

## *Holy Week*

When I first moved up to North Wisconsin about twenty-seven years ago, I quickly learned that there are two “holy weeks” in this part of the world. One is celebrated in the Spring (which I’ll get to in a moment). The other involves nine days each November. Sadly, more church-going people put far more energy and investment into November’s ‘holy week’ (deer season) than they do for the Holy Week that comes each Spring.

Maybe it would be good for us to remember what it is we’re doing during Holy Week, and why.

In spite of the publicity and popularity attached to Christmas, Easter is really the highest, most important festival in the Church’s year. Besides Sundays (each of which is a “little Easter”), Holy Week marks the most sacred, most important events in all of history. One third of all that is written in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) records the things that happened during this single week.

So let’s review.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, the day Jesus entered into Jerusalem accompanied by the praises of His followers. They waved palm branches and spread those branches on the road to keep down the dust as he rode into the city on a donkey. It was a royal welcome at the arrival of the king, the descendant of King David, but Jesus did not ascend to the throne or take control of the nation. Instead, He spent His days that week teaching in the Temple courts.

Fast forward to Thursday evening, when He celebrated Passover with His disciples. On that night, as the Old Testament feast drew to a close, Jesus began a New Testament feast. For the first time, He distributed His own Body and Blood, under the bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins. This He told them to do “as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” So we celebrate this Lord’s Supper every week, and with special honor on Maundy Thursday.

That night, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. There, He was betrayed, arrested, and taken to the Jewish authorities. After an illegal “trial” and conviction on Friday morning, Jesus was dragged before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Though declared innocent, Pilate illegally sentenced to Jesus to death by crucifixion.

So, on Good Friday, we listen, watch, and recall Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. Here we see the seriousness of our sin and the severity of the punishment we deserve, yet on Good Friday we also see that it is Jesus who suffered for us and for the sins of the whole world—for all people of all times and all places.

He dies, and His body is laid in a borrowed tomb. It seems all is over, all is lost.

Then, on Easter Sunday morning, the angels announce that glorious news: “He is not here, but has risen” (Luke 24:6). With Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, the power of sin and death have been broken. The devil has no more claim to us, and we are free to live as God’s people now, and to rise to perfection at the Last Day and live with God in peace and joy for all eternity.

Now, doesn’t that sound a bit more important than the number of antler points on your deer?

Preparing for November’s ‘holy week’ is relatively easy. Just buy whatever you’re need, go sit in your stand, and shoot when the deer shows up. Preparing for Holy Week can be even easier: just set aside the time and show up for services—all of them. From there, God’s Word will guide you into greater preparations and greater celebrations, both of which will spill over from this Holy Week throughout your life and into the Life that is yet to come!

### **HOLY WEEK SERVICES**

**Maundy Thursday (April 14<sup>th</sup>) at St Paul’s, Junction City – 7:30pm**

**Good Friday (April 15<sup>th</sup>) at St Paul’s, Junction City – 1:30pm**

**Good Friday Tenebrae at St John’s, Dancy – 7:00pm**

**Easter Sunday (April 17<sup>th</sup>)**

**St John’s, Dancy – 7:00am (with breakfast to follow) St Paul’s, Junction City – 9:30am**