

The Passion Story
Sunday, April 10, 2025

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

Jesus' ministry began not at his birth, nor in his youth, but it began when John the Baptist came into the desert. He announced to the people the coming of God's kingdom and urged them to repent and be baptized. At that time Jesus came from Nazareth to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. And "as soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased." (Mark 1:10-11)

Hymn: *"What Was Your Vow and Vision"* Insert (vs 1,2)

Jesus Calls His Disciples

Jesus entered the wilderness, reflecting on the meaning and purpose and goal for his ministry. And when he returned, filled with the Spirit, he began to proclaim "the kingdom of God has come near."

As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, catching fish with a net. Jesus called out to them "Follow me and I will teach you to catch people." At once they dropped their nets, and followed him. Going a little farther, Jesus saw two more brothers, James and John. As soon as he saw them, he called to them; and they followed him. (Mark 1:16-19)

These were not the only people Jesus invited to be his followers. He invited all who would hear him to be his disciples, and to follow him in a way they could hardly imagine. "If any of you want to be my followers, you must renounce yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me". (Mark 8:34)

Hymn: *"The Summons"* Insert (vs 1,2,4)

Jesus' Ministry

With his disciples, Jesus traveled throughout the region offering people comfort, support and guidance. He healed, he performed signs and wonders, he taught with truth and wisdom. His love and compassion drew many to him, yet his ministry also drew conflict. Often it was the religious leaders who struggled to accept his words and acknowledge his authority. Yet even when he faced resistance to his way, he held deep compassion for them.

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets! You stone those who are sent to you! How often I wanted to gather your children, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you refuse!" (Luke 13:34)

Hymn: *"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"* Black #23 (verse 1)

The Triumphal Entry

As Jesus' opposition grew, so also his fame and popularity grew. People longed for a Messiah who would come and claim his rightful place as their king. So, when Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover, many people gathered palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting...

“Praise God! He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One! God bless the coming kingdom of our ancestor David. Praise God in the highest heaven. (Mark 11:9-10)

Hymn: *“A Cheering, Chanting, Dizzy Crowd”* Insert (vs 1,4)

Last Supper

After His triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus taught in the temple, challenging the Scribes and the Pharisees. And as the day of the Passover drew near, they began looking for a way to covertly arrest him and put him to death. And Judas Iscariot willingly complied with their plans.

Then on the first day of the feast, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, he sent his disciples to prepare the Passover feast. That evening they gathered at a table in an upper room and Jesus said:

“With all my heart I have longed to eat this Passover with you before the time comes for me to suffer. Believe me, I shall not eat the Passover again until all that it means is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 22:14-15)

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to his followers and said, “Take this bread and eat it; this is my body.” Then he took a cup; and after giving thanks, he gave it to them. ‘Drink from this, all of you,’ he said “this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mt 26:26, 28.) “When you do this, remember me.” (Luke 22:19)

Hymn: *“According to Thy Gracious Word”* Bue #321 (vs 1,3)

In The Garden

After the Passover meal, Jesus and the disciples moved from the upper room to a nearby garden called Gethsemane. There he asked his disciples to pray as he went deeper into the garden. He began to be distressed and agitated, then he threw himself on the ground...

“Father, my Father!” he kept praying, “You can do all things. Take this cup of suffering away from me. But let your will be done rather than mine. (Mark 14:36)

Hymn: *“Journey to Gethsemane”* Black # 219 (verse 1)

The Trial

In the dark of the night, as Jesus finished praying, a group of the temple guards entered the garden. They were led by his disciple Judas, who betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. There they arrested him and brought him to the High Priest, to the court of the temple to face his accusers. And while he was being questioned Peter was asked if he had been Jesus' disciple. He replied "I do not know what you are talking about, I swear I never knew the man." (Luke 22:60) Three times he was questioned, and three times he denied Jesus. Then Christ turned around and looked straight at Peter. Realizing what had happened Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

Hymn:

"Bitter Was the Night"

Insert (vs 1, 3,7)

The Crucifixion

After being condemned by the religious leaders Jesus was brought to the Roman governor, Pilate, for execution. Now at the Passover festival, he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone whom they wanted. A man named Barrabas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during an uprising. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to follow this custom. He asked them "Do you want me to set free the one you call the King of the Jews?" (Mark 15:9) But the religious leaders had stirred up the crowds and they shouted "Crucify him! Crucify him!! Crucify him!!!" (Luke 23:21)

Responding for the crowd's cries for crucifixion, Pilate gave the order for Jesus to be executed. The soldiers showed no mercy as they stripped him and beat him; then they laid a heavy wooden cross on his back. Jesus began the slow and painful walk to Calvary. Weakened by the brutality Jesus fell, so they conscripted a passer-by to carry his cross as they led him to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull. There they crucified him with two other criminals, one on either side, with Jesus between them. They and the crowds surrounding him mocked him. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on his cross. It read, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (John 19:19)

Hymn:

"O Sacred Head Now Wounded"

Blue #178 (vs 1,3)

The Death

The sky grew dark as the sounds of a gruesome crucifixion echoed across the rocky landscape. Even in his fragile moments of life, Jesus loved those he had come to save. These final precious phrases reveal a heart of mercy and a message of hope for the world. No words of complaining or condemnation, no words of bitterness or regret...one last expression of love.

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do". (Luke 23:34)

And he gave himself to the God's final purpose.

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

Then, one last cry...

“It is finished...” (John 19:30)

Hymn:

“Were You There?”

Blue #181 (vs 1)

Reflection

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, what whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:16) This is the love of God. He spread out his arms in life, in death, and beyond death, in order to embrace us in this, our life. He poured himself out so that he might fill us with the gift of his everlasting life. Jesus is the gift and glory of God. Jesus is our hope, our strength and our song. He has become our salvation.