

Lectionary Bible Study

For Sunday, March 29, 2026 (Palm Sunday)

Isaiah 50:4-9a (Amplified Bible)

The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

⁵The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears;
I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away.

⁶I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.

⁷Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.

Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.

⁸He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other!

Who is my accuser?
Let him confront me!

⁹It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me.
Who will condemn me?

Discussion Starters

1. Verses 4-9 are the third of four "Servant Songs". How would you describe the Servant's mission? What about this passage describes the events of Palm Sunday?
2. How is the Servant different from the standard expectation of the Messiah held by most Jews of Jesus' day?
3. What might cause the Servant to be mistreated like this?
4. How does the Servant find strength during these times of mistreatment?
5. What is a "well-instructed" tongue?

Philippians 2:5-11 (Amplified Bible)

⁵Let this same attitude *and* purpose *and* [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]

⁶Who, although being essentially one with God *and* in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped *or* retained,

⁷But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men *and* was born a human being.

⁸ And after He had appeared in human form, He abased *and* humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!

⁹ Therefore [because He stooped so low] God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ That in (at) the name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ And every tongue [frankly and openly] confess *and* acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Discussion Starters

1. Verse 5 begins with the admonition to “have the same attitude” as Jesus. What attitude did He display? How is it possible for us to have that attitude?
2. What do you think it was like for Jesus to leave heaven and become human?
3. In what way does this passage counter the world's view of “success”?
4. What are practical ways for Christians today to apply this passage to their lives?
5. This passage is often titled “The Humiliation of Christ.” In what ways might this have been humiliating?

Matthew 26:1-15 (Amplified Bible)

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ² “As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴ and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ⁵ “But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

⁶ While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

⁸ When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. ⁹ “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

¹⁴ Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Discussion Starters

1. Why was Passover a perfect time for the events of vv. 1-5 to unfold? Why might that timing be risky?

2. What is significant about the setting for the woman's gift to Jesus? Why are the disciples indignant?
3. What is Jesus trying to teach His disciples about priorities?
4. Why did Judas take money to betray Jesus? Why not do it for free?
5. What did Jesus mean by "you will always have the poor with you?"

Matthew 21:1-11 (Amplified Bible)

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ "Say to Daughter Zion,

'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

¹¹ The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Discussion Starters

1. Why did Jesus ride a donkey and not a stallion?
2. What does "Hosanna" mean?
3. Why is Jesus called the "Son of David"? What is the significance of that title?
4. Why is the crowd so excited to see Jesus?

WRAP UP

What key insight did you gain from this Bible study? How might it make a difference in how you live today?

Palm Sunday (Year A)

Commentary

Isaiah 50:4-9

50:4–6. In verses 4–9 the Servant is speaking, for He addresses God as the Sovereign Lord (vv. 4–5, 7, 9). As the Lord taught the Servant daily how to comfort the weary (v. 4), the Servant did not rebel against that instruction (v. 5). In fact He even gave His body to those who persecuted Him (v. 6). Jesus, before He was crucified, was beaten, mocked, and spit on (Mark 14:65; 15:16–20). In extremely difficult circumstances, more difficult than what Isaiah's original readers were facing, the Servant was obedient and submissive (cf. 1 Peter 2:22–23).

50:7–9. The Servant was convinced that He will be vindicated by the Sovereign Lord who helps Him (vv. 7, 9). Even if it did not seem as if He were winning a battle, He was convinced that He was doing God's will. The Servant was aware that those who falsely accused Him will eventually face Him as their Judge and will come to nothing. Like moth-eaten garments, they will perish (cf. 51:8).

Philippians 2:5-11

Christ is the supreme example of humility and selfless concern for others (vv. 5–8). These verses, along with verses 9–11, constitute a grand statement on Christology.

2:5. Believers are exhorted to have the same attitude—selfless humility—**Christ** exhibited in His humiliation and condescension. The word here translated **attitude** is translated “like-minded” in verse 2.

2:6–8. The word translated **nature** (*morphē*) in verses 6 and 7 is a crucial term in this passage. This word (trans. “form” in the KJV and NASB) stresses the inner essence or reality of that with which it is associated (cf. Mark 16:12). Christ Jesus, Paul said, is of the very essence (*morphē*) of God, and in His incarnation He embraced perfect humanity. His complete and absolute deity is here carefully stressed by the apostle. The Savior's claim to deity infuriated the Jewish leaders (John 5:18) and caused them to accuse Him of blasphemy (John 10:33).

Though possessing full deity (John 1:14; Col. 2:9), Christ did not consider His **equality with God** (Phil. 2:6) as **something to be grasped** or held onto. In other words Christ did not hesitate to set aside His self-willed use of deity when He became a man. As God He had all the rights of deity, and yet during His incarnate state He surrendered His right to manifest Himself visibly as the God of all splendor and glory.

Christ's humiliation included His making **Himself nothing**, taking the **very nature** (*morphē*) **of a servant**, and **being made in human likeness** (v. 7). These statements indicate that Christ became a man, a true human being. The words “made Himself nothing” are, literally, “He emptied Himself.” “Emptied,” from the Greek *kenoō*, points to the divesting of His self-interests, but not of His deity. “The very nature of a servant” certainly points to His lowly and humble position, His willingness to obey the Father, and serve others. He became a man, a true human being. “Likeness” suggests similarity but difference. Though His humanity was genuine, He was different from all other humans in that He was sinless (Heb. 4:15).

Thus it is seen that Christ, while retaining the essence of God, was also human. In His incarnation He was *fully* God and *fully* man at the same time. He was God manifest in human flesh (John 1:14).

Some have wrongly taught that the phrase, **being found in appearance as a man** (Phil. 2:8), means that He only *looked* human. But this contradicts verse 7. “Appearance” is the Greek *schēmati*, meaning an outer appearance which may be temporary. This contrasts with *morphē* (“very nature”) in verses 6 and 7, which speaks of an outer appearance that reveals permanent inner quality.

The condescension of Christ included not only His birth—the Incarnation in which He became the God-Man—but also His **death**. And it was the most cruel and despicable form of death—**even death on a cross!** (v. 8) This form of capital punishment was limited to non-Romans and the worst criminals.

No better example of humiliation and a selfless attitude for believers to follow could possibly be given than that of Christ. With this example before them, the saints at Philippi should be “like-minded” (v. 2) and live humbly before their God and each other.

God the Father is the subject in these verses, whereas in verses 6–8 God the Son was the subject. Christ’s obedience was followed by the Father’s exaltation of Him to the place of highest honor. God exalted and honored the One men despised and rejected.

2:9. Christ’s exaltation and His receiving a **name that is above every name** was the answer to His high-priestly prayer (John 17:5). The exaltation refers to His resurrection, ascension, and glorification at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:33; Heb. 1:3). His “name” is not merely a title; it refers to His person and to His position of dignity and honor.

2:10. In keeping with Christ’s exaltation and high **name ... every knee** will one day **bow** and acknowledge Him for who He really is. Paul stressed the same truth in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 14:11). Both instances reflect Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 45:23) of the singular greatness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The extent of Christ’s sovereign authority is delineated in the threefold phrase, **in heaven and on earth and under the earth**. No intelligent being—whether angels and saints in heaven; people living on the earth; or Satan, demons, and the unsaved in hell—in all of God’s universe will escape. All will bow either willingly or they will be made to do so.

2:11. What all will **confess** is that **Jesus Christ is Lord**. This, the earliest Christian creed, meant that Jesus Christ is Yahweh-God. One day all will be made to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is all He claimed to be—very God of very God. Unfortunately, for many it will be too late for the salvation of their souls. The exalted place the Savior now occupies and the universal bowing in the future in acknowledgement of His lordship is all **to the glory of God the Father**.

Matthew 26:1-15

26:1–5. The words, **When Jesus had finished saying all these things**, are the last of five such turning points in the book (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1). As soon as Jesus completed the Olivet Discourse, He reminded the **disciples** that **the Passover** feast was only **two days away and** that He would **be handed over to be crucified**. The events in 26:1–16 occurred on Wednesday. Though there is no record of the disciples’ reactions to the Lord’s words, Matthew did record the plot that developed among the religious leaders to **kill Him**. **In the palace of the high priest ... Caiaphas**, the plan was begun **to arrest Jesus in some sly way** but **not** until **the Feast** had passed. Their thinking was to wait until the many pilgrims

who had converged on Jerusalem for the Passover had gone home. Then they would dispose of Jesus in a quiet way. Their timing was not God's timing, however, and the advancement in the timetable was due in part to the willingness of Judas Iscariot who volunteered to betray the Lord.

26:6–9. During the final week of His life before the Cross, the Lord spent the nights in **Bethany**, east of Jerusalem on the south slopes of the Mount of Olives. Matthew recorded an event that took place one evening **in the home of ... Simon the Leper**. John described the same event in greater detail (John 12:1–8), giving the names of the individuals. The **woman** who **poured** the oil **on** Jesus' **head** was Mary (John 12:3), and the disciple who first objected to the action was Judas Iscariot (John 12:4). The **perfume** was **very expensive** (Matt. 26:7), worth "a year's wages" (John 12:5; lit., "300 denarii"). Obviously this act of love was costly for Mary.

26:10–13. The Lord was aware of the disciples' comments ("Why this waste?" v. 8) and their heart attitude ("they were indignant," v. 8; cf. 20:24; 21:15) behind their words. Judas Iscariot was not motivated by his concern for **the poor** (John 12:6). He was a thief and was concerned about the money not being put in their common purse which he controlled. Jesus reminded them that because **the poor** would **always** be **with** them they would have many opportunities to show kindness, but He would **not always** be among them.

Mary's **beautiful** act prepared His body **for burial** (Matt. 26:12). Jesus had spoken several times of His coming death (e.g., 16:21; 17:22; 20:18), but the disciples did not seem to believe His words. Mary believed and performed this act as a testimony of her devotion to Him. As a result her sacrificial act is often proclaimed **throughout the world**. Perhaps it was this act and the Lord's approval of it that made Judas willing to betray the Lord. From this scene Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray Jesus.

26:14–16. **Judas Iscariot** must have been viewed by the religious leaders as an answer to their prayers. Judas' offer **to the chief priests** to betray Jesus Christ was more than agreeing to point out Jesus to arresting officers. Judas was offering his services as a witness against Jesus when He would be brought to trial. He would do anything to gain more money (cf. John 12:6). The offer was made in exchange for funds, probably paid out immediately to Judas. **Thirty silver coins** were the redemption price paid for a slave (Ex. 21:32). This same amount was also prophesied as the price for the services of the rejected Shepherd (Zech. 11:12). The exact value of the agreed price cannot be determined because the coinage was not identified; it was simply called "silver" (*argyria*; cf. Matt. 25:18). But it could have been a substantial amount. The bargain had been struck and **Judas** was now being looked to by the religious leaders as their deliverer from their biggest problem, Jesus of Nazareth. Judas knew he had to follow through, for his word had been given and money had been exchanged.

Matthew 21:1-11

21:1–5. Jesus and the disciples were approaching Jerusalem from the east as they came up the road from Jericho. When they reached the town of Bethphage on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples ahead to find a donkey and its colt. Though all four Gospel accounts include the Triumphal Entry, only Matthew mentioned a donkey along with the colt. A simple explanation of what some call a

contradiction is that when Jesus rode the colt, the mother donkey naturally went along. Perhaps He rode each animal part of the distance (v. 7).

Jesus told the disciples to bring the animals to Him. If anyone questioned their actions, they were to say the Lord needed them. As Messiah He had the right to request whatever He needed. Matthew mentioned (vv. 4–5) that this act fulfilled a prophecy, namely, Zechariah 9:9 (cf. Isa. 62:11), which spoke to the nation of the coming of her King in a gentle manner riding on ... a colt, the foal (lit., son) of a donkey. This was not the normal manner in which kings arrived, for they usually came as conquerors riding on horses. A colt was a symbol of peace.

21:6–8. The disciples got the animals, threw their garments on them to make saddles, and people in the large crowd spread their cloaks (cf. 2 Kings 9:13) and tree branches on the road. Most of these people were pilgrims from Galilee on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They were familiar with Jesus and the many miracles He had performed in Galilee.

21:9. As the people walked along, some before Jesus and some behind Him, they were probably singing some of the pilgrim psalms. Matthew noted that they (including children, v. 15) shouted the words of Psalm 118:26, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. To Him they shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David. "Hosanna" is from the Hebrew *hōšī'āh nā'*, "Save (us), we pray," taken from Psalm 118:25. It came to be a note of praise as well as petition.

While the crowd did not fully understand the significance of this event, they seemed to be acknowledging that this One is the promised Seed of David who had come to grant them salvation. Both their actions and words bestowed honor on this One coming into the city, at last presenting Himself publicly as their King.

21:10–11. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the entire city was moved and asked, Who is this? Since Jesus had usually avoided the city, its inhabitants did not know Him. Those accompanying Jesus from out of town kept answering, This is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee (cf. v. 46). As *the* Prophet, He is the One promised by Moses (Deut. 18:15). Luke recorded that Jesus wept over the city (Luke 19:41) and told the religious leaders that the day was a significant time for the nation: "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42). Jesus may well have had in mind the significant prophecy of Daniel concerning the time of Messiah's coming and that He had arrived in Jerusalem at the very time predicted by Daniel over 500 years previously (Dan. 9:25–26). This event marked the official presentation of Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel as the rightful Son of David.