Jesus did not heal all the sick or feed all the hungry. He didn't overthrow Rome or even resist his own arrest. Instead he was submitted to the will of God.

I often think of submission as an act of doing something: if I was fully submitted to God, I would give more, volunteer more, etc. But if I use Jesus' example for holy imagination, submission is sometimes not doing things. It is listening for when to speak and when to be silent, when to act and when to rest, when to shake the dust off your feet and when to stay and linger.

As I ponder the Messianic example of submission in this passage, I am struck by Jesus' judicious restraint despite his clear power, but even more so, I am surprised by the love it must take to make such a sacrifice. In this passage, John paints a holy juxtaposition - a silent lamb being led to the slaughter and a powerful King coming to claim his people. His deepest submission is his greatest act of love.

**Saturday April 11, 2020**

by Jasmine Hill

**1 Peter 4:1-8**

I have been asking God for freedom since I was a young girl. Part of me recognized that those who were charged to nurture and instruct me were not blameless. I saw their faults and I wanted to be free from them. I assumed that freedom meant doing things my way. I recently came to understand that even my will for my life was a form of bondage and oppression. Humans can be bad masters to others and to themselves. We can never love ourselves as well as God can, and we are much harder on ourselves than God will ever be.

You've spent enough time being bludgeoned by the tyranny without and within you. Now is the time to live your life by the perfect will of God. This means suffering in the flesh, but even that is good. It's a weaning, a realization that you are not in charge and everything will not go the way you want it to. We come to learn, that's okay. Our ways lead to the same darkness as the ways of our earthly masters. Once we let go of our will and take hold of God's, we become free people. People who are no longer bound by the desires of their flesh, but who are loosed in the Spirit. People who live their lives in service to the best Master they will ever know.