

Palm Sunday



Surrender

"... into your hands I commit my spirit."

Luke 23:46

Opening Prayer

God,

Teach us your ways.

Teach us not to grasp so tightly the things we think are important
but to cling to what you hold dear.

Teach us to release our plans and thoughts and things to you.

Teach us to follow your pathways.

For you know the plans you have for us, plans to give hope and a future.

Amen

Thought to Ponder...

What things do you hold most dear in life, that is, what things do you spend the most time and money on or give the most of your attention to?

Surrender

Surrender is a difficult topic to describe and even more challenging to practice. As humans, we think we have the right plans and ways to pursue them. Surrender is not in any way a coercive technique of God. Rather, surrender is an act of our will—to lay aside our own plans, dreams, and desires, and submit them to God.

If you have ever been kayaking or white water rafting, surrender is what they teach you to do if you get stuck in an eddy (a cyclical current that can hold you underwater). If you become trapped in an eddy and fight it, it is like being stuck in an underwater tornado, where you cannot break free. The only way to get unstuck is to relax your body and surrender to the current. The eddy will swirl you a few times and then shoot you out farther downstream. Surrender is counter to the impulse of trying to fight against a current pulling you under. But freedom happens in surrender.



Usually, on Palm Sunday, people read a passage from one of the Gospels about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where his followers laid cloaks down on the road and waved palm branches, shouting "Hosanna! Hosanna!" worshipping Jesus as he entered the city on the back of a donkey. However, today is also the final of the seven last words of Jesus, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." It may seem like a very different Palm Sunday passage, but they illustrate the same point—Jesus' faithful surrender to God's plan.

In the triumphal entry, Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem for a festival, knowing what lies ahead. Jesus surrenders to God's plan throughout his life. Still, it can be seen again and again during Holy Week (the week of Easter) as Jesus takes the final journey into Jerusalem, celebrates Passover with his disciples, and walks his final steps to the cross. It is fitting that this week begins and ends in the act of surrender, culminating in the words, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," when Jesus breathes his last breath.

Read the Story: Luke 23:44-49

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you recall a time in your life when you let go of something? What was that like? What was lost, and what was gained in that experience?
2. Are there things in your life that you feel called to surrender (an old dream, a plan you can't quite let go of, a situation that keeps you stuck, etc.)?
3. What are some actions you can take to help you surrender the situations or thoughts that prevent you from moving forward?
4. What is one thing you can name today that you are ready to surrender?

Practicing Jesus' 7 Last Words

Choose one (or more) of the following activity options to do this week as you consider surrender.

Songs of surrender: To surrender is an act of worship when you relinquish something you hold very dear (an item, a decision, a dream, a plan, etc.) to God. Listen to the words of the song "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,"¹³ and consider what it means to surrender yourself to God.

Skiping stones: Find enough rocks for each person in your household or devotional group to have at least one. Write down something on the rock that you need to surrender to God (a plan, a hope, your time, etc.). Go to the nearest body of water and skip the rocks out into the lake, ocean, or river. As you do, pray about surrender.





Closing Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

