



Living Ink

Learning to Live in God's Story

A Worship Series

Lent-Easter 2016

Palm Sunday | The Testing of Your Allegiance

Living Ink | Lent to Easter 2016

- Lent is a 40-day season when the church commemorates the time Jesus spent in solitude, in silence, and fasting in the wilderness. Jesus prepared himself in the wilderness for what the Father had for him in his life and ministry.
- In this season of wandering and preparation, we are invited to make room for God's Spirit as we allow him to become the source of our strength and the Lord of our lives.
- In our *Living Ink* worship series, we have been discovering through the Scriptures that God is the Author of a grand narrative—a tale that encompasses all our struggles, pain, joys, and victories. This Author calls us to co-authorship, using our very lives to continue the Kingdom mission and vision of Jesus in a world poised for resurrection.

Lent 6 | The Testing of Your Allegiance

- Jesus extended a high invitation and challenge to his disciples all throughout his ministry. He repeatedly proves not to be the Messiah they expected, and so many desert him along the way. This was never more apparent than it was during the hot political climate of Passion Week.
- In *The Testing of Your Allegiance* (6 of 7), we will be encouraged to faithfully live into God's story by letting the demands of the real Jesus trump all other allegiances.
- What does that mean for all of life? But more specifically, what does it mean in our current political climate? Are we living out a "third way" allegiance, or something else?

Luke 22:14-19 NIV

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke 22:20-23 NIV

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²² The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!” ²³ They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

Luke 22:31-34 NIV

³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” ³³ But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

Luke 22:39-42 NIV

³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”

⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

Luke 22:43-46 NIV

⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”



Palm Sunday to Maunday Thursday

- Jesus rides in on a donkey to the waving of palm branches through the *eastern gate* in a counter-protest; Jesus goes into the Temple and sees the corruption
- Jesus rebukes the corrupt Temple practices and prophetically points to the end of temple-based faith; he cryptically alludes to his own death and resurrection
- Jesus teaches in the Temple and condemns the hypocrisy of the religious scribes and Pharisees; Judas betrays him
- The shaken disciples, anticipating the end, meet with Jesus in the upper room for a final memorial meal; washes their feet and commands them to love

The Invitation & Challenge of Jesus

Jesus tests the allegiances of his would-be disciples:

- He calls Matthew to drop everything and follow
- He tells a dutiful son to not wait, but commit now
- He tells a rich young man to give up his wealth
- He invites his listeners to leave comfort and certainty, live by faith and be willing to risk it all
- He tells religious leaders not to idolize a book, but see him as fulfillment
- He challenges them to see him as Messiah, despite their unmet expectations
- He reveals that the Kingdom of God doesn't come through law, politics, and military might

Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”

John 18:36 NLT

The Politics of Jesus & the NT

Political language used subversively in the NT:

- **gospel** (*euangellion*) “good news” of Caesar/Christ
- **savior** (*soter*) “salvation” that Caesar/Christ brings
- **faith** (*pistis/fides*) “faith” in Caesar/Christ
- **lord** (*kurios*) “Caesar/Christ is Lord” (Rom 10:9)
- **church** (*ekklesia*) a civic assembly of Caesar/Christ
- **coming** (*parousia*) victorious return to reign & rule
- **citizenship** (*politeuma*) be a good citizen of Rome/heaven

“The crucial distinction between the two kingdoms is how they provide antithetical answers to the questions of what power one should trust to change ourselves and others: Do you trust “power over” or “power under”? Do you trust the power of the sword, the power of external force, or do you trust the influential but noncoercive power of Calvary-like love?”

Greg Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (pg.33)

Faithfulness in a Philippian World

- Philippi was located in Macedonia 13 miles inland; Paul went there with Silas and Timothy after having a dream
- A Roman colony filled with retired soldiers and patriots willing to settle there; imperial cult was deeply rooted
- No synagogue in Philippi; church is planted there after Lydia and other women receive Paul's gospel message; they are baptized and convert their households
- Paul is stripped and beaten for "advocating customs unlawful for Romans" to practice; eventually escorted out
- His letter to the Philippians reflects the great tension between the gospel of Christ and that of Caesar's; clearly the most politically subversive of his 13 letters

“Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.”

Paul, Philippians 1:27 NLT

- “conducting yourselves” – Gk: *politeuesthe*
- **3:20** “But our *citizenship* is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
“citizenship” – Gk: *politeuma*

Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Learning to Live in God's Story

“The Testing of Your Allegiance” reflection questions:

1. What is God speaking to you? How might he be asking you to grow in your allegiance to him?
2. Unmet expectations and dashed assumptions are hard. Are you willing to let those go and receive Jesus for who he is, so that you can fully live into God's story?
3. In this hot political climate, do you feel that you're living above the fear that rips away at the soul? Are you living as if Jesus is King and his Kingdom is coming?
4. Will you ask Jesus to help you overcome and truly live?



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Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org