



## THIS WEEK'S PONDERING

APRIL 1, 2021



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**CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

*“For as Jonah was three days and three nights  
in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man  
will be three days and three nights in the  
heart of the earth.” Matthew 12:40*

Today is the start of those “three days” of which our Lord spoke. Sometimes referred to as the “Triduum”, Holy Week’s “holiest days” are those from sundown on Thursday to sunrise on Sunday – or in the Jewish reckoning of things, with days beginning at sunset – three days and three nights. Jonah was in the belly of a big fish both to humble him and to provide for the salvation of a city called Nineveh. At the preaching of Jonah, after he was released from his three days in the dark recesses of this rather large mammal – the people of Nineveh, we are told, to a person repented and believed in God. It’s quite a story. But Jesus, of all of the Old Testament prophets he could have selected, chose Jonah, the one who seems like the most reluctant, most incapable, to represent how only after he (Jesus) was humbled by his suffering would his preaching take wings.

So I encourage you to participate in the services marking these three days – each unique in its emphasis. Maundy Thursday presents to us two “mandatums” (mandates...commands), the first of which is relayed in John 13 – “a new command I give you ... love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another.” The second is “take and eat, this is my body given for you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink it, do so in remembrance of me.” (Matthew, Mark and Luke, plus I Corinthians 11 relay these words to us). We tend to emphasize the latter, since we associate Maundy Thursday with our Lord’s meal “on the night he was betrayed.” It’s quite clear, however, that John, who only mentions the meal briefly, was struck more by the example of servant love Jesus displayed in the washing of his disciple’s feet as the meal was being served.

I mention this because the events of Thursday (Jesus “humbling himself” in the manner he did at the meal and being humbled by his latter betrayal and denial) begins the “three days” of our Lord’s suffering. This can’t all that easily be separated from his trial and crucifixion on Friday – even if those events, for obvious reasons, take on more weight both because of their theological significance and simply the drama of the events as told. What Jesus did on Thursday is no less a “sign” of his divinity than what he did on Friday. And as my friend and mentor Pastor Harry Wendt likes to tell us – the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday is, besides being the foundation of our hope for eternal life,

simultaneously it is God the Father's ratification of the servant life Jesus lived. From the cross Jesus said, "Father forgive them". Yes, but from the empty tomb God said, "I want this sort of life, that was in my Son, to continue."

To "earn a hearing" for the gospel of grace and the "mandatum" of how we are to live, Jesus, like Jonah, was humbled – and then some. But as we read in our lesson from the start of Holy Week, Palm Sunday's New Testament reading from Philippians 2:5-11, "this is the mind God wants us to have, that was in Christ Jesus ... who chose the servant life even if he was a King." Nothing wins a hearing for the gospel more than when servants of the servant king love one another as we have been loved.

I hope you will enter these three days and worship along with your King and forgiver.

Because of a cross,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ken Nelson".

Pastor Ken Nelson