



The Pieces of Jesus' Life

Reading

[**Please provide:** three readers; musical accompaniment; hymnals and copies of the words to “We Three Kings” for attendees; three copies of the reading for the three readers.]

[This reading can be accompanied by a quilt shown in a photo on page 196; the photo of the quilt; or blue, brown, gray, white, purple, red, green, and yellow pieces of material on a black piece of material in the shape of a cross.]

Reader 1: Our Triune God’s eternal plan of salvation was for Jesus our Savior to live an earthly life. Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh and lived a conventional, human life. The big difference, of course – He lived it perfectly, without sin. This was necessary in order to be the perfect sacrifice for you and for me. Does that mean life was easier for Him? Absolutely not! It means that He had experiences just like ours which God used to piece together the perfect life, a life that would glorify God.

The first piece of Jesus’ earthly life of which we are told is the announcement of Mary’s conception.

Reader 2: *And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:35, 38).

Reader 1: Mary, as the Holy Scriptures say, “*found favor with God*” (Luke 1:30) because of His love for her. She then responded, as do we to this same love of God for us, in faithful and loving service to Him and those He places in our lives. **We will use blue to represent that piece of Jesus’ life.** It is the color of Mary’s head covering in many pictures and Christmas plays. Blue is often considered the color of purity.

Reader 3: Mary accepted God’s announcement in faith and began a very rocky journey. Being pregnant before marriage was not a path she would have chosen. It may actually have been some relief to her when she and Joseph had to leave their home and travel to Bethlehem. However, coming late in her pregnancy, it was a very inconvenient journey.

Reader 2: *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child* (Luke 2:1-5).

Reader 3: **We will use brown to represent these rocky and inconvenient paths in Jesus’ life.** We all experience times when our path is a bit rocky. It may be a journey through a job change, a

journey through sickness, a journey through divorce, or a journey through the valley of death. Our path may seem terribly rocky, but we cling to God and make it through that journey.

Sing: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” LSB 361, TLH 647, LW 59 or 60

Reader 1: Jesus was born at the end of Mary and Joseph’s inconvenient journey. And the situation didn’t get easier. There was no room for them at the inn, so His first bed was a manger.

Reader 2: *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn (Luke 2:6-7).*

Reader 1: Yes, the Savior of the World, the King of Kings, the Alpha and the Omega, God Himself, did not have anything but a manger to sleep in His first night on earth. According to historians, that manger was quite likely made out of stone. **We will use gray fabric to represent the hardness of Jesus’ life.** From the beginning He had no luxuries. Some of us may be becoming more and more familiar with “having to make do” and even as we find ourselves in those types of situations, we know that our Heavenly Father uses even these hardships “*for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28 NIV).

Sing: “Away in a Manger” LSB 364 or 365, LW 64

Reader 3: While resting in that manger, Jesus received His first visitors – shepherds.

Reader 2: *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger (Luke 2:15-16).*

Reader 3: Those first visitors were representative of the kind of people with whom Jesus would spend time throughout His life – unpopular people. No one wanted to associate with shepherds. They smelled like sheep. They spent most of their time alone with no one to talk to but the sheep. They were generally shunned by society. But they were the first to be told of the arrival of the Savior of the world.

Sing: “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” TLH 109, LW 70

Reader 3: Throughout Scripture, God demonstrates a love for the common people. He often uses them and us in mighty ways. Do you remember how the shepherds responded to meeting Jesus? How do you respond to the good news that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, born that first Christmas evening, laid in a manger, and worshipped by the shepherds?

Reader 2: *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them (Luke 2: 17-18).*

Reader 3: Having received the Good News from the angel (that the Prophets had foretold throughout all of Old Testament history), having laid their eyes on the Messiah, these shepherds now spread the Good News! **We will use white fabric to represent the fact that through Holy Spirit given faith in this little One who is laid in a manger, who would live a perfect life, die on the cross of Calvary, be raised to life again on the third day, and ascend into heaven to one day return for us, we are forgiven of all of our sins and given, already now, eternal life.** As we go through our lives, as we face lonely times and feel we're not worth much, Jesus comforts us and gives us the encouragement we need as He assures us that He is our Good Shepherd, who loves us unconditionally, accepts us as we are, and comforts us as we go through the trials and tribulations of this life, just as did the shepherds of His day.

Reader 1: The next visitors mentioned in Jesus' life were the wise men, also called the Magi. They came from the east seeking the new King.

Reader 2: *And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.* (Matthew 2:9-11).

Reader 1: The Magi came with great gifts and they were allowed to present them to Jesus. Mary and Joseph accepted the gifts. Later in life, Jesus accepted help and hospitality from others. He enjoyed the hospitality of Mary and Martha in their home. He was willing to take the lunch offered by a small boy to feed the five thousand. Did He really *need* the boy's lunch to do that? Of course not. But just imagine how that young boy felt watching what Jesus did with his offering! I am sure he felt very special as the King of kings and Lord of lords accepted and used what he had to offer. **We will use purple, the color of royalty, to represent Jesus' kingship, rejoicing in the fact that He is willing to use what we have to offer for the good of the Kingdom, both here on earth and for eternity in heaven.** Think for a moment about what a gift it is that we give to others when we accept what they offer to us instead of saying "It is not important" or "I don't need it". As we say those things, we are saying to them that what they have to offer is of little or no value and we take away from them the joy of giving.

Sing: "We Three Kings" or as an alternate, LSB 397, "As with Gladness, Men of Old"

Reader 3: Jesus had a relative named John the Baptist. They were cousins, and in their adult lives they were friends and coworkers in God's kingdom. When King Herod had John the Baptist beheaded, Jesus lost his friend. Scripture tells us of His reaction.

Reader 2: *And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus. Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself* (Matthew 14:12-13).

Reader 3: Scripture tells us that Jesus was deeply affected by John's death. He felt the need to be alone in His grief. **We will use red to represent this difficult time in Jesus' life.** He has experienced the pain of losing someone He loved. These types of times can lead us to question

God's plan in our lives. How can He possibly use this heartbreaking time for good? Why did He allow this to happen? The answers to those questions are not for us to know. For now, we can be assured that the experience will be used by God for our good.

Reader 1: I can't imagine there's anyone here who wouldn't be thrilled to meet our Lord. I picture Him as someone who would make me feel good just being near Him. But many in Jesus' life didn't understand Him. They thought He was a rebel. They did not want Him around.

Reader 2: *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).*

Reader 1: Jesus knew that the work of being a disciple would be difficult and that they would face many tough situations. He knew first-hand the difficulties that His disciples would face since He was in every way just like us, yet without sin. He knew that following Him was not easy. He knew that then, like today, there would be rejection, even at times by friends and family, because of what we believe. We're told that even Jesus' family was skeptical of Him and thought He had gone overboard. Knowing all of this, as their loving Rabbi and friend, He wanted them to be prepared.

Reader 2: *And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind" (Mark 3:21).*

Reader 1: Jesus understands what it is to be **misunderstood and to feel like an outsider**. So during those times when we don't feel like we fit in, when we're tempted to feel jealous of those on the "inside," we'll remember **the green fabric in Jesus' life**.

Sing: "What Child Is This?" LSB 370, LW 61

Reader 1: So when we feel a little "green" with envy, we'll remember how Jesus makes everyone feel welcome and how, like the pine trees of the forest, He stands tall and true for all who call upon Him.

Reader 3: Being a friend of Jesus must have been an awesome experience! I have often thought of what it must have been like to talk with Him, to listen to Him teach, and to share a laugh with Him. It's hard to understand how a friend of His could betray Him like Judas did.

Reader 2: *Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."*

While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do." Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him (Matthew 26: 45-50).

Reader 3: What could Judas have been thinking? Why would he do such a thing? Of course, our first response is always, “greed.” But I think, too, that he was a coward. He was afraid to trust God to provide for his needs, so, as we’re told in Scripture, he stole from the treasury and he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. But Judas wasn’t the only friend who didn’t always behave as a loyal friend to Jesus.

Reader 2: *Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, “This man also was with him.” But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” And a little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not.” And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, “Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed (Luke 22:56-60).*

Reader 3: Unfortunately, there are times in our lives when we are afraid to trust God, too. We don’t think we can trust Him with our lives. In some social situations, we are afraid to mention that we know Jesus and that He is the only way to heaven. We are cowards. Yet, Jesus loves us.

We will use yellow for the times in our lives when we are cowards. The yellow will remind us that, though we are weak, God’s strength will shine through. **His love for us shines like the brilliance of the sun**, which cannot be hidden. Remember how He lovingly used Peter’s denial and restoration by Jesus to help Peter grow into one of the boldest witnesses ever for Christ!

Sing: “Love Came Down at Christmas” LW 46

Reader 1: We now come to the saddest, most tragic day of Jesus’ life. None of us has suffered a day like this, but many of us have suffered through something that we feel is as close to going through hell as we ever want to be. We often ask, “Where is God?” “How could He let something like this happen?” “Why?”

Reader 2: *“My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46)*

Reader 1: **We will use black fabric to represent that dark day in Jesus’ life.** When we look at it, we’ll remember that Jesus lived through a time when His Father and ours, rejected Him, turned His back on Him, literally could not look upon Him as Jesus did not just carry our sins to the cross, but became sin for us. As we will see again in a minute in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Perhaps there have been times in our lives when we have felt rejected by God. Thankfully we were not for His words of promise and assurance to us are the same as they were to Joshua and countless other saints: *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV). Without a doubt, we can trust Him to help us through every situation.

Sing: “Silent Night, Holy Night” LSB 363, TLH 646, LW 68

Reader 3: We've talked about two very different "Silent Nights" tonight. The first is, of course, the song's initial purpose – telling of the beginning of Jesus' life on earth. The second is what the song is ultimately all about – the purpose of Jesus' life on earth. We have spanned His lifetime and looked at all the pieces. We can begin to see how those pieces worked together to form the whole fabric of His life. God took each piece and shaped it as necessary to fulfill His plan for Jesus' life. Not all of the pieces may make sense to us, why they had to happen, even though our Savior knew exactly what was involved in carrying out the eternal plan of salvation as through His perfect life, death and resurrection He won for all people forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Without a doubt, that first Good Friday evening, Jesus' friends and family were bewildered, disappointed, and discouraged, but in the end, His life was just as it needed to be – He lived perfectly so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Reader 2: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

Reader 1: The following Sunday morning, when it was discovered Jesus had risen from the dead, the pieces of His life began to make more sense. When He walked along the road to Emmaus and explained to the two men all that had happened, and later, as He walked among His disciples once again for a short time teaching them the final things they needed to know, the pieces began to come together and the picture was more complete. The pieces of Jesus' life have come together to complete God's perfect plan for our salvation [**reveal quilt or black cross with colored pieces of material on it**]. We can see:

Reader 3: The blue that represents Mary, the Mother of our Lord, who "*found favor with God*" (Luke 1:30) through His love for her.

The brown for the rocky path that she and Joseph trod to Bethlehem.

The gray represents that hard manger and the other hardships of Jesus' life.

The white represents the forgiveness of sins and eternal life that the shepherds and all those who know Jesus Christ as their Savior, receive through faith in Him.

The purple reminds us of Jesus the King and His willingness to accept gifts from others to be used in the work of the Kingdom.

The red represents Jesus' emotional pain at losing John, His friend and fellow worker in the Kingdom.

The green represents the comfort of Jesus' friendship when we feel like we are an outsider and become envious of those on the "inside."

The yellow reminds us of strength in tough times and that God's love will shine through when we have failed.

Reader 1: We can also see that the black has blended with all the other colors, just as a tragedy in a life affects all areas of it. The shadow that the black made has formed a cross. This represents how God used that tragedy in Jesus' life for the good of all. And though tragedies in our lives are never welcome, we, as believers, can be assured that God will give us the strength when needed and someday, when we see the whole picture of our lives, we will understand how they have worked in our lives.

This quilt is not finished. I would like to say it was planned that way, but, originally, it was not. However, I decided that it actually is better this way, because, even though Christ Jesus' mission is completed as He has paid the price in full to save us from sin, death and the devil, there is still work being done in each of us each day of our lives as the Holy Spirit continues His work of sanctification through the Means of Grace. Our work is not complete either as the time is now for us to continue in the work that He gives and equips us to do, namely taking advantage of the opportunities He gives to us of sharing this good news we have been studying this day as He blesses us to be His instruments to share the good news of Jesus so that many more of the lost and the erring can be brought into eternal fellowship with Him.

Reader 2: *“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away”* (Revelation 21:3-4).

Reader 1: And the beauty that He will bring then could never be captured by mere fabric!

Sing: “Joy to the World the Lord is Come” LSB 387, TLH 87, LW 53

The Pieces of Jesus' Life
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