

Panoramic of the Passion Week

John 10:14-18

I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord

Introduction: One of the favorite vacation moments we have as a family is driving through the Wawona Tunnel on the road into the Yosemite floor and into the tunnel view overlook. We drive in the morning, so the sun is still low in the sky and the contrast of the dark, myopic tunnel gives way to the breathtaking contrast of the view of Half-Dome and El Capitan. But as awe inspiring as this view is, it is said (and some of you can confirm) that the view from Glacier Point actually provides a more spectacular view since the scope is broader, giving one a broader **panoramic view of the valley floor**, giving a greater perspective of the whole, as opposed to looking up at the massive monuments from below. High elevation brings new perspective.

Now my wife may argue that the tunnel view is the best since there is nostalgia attached, as well as the fact that we haven't actually gone to the other, but the point is: *both views are fantastic and see some of the same iconic landmarks, both are impressive, and both add to the overall appreciation.*

That is our goal this morning, to look at the Easter story of the resurrection through a panorama of the Passion week, eight days that changed the world. On **Palm Sunday**, Jesus entered into Jerusalem and was received with *messianic fervor*, but by **Good Friday**, the tone had changed and the shouts had moved to *crucify Him*. We want to look at the first **six days** of this week from a high elevation rather than examining every detail. In doing this, we will see and appreciate the **person and work of Jesus even more**, as well as the greatness of the plan of God in reaching down to humanity to save us from Himself, for Himself, and by Himself, to His glory and our ultimate good. Let's start with this panorama with some perspective points from **John 10:14-18**:

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

There are **three key points here that will give us anchor points in the passion week**:

1. **Jesus laid down His life willingly, meaning NO ONE took it from Him** – Jesus was faithful to uphold the glory of the Father and to be obedient to Him, and throughout His life and death, He was in control of every action. All of the duplicitous and insidious plots against Him could not thwart even one of detail of God's redemptive plan. We see Jesus' deity & humanity on display throughout.
2. **Jesus died for His own** (including 'other sheep' who would be added, which is good news for us) – Throughout the entirety of the Passion week, Jesus drove the Jewish people of the nation to a decision point – follow Him in faith driven allegiance, which included turning from the works driven religious system of the present leaders – or not. But there was, and IS, no middle ground with Jesus. He is either our **Lord and Savior, or not.**

3. **Death was the only path to restore and reconcile His own** – Jesus’ ultimate death and resurrection was NOT the result of envy and pride, but of God perfect plan of satisfying God’s righteousness and wrath so that He could look on those who had sinned and could welcome them as His own. Death was the goal, but not the end. Death was necessary, but it was not final. And that is why we celebrate the scandalous nature of the cross.

Sunday - Triumphal Entry: *Messiah is Presented*

The build-up to Palm Sunday took place 3 ½ months earlier, where John 10 tells us that at the Feast of Dedication (Winter), He claimed that He and God the Father were one, which prompted the crowd to try to stone Him. Undeterred, Jesus then claimed the Father was in Him and “I am in the Father”, which led to them seeking to arrest Him, sending Jesus across the Jordan River to Perea since He was now a fugitive. The importance of knowing this is in the fact that the events of the **Passion week did not just happen through Jesus’ deity and working some sort of miracle, but we see how He always stayed one step ahead of any duplicitous plan in His humanity.** When He got news that Lazarus had died, he travelled back to Bethany (John 11), with at least one disciple thinking this was a suicide mission. After raising Lazarus, many believed (11:44), which elicited a swift reaction from the religious leaders:

*“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, **and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**” (11:48)*

Even Pontius Pilate knew the religious leadership were **envious of Jesus’ notoriety** (Matt. 27:18), and their envious pride led them to declare:

So from that day on they made plans to put him to death (11:53)

They did not have noble or magnanimous intentions, but we know that they loved the glory that comes from men rather than God (John 12:43). So Jesus could not simply operate in the open, but had to be selective and strategic. When He entered into Jerusalem with the praise and acclaim of the thousands that were there, it gave him cover. After raising Lazarus from the dead, He had gone to Ephraim, north of Judea, and then to Galilee where he joined up with families travelling down to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (Luke 17:11). Along the way He taught and did miracles, and as the throng crossed the Jordan River to enter the city, He stayed before the Sabbath (John 12:1) in Bethany, a city just a couple of miles away where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus had a house. As the crowds entered the city, the question lingered: *is He coming?* (John 11:56), to which the reply would have been: He’s coming, and it’ll be Sunday (after the coming out of Shabbat). **Now a few key things to remember about Palm Sunday:**

1. **Jesus acted EXPLICITLY in a messianic way** – He had NOT done this in His earthly ministry, often having people NOT share His identity and speaking in parables, since it was not the time. But when He entered Jerusalem that day, he let the crowds roar! They spoke and sang from the Hallel Psalm 118:25-26, **“Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”** Hosanna simply means “save us now”, and they recognized that Jesus was identifying as the Davidic king (Mark 11:10) while riding the mule of a king (Zech. 9:9; 1 Kings 1:32-40).
2. **He came to give a TRUE OFFER to Israel** – *“I will be your king, but you must take me on my terms”*. This will be evident in the next couple of days
3. **He utterly confused the DISCIPLES** – This would have been the high point for them, as Jesus had the praise of the people, had the religious leaders impotent, could raise the dead, and was

primed to BRING THE KINGDOM. They would continue to argue about their own greatness in the Kingdom (Luke 22:24-28), missing the point of following Jesus.

Mark tells us that Jesus went up to Temple, looked around, and went back to Bethany (Mark 11:11), setting the stage for the all-important events of Monday and Tuesday.

Monday/Tuesday: Possessing the Temple: *Messiah is Proclaimed*

Jesus put His messianic or kingly authority on display, leaving no doubt to His identity and putting a fork in the road for all who would follow Him. In order to understand **what He was doing**, we have to understand the players involved:

Sadducees – This would have made up the *priests*, including the chief priests, and when you think Sadducee think: **TEMPLE**. They ruled the Temple because they had paid Rome for the right to run it and to charge the people a “*Temple Tax*”, which every Israelite had to pay and then often pay again in coming to the feasts in the Temple. Here is where they ripped the people off, since they would have to *exchange* money from their Jewish denomination to that of the Roman coinage, and would get ripped off in the transaction. They ran the offerings, and brought in shepherds into the court of the Gentiles to sell their sheep. The people **disdained** this class, but they possessed much power.

Scribes – Experts in the Law, and would function in the synagogues as teachers and copiers of the Law.

Pharisees – A group that existed and perpetuated throughout the diaspora, they were hugely influential **among the people**. They were experts in KEEPING THE LAW, and had become the measure of righteousness. They functioned in the **synagogue**, something every village, town, or city would have had, and was their *church, community center, social hub, and cultural lifeline*. Pharisees were both **revered and feared** by the people, since they could “*PUT PEOPLE OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE*” (John 9:22; 12:42). The Pharisees HATED Rome and fought for the purity of the Law, but they LOVED the acclaim, praise, and power they had over the people (Matt. 23), ultimately showing themselves to be hypocrites.

On Monday, Jesus cleansed and possessed the Temple for a second time in His ministry (the first in John 2:13-17), and so controlled it, He “would not allow anyone to carry anything through it” (Mark 11:16) This was because of the abject wickedness and thievery that went on, but let me pose one other thought. In order for Jesus to be crucified, He had to solidify the whole of Jewish leadership against Him, and in cleansing the Temple, He absolutely devastated the **Sadducees**, who now *feared and sought a way to destroy Him* (Mark 11:18).

On Tuesday, Jesus entered into debate with these groups, consistently putting them to silence (“*render to Caesars the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’...and they marveled-* Matt. 22:21-22). He was asked questions about **paying taxes, the resurrection, by whose authority He did things, and the greatest commandment**, and each time, He had a drop the mic moment. In this culture, winning an open debate was equivalent to winning a fist fight (or dance-off to the younger generation) on the playground. All of this culminated in His **excoriating WOE’S against the Pharisees in Matthew 23**, a take the paint of the walls, start crying and put your head down type of takedown. This now solidified the Pharisee’s against Him, and this all culminated in **two things**:

- 1) **The priests and elders got with Caiaphas** (High Priest), and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus **by stealth and kill Him** (Matt. 26:3). They only needed to find an opportunity, which came in a few hours from Judas (Matt. 26:14-16)

- 2) **Jesus was revealing the people's true faith and allegiance** – This is vitally important. Saving faith has to be more than mental understanding or appreciation. The people shouted for Jesus as their **king when they liked what they thought He would bring** – but because of fear they were willing to turn away. Jesus was driving them to the point He had made early – *“unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisee's, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:20). They had to **turn from their system of works righteousness and follow Him, being willing to be put out of the synagogue and have life be changed**. This is absolutely the same call today. Jesus is NOT just a Savior, but our LORD and KING (1 Cor. 12:3). There is no third way or middle ground. One is either willing to turn from sin to follow Jesus, or have chosen to stay in rebellion and sin.

Thursday: Upper Room: Messiah is Prepared

We will spend time here a bit on Friday night this week, but remember Judas brokers a deal to give Jesus up to the Sanhedrin, delivering Him to them *“in the absence of the crowd”* (Luke 22:6) On Wednesday Jesus would have made arrangements to find a borrowed room to keep the Passover supper with the disciples, and kept the information hidden so Judas would not know. As the supper was going on, Judas knew he had an opportunity, so slipped out of the meal (John 13:30)¹ Jesus left the upper room to spend the last hour praying with His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, which would have crossed the Kidron Valley (where the lambs blood from the Temple had turned it red) to a hobby farm that they had been to many times. Judas probably brought the soldiers to the upper room, but finding it empty, knew where Jesus had gone. The kiss was to identify Jesus to the Roman soldiers, and Jesus went willingly, even telling Peter to put his ceremonial knife down.

Friday: Trial & Crucifixion: Messiah is Perfected

After Judas delivered Jesus up to the Sanhedrin² on Thursday night, there was a mad scramble to get Jesus on the cross before the dawn broke, since they still feared the people and wanted to get the deed done before they would celebrate Passover. They had to have a formal charge brought against Him so that the waiting Pilate could have grounds to put Him to death. Let's quickly trace the narrative of these 6 phases or stages of Jesus' trial:

3 Phases of Jewish Trial

- **1st** - Before Annas, the Father in Law of Caiaphas (John 18:13-24) - not much accomplished, except Peter is recognized in the courtyard - Jesus is transferred to Caiaphas
- **2nd** - Before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54) - False witnesses brought to bear false witness, but no two witnesses could agree; **Are you the Christ?** (a messianic term - in other words, are you saying you are king and not Caesar). Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of Man from Psalm 110:1; they tear their clothes in indignity calling Him a blasphemer (between the 2nd and 3rd trial - Peter denies)

¹ Judas was in charge of the money (like the group Treasurer), but was a thief (John 12:6), feigning indignation of spending money on perfume for anointing Jesus' body instead of the poor, but he cared nothing about the poor. Judas gave himself over to sin (Matt. 26:14), since sin makes us stupid, and he loved his sin more than the truth he'd been exposed to for all these years.

² Sanhedrin was made up of 70 Jewish leaders comprised of both **Sadducees and Pharisees**, who hated each other. Trying to get them to agree was equivalent to having far right and left politicians work together in our US system today.

- **3rd** - Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71) - *Are you the Christ?* Again quotes Psalm 110:1, I am the Son of Man. *Are you the Son of God, then?* It is as you say (Yes I am) - *What further testimony do we need???*!!! Notice that Jesus wanted to be identified clearly as the Son of God and THAT is why He was condemned. (after this, Judas hangs himself - Matt. 27:3-10)

These trials were **illegal, done out of envy** (Matt. 27:18), **and showed the cafeteria morality that this false religion stood for** (wouldn't eat the Passover before this, but were willing to bring false witness and kill an innocent man)

3 Phases of Gentile Trial

- **1st** phase - Pilate (Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38) - Finds no fault except blasphemy (which he didn't care about). Remembers He's from Galilee and Herod Antipas is in town, sends Jesus to him
- **2nd** phase - Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12) - Herod tries to make Jesus dance, makes sport of Him, but Jesus says nothing and is sent back to Pilate
- **3rd** phase - Pilate (Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16) - Pilate tries like crazy to NOT put Jesus to death. Jesus reassured Pilate that the one who delivered Him (Caiaphas) had greater sin (John 19:11).

One of the most appalling statements that the Chief Priests made at the end: *"We have no king but Caesar!"* (John 19:15) a total and utter selling out of their people and beliefs. Jesus was such a threat to their own **independence and control** they were willing to prostitute themselves to get Him on the cross.

What was the nature of crucifixion?

Rome had perfected this method of death through years of practice. It created a message for any and all who would even think or entertain the idea of rebellion. It was not just to kill the seditionist, but to put down sedition.

- **CRUEL** - Before being nailed by feet and hands, the prisoner was often scourged, which would open up deep wounds on the back side of the victim. Like Jesus, convicted felons would carry their own cross beam a distance, which was made of wood, splintering into the gashes opened up. On the cross, within a few minutes the condemned would have to lift himself up to get a breath, each time creating the shocking and shooting pain throughout the body.
- **LINGERING** - A person could live for days in agony as the reflex to fight for life kicked in and the competition against death was waged. The cross maximized pain, for the longest length of time to create the greatest affect for the people.
- **PUBLIC** - Crosses would be set up at the gates of the city where commerce would continue, crowds would gather, and even children would be exposed. For days the dying would be seen and heard, as blood ran down and punishment was poured out. Rome wanted everyone to see what would happen if insurrection was your goal. They were in constant fear that the populous, especially the majority of the slave class would unite and rebel.
- **CERTIFIABLE** - Other forms of corporal punishment happened in the Bible, particularly stoning. But these were not always 100% effective, like when Paul was stoned, left for dead, but got up and went back into the city (Acts 14:19-20). Crucifixion was accurate and final. In fact, if a prisoner was taken down too early and still breathed, the soldiers on duty would face the wrath of death. The condemned were taken down **ONLY** when they were completely dead (not mostly dead, which is slightly alive).

Jesus was lifted up on the cross, publically seen and executed, so that all those who would look upon Him would be saved.

As Jesus was nailed to the cross for the first three hours, He interacted with His mother and the thieves next to Him ("*Father forgive; today you'll be with me; woman, behold your son*"). **But I want to take you to the last three hours:**

"And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried in a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is **My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?** Matthew 27:46

"When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished**", and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." John 19:30

At about **noon (the ninth hour) darkness covered the land**. It was probably not pitch black, but as if a curtain of gray had to cover this gloriously horrendous scene. For three hours Jesus endured what He had dreaded in His humanity (see John 12:27; Luke 22:44). What happened in this time is not only a **mystery**, but is also the **content of our salvation**:

- **Jesus experienced death** - The death that we all face is not merely physical. In fact, we have already seen those who faced physical death could be raised again by a word (Lazarus, come forward). But this is really a secondary result. The main problem of death is a spiritual death, a separation of our soul from body. Remember when Adam sinned, he experienced death by being separated from God, while facing physical death centuries later. There is only one way in which spiritual death could be cured, and that is the substitutionary death of another.
- **Jesus became sin** - "For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus lived the life that we could never live so that God could treat Him the way we deserved. God's wrath was poured on Christ in totality of the debt we owed. In three hours, God exhausted His wrath to the last drop on Christ so that He was satisfied, looking no longer at our sin but at Christ's righteousness.
- **Jesus was judicially dis-fellowshipped from the Father** - Jesus experienced alienation from the Father, becoming a curse and bearing our sin. This caused Him to cry out that which echoes into the expanse of the universe – "*My God, why have you forsaken me??!!*" (Matt. 27:46)

As Jesus' physical condition reached its conclusion, he declared His thirst, from a physical condition that would have dehydrated Him and caused His tongue to swell and stick to the roof of His mouth. Taking the bitter sponge full of sour wine, He whet His lips enough to utter the words, "**IT IS FINISHED. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit** (a quotation application of Psalm 31:5). It is finished! The veil that separated the people from God was rent in two, meaning that no longer would there need to be the blood of animals shed, no longer a priest who would be a go between, no longer anything other than the blood of Christ poured out for us to make us acceptable to God. **It is finished! It was enough! It was forever! It was accomplished completely! The propitiation was accepted** (1 John 2:2)!

No more **earning**, no more **fearing**, no more **shame**, no more **waiting**. No more half-hearted, middle of the road commitment. **It is finished** means we can come to Christ NOW, and begin life in Him with delight, hope and joy...but only on His terms.