

## What Comes Before Easter? The Three Days

Every Sunday, we tell the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Christians, this is our central story. It is the most important story that we tell to each other, to our children, to our neighbors, and to our world. It is, in fact, the *only* story we have to tell. As the Easter hymn puts it:

If Christ who once was slain,  
not burst his three-day prison,  
our faith had been in vain.  
But now has Christ arisen,  
arisen, arisen, arisen.  
(*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* 391)

This is the story at the heart of our Sunday gatherings.

So once a year we slow down to hear this story again during what is known as “The Great Three Days” leading up to Easter Sunday: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday night. We hear again the “old, old story”, but now in greater detail and with greater reflection upon our lives.

On **Maundy Thursday** we gather in the sanctuary to remember the story of the night in which Jesus was betrayed, where he took the bread and the cup and invited his friends to eat this meal in his name. We also remember how on that same night Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to do likewise, to “love one another as I have loved you” by washing each other’s feet. (If you’d like to participate in the footwashing, please wear shoes or sandals that are easy to slip off and on.) We conclude the service by stripping the altar and the chancel of its furnishings, a symbol of Christ’s self-emptying love for the world.

On **Good Friday**, we gather in the sanctuary again at the foot of the cross and hear the entire story of Jesus’ betrayal: his trial, his crucifixion, and his burial from the Gospel of John. We marvel at the power of the crucified Lord who, even in his weakness, displayed a strength that has power to save the world.

On **Easter Vigil** we gather outside the church doors to light a new fire- a sign of the light of Christ that will never go out but will always shine in the darkness. We then move to the sanctuary and sit as “a family circle” to hear the great salvation stories of the Hebrew scriptures: Creation of the World, Crossing the Red Sea, Isaiah’s Promise of Salvation, the Valley of Dry Bones, Jonah and the Whale, and the Three Children and the Fiery Furnace. Finally, we fill the baptismal font with water, baptize individuals, hear the resurrection story of Jesus, give thanks for our daily dying and rising with Christ, eat and drink together in the Lord’s name, and sing and shout our Alleluias.

I guarantee that attending these events will deepen your faith and experience of Easter Sunday. All three services begin at 7:00pm.

See you in church.

*Pastor Nathan*