

Thursday Theology: Resources for Holy Week Preaching and Listening

Co-missioners,

Today we set a new record for the shortest Thursday Theology post ever. It will also be one of the meatiest posts ever. That's because we're sending you some links to items on our website that we urge you to explore between now and next Thursday. It will involve more reading than we usually summon you to.

All these links pertain to this year's forthcoming proclamation of the Passion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Palm Sunday is ten days from now. We'd like to think that pastors are already wrestling with the texts they'll be preaching on during Holy Week. For all we know some layfolk are reading ahead too so that when the days arrive for the texts to be read out in church their hearing will be sharper, deeper, and more expectant.

Here's what thoughtful hearers should be able to expect when Holy Week arrives: that whoever presumes to speak publicly about the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus will do as Peter and Paul did in their pioneer Christian preaching. They will show how these things they speak of are good news for the people they're talking to—good news from God for the sinners of 2024, to put this more sharply. In doing so they'll also give Christ crucified the credit he deserves for the unthinkable antithesis to our fate as sinners that we'll celebrate again come Easter Sunday.

HOLY WEEK



Holy Week – From Canva

If these are the goals of the preachers who read this, we recommend the following for your attention these next few days. They may help to focus your thoughts. They'll also offer substance to hearers who aren't expecting much when Holy Week gets here. We add that these items are available only on our Crossings website—where, unfortunately, they'd likely lie unnoticed if we didn't bring them to your attention.

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Item 1. Robert Bertram's "[How Our Sins Were Christ's.](#)" Here Bertram explores in meticulous detail how Luther handles the topic of Christ and sin in his Galatians commentary of 1531. This article was *The Promising Tradition*, a mimeographed theological primer for Seminex students in the mid-70s. It remains a "must read" for anyone who wonders how Christ's death addresses the problem of sin.

Item 2. "[Just How Much Jesus is Needed?](#)" So asks Ed Schroeder in

a 2006 review of a book by Stephen J. Patterson entitled *Beyond the Passion: Rethinking the Death and Life of Jesus*. Patterson's ideas, emerging from the Jesus Seminar, seem to be popular in today's mainline Protestant circles. They crop up now and then also in Lutheran discussions (think Jesus vs. Empire). Are they showing up in this year's Lutheran preaching helps too? If so, read Ed. He'll warn away from them with his typical vigor and clarity—and this for the sake of folks who in 2024 need a lot more Jesus than Patterson et al. are willing to give them.

Item 3. A reading of St. John's Passion will be featured at lots of churches on Good Friday. Will it be followed by a homily? If so, let the preacher consider a lead tossed out by Stephan K. Turnbull at our Crossings conference of 2016. In a paper entitled "Nicodemus and the New Humanity," Steve lifts up a core yet under-played issue that runs through John from start to finish and pours some fresh and bracing content into the climactic moment when Pilate presents Jesus to the baying crowds. It's worth a sermon of your own if you haven't touched on this before. See [Part One of Steve's paper](#), somewhat retitled when we posted it in Thursday Theology.

Item 4. Are this year's preaching helps suggesting that "wrath of God" is yesterday's concept, inadmissible for consideration on Good Friday, 2024 as an issue that swirls around the cross? If so take a glance at Jerry Burce's ten-year old screed on this topic, "[The Agony of the Empty Preacher](#)." As with Ed's item above, the message here too is "Think again." Or better still, "Don't let Jesus go to waste."

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For all who bear the burden of telling God's Gospel of Christ and him crucified, let us pray: "Holy Spirit, guide well!"

Peace and Joy,
The Crossings Community

**Thursday Theology: that the benefits of Christ be put to
use**

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