

Easter – in a time like this

5-12 April 2020

This year we are celebrating Easter in our homes – alone or maybe with close family. For some it means long days on their own, for others long days with little ones or teenagers, for others long days with adult children and maybe even grandchildren. No matter who you are with, this is an invitation to experience the Easter week like never before. May the ideas and suggestions here stimulate your own thinking about Easter and may you be creative as you improvise and set up your own table of remembrance.

Here is what you will need to do/know in preparation:

- The devotions start on Palm Sunday (4/5/20) and there is one for each day until Easter Sunday (4/12/20)
- Choose a suitable corner in your house where you can gather each day to spend time with some of these ideas
- Decide on a time and make sure everybody gets involved – also in preparing for the day's devotional. Set aside at least 30 minutes.
- See if you can gather all the items as needed OR improvise and replace with what you have or what you think is suitable for the moment.
- This is the basis of what you will need:
 - A dark coloured table cloth
 - A wooden cross
 - A hammer and 6 nails
 - A vase for flowers (flowers can be fresh or made with paper...)
 - One white candle
 - A Bible
 - A map or globe
- Make a playlist or choose your favourite Easter music for singing or just listening
- As a family you can decide to fast of something for this whole week or only on the day it is mentioned.
- Please change and adapt these ideas to suit the specific needs of your family

Day 1: Palm Sunday, 5 April 2020

Preparations:

- Put one flower in the vase
- Make sure every member of the family has a “palm branch”
- Make 6 cards each with an emoji to represent basic emotions like happy, sad, angry, scared, surprised and bored...

When you gather:

1. Light the candle as a symbol of Jesus' presence. A prayer can be said.
2. Give everybody a moment to look at the emoji cards and choose one that best represent their feelings at the moment. Those who would like to, can share it with the others. Listen attentively, but don't respond – and especially not with advice. Make sure everybody feels safe and thank them for being vulnerable.
3. Read Mat 21:1-11. If there are children, give them the opportunity to act out the story while you read it for a second time. You can even have towels and scarfs available to make it more real. This can be great fun for everybody (you can even assign somebody to be the donkey...). After the second reading and the drama everybody can join the crowd, singing praise songs to the King.
4. Chat about the joy of this event and then reflect on how these same people were shouting: “Crucify Him!” only days later. How is that possible? Can it be that they were deeply disappointed because their expectation of the King was crushed by His arrest and trial? What does it mean for us when we say Jesus is King?
5. Let's talk about our emotions and how they change from moment to moment... even how we feel about ourselves, each other and God. Discuss the fact that it is normal and that we need to have grace with ourselves and each other.
6. Read Ps 63:3 as a reminder of how God's love never changes.
7. Use the map/globe to find Jerusalem where all of this happened about 2000 years ago. Talk a bit the Middle East and all the tension there amongst the countries. Pray for a new discovery of God's unchanging love for all of them and that people will start sharing that with each other.



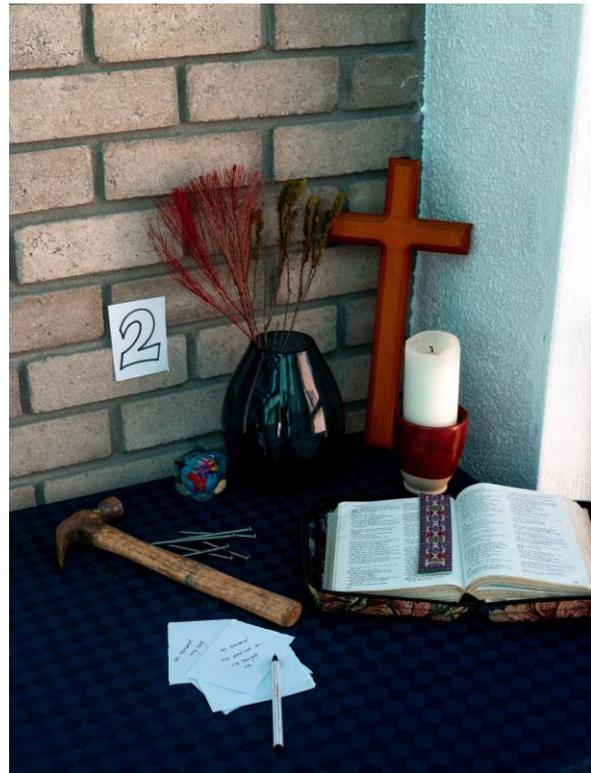
Day 2: Monday, 6 April 2020

Preparation:

- Listen to music while getting ready.
- Add a second flower to the vase.
- Make a pack of cards (at least 3 for each family member) for everybody to write things on that causes unhappiness in the house – think about things like saying mean things to somebody, teasing, not doing a chore etc Just write one thing per card, make sure there are doubles and also a few empty cards. You can also draw pictures if there are little ones who cannot read.

When you gather:

1. Light the candle. Let somebody else do it this time and give an opportunity for a prayer.
2. Hand out 3 cards for every person. The oldest can start and then you move clockwise. The first player puts a card in the middle, face up. If another player has the same card, he shouts “SNAP!” and slam his card on top of the first one. If the first player succeeded to withdraw his card quick enough, the player of the second card must take the turn and answer the following questions regarding the situation described on his card.
Has this happened to you before?
How did it feel?
Have you forgiven the person yet?
If the first player was not quick enough to withdraw his card, he must answer the questions. Play continues clockwise. If the card is blank, the player must act out an animal and the group guesses. The player who gets rid of all his cards first, is the winner. The group can decide on a prize beforehand.
3. Read Luke 23:13-25 and 32-34. Chat about what happened here and how it must have felt to be treated like this when you’re completely innocent. Think about the emotional and physical pain Jesus had to endure. And then reflect on His response in verse 34.
4. Chat about our responses when we are hurt. How can we change the ways we interact to make the world a better place for everybody...and how about forgiving one another... is that easy and is it hard to talk about forgiveness?
5. Spend a moment in quiet prayer or reflection. Is there a hurt inside that you haven’t dealt with? Is there somebody you need to forgive or do you maybe need to ask for forgiveness? Talk to the Lord and ask Him to help you also forgive yourself for ways you could have wronged other people.
6. Read Eph 4:32 as a reminder of God’s complete forgiveness.
7. Take a look at the map/globe and find areas where there are wars raging at the moment. Pray for the people living there and especially for the leaders – that they will stop strategizing about revenge and violence. Pray that they will come to know God’s unconditional love and change the focus to creating better relationships.



Day 3: Tuesday, 7 April 2020

Preparation:

- Listen to your choice of music while doing the preparations.
- Add a third flower to the vase.
- Make a crown of thorns and a plaque that reads, " King of the Jews."

When you gather:

1. Light the candle.
2. Grab a fake microphone and interview different people on their view of the Kingdom – how it changes you if you are a follower of Jesus and choose to live in His Kingdom here on earth.
3. Read Mat 27:35-44 and Luke 23:39-43. Talk through what happened here. While everybody is accusing Him falsely, attacking Him physically and emotionally, Jesus stays calm, loving and focussed on the reason He came to the world. What does that tell us about God's Kingdom here on earth and what it can look like? What will happen if we also choose for more love and less violence in our interactions with ourselves and other people?
4. Read Luke 10:27 and try to memorize it with appropriate movements. What does this explanation of the Kingdom help us to understand it better?
5. Hang the crown of thorns on the cross and add the plaque.
6. Join hands while somebody (or everybody) prays the Lord's Prayer.
7. Look at some areas on the map/globe that are highly populated. Discuss the effect people and their way of life has on the environment. What does it mean to let God's kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven? How can we make a positive contribution? Maybe you can spend some time today watching documentary about environmental health and/or make plans to improve recycling in your home.



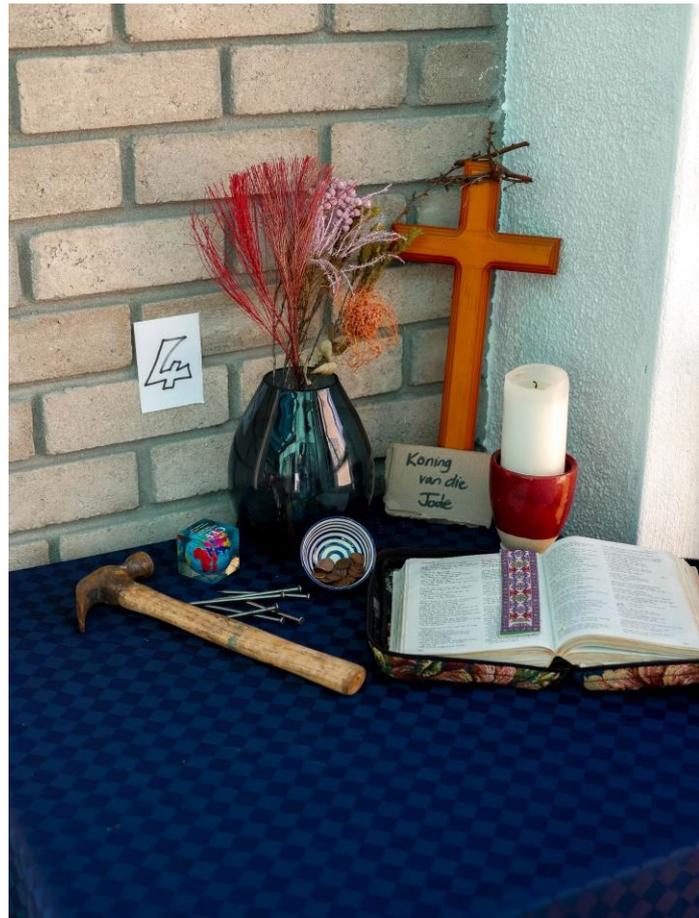
Day 4: Wednesday, 8 April 2020

Preparation:

- Listen to your choice of music while doing the preparations.
- Add a fourth flower to the vase.
- Put about 30 coins in a small dish and add it to the table.

When you gather:

1. Make the room as dark as possible and sit quietly while somebody reads Mat 27:45 and 46. Talk about times when you were alone and afraid.
2. Light the candle while reading Hebr 13:5b and 6.
3. Read Mat 26:14-16, 31-35 and 44-56. Take a moment after each section to ask simple questions e.g. what is happening, how do you think Jesus felt and how does it make you feel?
4. Allow time for somebody to share a situation from their own life where they felt disappointed, betrayed or abandoned. When you share, you can take a coin from the dish, hold it in your hand and then put it down at the cross when you're done. You can also do this while listening to somebody share or even if you want to acknowledge that you have felt that way without sharing the details.
5. In Jesus' words in Mat 27:45 and 46 we can hear how He felt abandoned by God in that moment. He gave Himself so completely to us and went to that place of total aloneness and desolation, so that when we feel that way, we can know He is right there with us. He really knows and understands what it feels like.
6. Read John 3:16 as a reminder of how much God loves you and every other person on this earth.
7. Think about somebody you know who is alone in this time and cannot visit their loved ones. Decide what you can do today to share God's love with that person (-s) and help them feel His presence even where they are alone. Pray for people across the world who are experiencing loneliness and that there will be others reaching out to them.



Day 5: Thursday, 9 April 2020

Preparation:

- Listen to music that encourage contemplation.
- Add a fifth flower to the vase.
- Take some time today to go through rooms and closets to gather those things that are not being used anymore. Put it in or near your corner.
- Prepare to eat a simple meal when you gather for your devotion.
- Be ready with a bowl with warm soapy water and one or two towels for the washing of feet.

When you gather:

1. Light the candle and read Ps 23.
2. Read John 13:1-17. Wash each other's feet and enjoy your meal together (maybe you can do it in the Biblical times' style by sitting on the ground or at a low table).
3. Talk about how it felt to allow somebody else to wash your feet and how it felt to do it for each other. What are all the possible things Jesus wanted His disciples to experience here? How can we make other people feel this without actually washing their feet?
4. Read Mark 14:32-39. What can we learn from the way Jesus dealt with fear and pain. Is this maybe another way of showing God's love to others:
5. Find China on the map/globe – look for the city of Wuhan if possible. Also find Italy, Spain and the USA. All these countries were severely impacted by the Corona virus. Many people got sick and many died. Spend a few moments in silence to think about those suffering pain and loss. Allow for a prayer or two.
6. Discuss where you can take the stuff you collected today to be a blessing for those in need.



Day 6: Friday, 10 April 2020

Preparation:

- Listen to music that encourage contemplation.
- Add a sixth flower to the vase.
- Light the candle early.
- Put the elements of communion on the table.
- Add some sheets of paper and coloured pencils or markers
- You can consider to all wear something red today.

When you gather:

1. Read John 19:28-42.
2. Blow the candle out.
3. Read Mark 14:22-26 while you use communion together.
4. Talk about what it means to you that Jesus died during the Passover in Jerusalem that day. Consider the following:
 - the cross is where God gave Himself to the world
 - the cross is where God demonstrated that each and everyone is forgiven
 - the cross is where God Himself suffered and died so that nobody ever has to do it alone
5. Choose a place on the map/globe where people are suffering and thank God that He is with them in their pain. Thank Him for also being with you in your struggles.
6. Listen to music while everybody tries to express their feelings and thoughts on paper – either through drawing or writing...



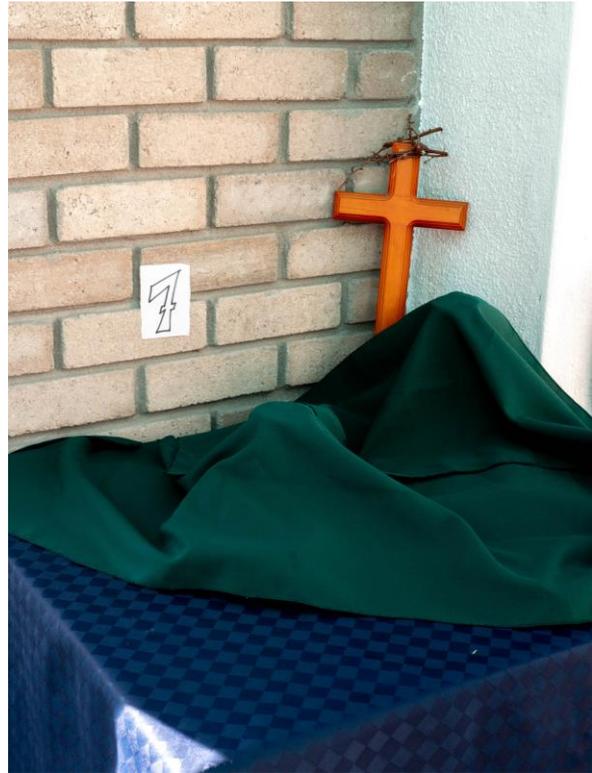
Day 7: Saturday, 11 April 2020

Preparation:

- Take away the flowers and cover the table with a dark cloth.
- Everybody can choose to fast of something for the day – a certain food/habit, one or all of the meals, screentime etc
- Read Eph 2 and Phil 4:4-9 on your own time today

When you gather:

1. Do not light the candle.
2. Talk about what you read in Paul's letters concerning the meaning of Jesus' death. How does it affect the way we think about ourselves and others? What does it mean for our daily choices and our relationships in general? Can life be lived differently because of the events during that Passover so long ago?
3. Talk about people who might need to be encouraged in this. Spend some time after you've done nu 4, to write letters or make cards of encouragement and hope to them.
4. Read John 10:10b and 16:33 while everybody sits with their eyes closed. Conclude with a prayer.



Day 8: Sunday, 12 April 2020

Preparation:

- Remove everything and cover the table with a white cloth.
- Put the vase back with white flowers in it.
- Put the candle, cross, globe/map and Bible back on the table.
- Plan to get up for the sunrise if you have a spot from where you can see it.

When you gather:

1. Watch the sun rise together and read Mat 28:1-10 and 16-20.
2. Light the candle.
3. Read John 8:12 and give everybody the opportunity to say how he/she is going to live with the Risen Christ. Start your sentence with, "Because He lives, I can..."
4. Work together to make a great breakfast and lay a beautiful table.
5. Listen to music that celebrates the Risen Christ and the Hope He is for the dark moment we find ourselves in as a global community.
6. Make an effort to connect with friends you would have seen at church. We need each other even more during this time.

