

# WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



## HOLY WEEK 2023

PALM/PASSION

SUNDAY

APRIL 2, 2022

10:30AM

DAILY PRAYER

HOLY MON. - WED.

APRIL 3-5, 2023

## Grace Notes

**Welcome to WHPC!** If you are visiting us today, we are so glad you joined us for worship. If you have not already, please take a moment to record your contact information on the visitor card you will find in the pew and drop it in the offering box or hand it to a greeter at the door. We are always glad to share the great things happening at WHPC!

If you are looking for a new church home and would like to join in fellowship with Westover Hills, please join us in the Parlor (outside the sanctuary doors) and we will gladly share more about life at WHPC or, if you are ready, receive you into membership.

**Childcare** is available in the nursery. Please check with a greeter.

# WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

## WE GATHER AT GOD'S INVITATION

WELCOME & OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP Dr. Robert Wm Lowry, Pastor

PRELUDE David Austin, Music Director

CALL TO WORSHIP Liturgist Sahr Lebbie

We come to prepare for the holiest of weeks.

**We will journey through praise, with joy on our lips;  
we will travel through betrayal and death,  
cradling hope deep in our hearts.**

Jesus leads us through this week, and we will follow,  
for he is the life we long for,  
he is the Word who sustains us.

**We wave palm branches in anticipation,  
we lay our love before him, to cushion his walk.**

Setting aside all power, glory, and might, he comes:  
modeling humility and obedience for all of us.

**Hosanna! Hosanna!  
Blessed is the One who brings us the kingdom of God.**

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,  
on the first Palm Sunday  
you entered the rebellious city  
where you were to die.  
Enter our hearts, we pray,  
and subdue them to yourself.  
And as your disciples blessed your coming  
and spread garments and branches in your way,  
make us ready to lay at your feet  
all that we have and are,  
that we too may bless your coming  
In the name of the Lord.

† OPENING SONG OF PRAISE #89 "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna" ELLACOMBE

### CALL TO CONFESSION

If we say we are completely put together, the truth is not in us.  
But if we confess our distractions, our errors, and our anxieties, God will meet us  
and renew us.  
Together let us confess our sins against God and one another.

## Grace Notes

The word “hosannah” comes from a Hebrew exclamation meaning “Pray! Please save!” Making stops in Greek and Latin, the Hebrew phrase arrives with us as the acclamation familiar on Palm Sunday.

Mindful of individual preferences, please turn to your neighbors and offer a sign of Christ’s peace.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, The streets were crowded.

**A parade mood filled the air.**

Shouts came from deep in the heart.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

Save us from lukewarm faith.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

Save us from callous indifference.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

Save us from paltry hopes and petty dreams.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

Save us from unquenchable greed.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

Save us from lazy habits and faithless commitments.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

Save us from soft-mindedness and hard-heartedness.

**Hosanna. Save us.**

We cry from the depth of our hearts and the very pit of our souls.

**Hosanna. Save us. Save us now. Amen.**

*Silence is kept.*

## SUNG PETITION “You Are the Lord, Giver of Mercy” WAYFARING STRANGER

You are the Lord, giv-er of mer-cy!

You are the Christ, giv-er of mer-cy!

You are the Lord, giv-er of mer-cy!

## + ASSURANCE OF PARDON

...in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

**Thanks be to God!**

## + THE PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ which passes all understanding be with you all.

**And also with you.**

GOSPEL READINGS

Matthew 21:1-17

*When they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two disciples a task. He said to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter, you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that their master needs them." He sent them off right away. Now this happened to fulfill what the prophet said, Say to Daughter Zion, "Look, your king is coming to you, humble and riding on a donkey, and on a colt the donkey's offspring." The disciples went and did just as Jesus had ordered them. They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them. Then he sat on them.*

*Now a large crowd spread their clothes on the road. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. "Who is this?" they asked. The crowds answered, "It's the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."*

*Then Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It's written, My house will be called a house of prayer. But you've made it a hideout for crooks."*

*People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were angry. They said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"*

*"Yes," he answered. "Haven't you ever read, From the mouths of babies and infants you've arranged praise for yourself?" Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.*

Matthew ties together in his retelling of the story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem the story of his cleansing the temple. This narrative twist closely associates the threat of Jesus toward the systems of power in the world and the brutal reaction of that power on Good Friday.

SERMON

"Sometimes You Have to Throw a Few Tables"

Dr. Lowry

†HYMN OF RESPONSE

"God the Sculptor of the Mountains"

JENNINGS-HOUSTON

This new hymn from the 1990's includes sweeping stanzas, each one describing how our human condition needs God's help. Each of the human adjectives, formless, aimless, hungry, searching, are followed by a three-syllable petition to God, shape us now, lead us now, feed us now, and meet us now.



1	God	the sculp - tor	of the moun - tains,	God	the
2	God	the nui - sance	of the Pha - raoh,	God	the
3	God	the dress - er	of the vine - yard,	God	the
4	God	the un - ex - pect - ed	in - fant,	God	the



mill - er	of the sand,	God	the jewel - er	of the
cleav - er	of the sea,	God	the pil - lar	in the
plant - er	of the wheat,	God	the reap - er	of the
calm, de - ter - mined	youth,	God	the ta - ble - turn - ing	

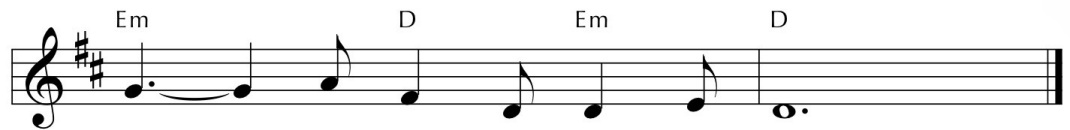
## Grace Notes



heav - ens, God the pot - ter of the land:  
 dark - ness, God the bea - con of the free:  
 har - vest, God the source of all we eat:  
 proph - et, God the res - ur - rect - ed truth:



you are womb of all cre - a - tion;  
 you are fount of all de - liv - erance;  
 you are host at ev - ery ta - ble;  
 you are pres - ent ev - ery mo - ment;



we are form - less; shape us now.  
 we are aim - less; lead us now.  
 we are hun - gry; feed us now.  
 we are search - ing; meet us now.

Today is both Palm and Passion Sunday. On this day we celebrate Christ's entry to Jerusalem and we also recall the events to come in the days ahead.

The Affirmation of Faith evokes the tension between these two events. Will we continue to shout His name and celebrate Christ, or will we fall back in anonymity to the crowd shouting "crucify"?

## WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

### ✦AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Some shout hosanna **some shout crucify**  
 some shout Jesus **some shout Barabbas**  
 some wave palms **some shake their fists**  
*today we choose...*

Some break bread **some break silence**  
 some proclaim Jesus **some deny Jesus**  
 some carry the cross **some run from the cross**  
*today we choose...*

Some are angry **some rejoice**  
 some anoint with costly perfume **some complain at the waste**  
 some like the light **some prefer the shadows**  
*today we choose..*

Some weep **some conspire**  
 some follow **some hide**  
 some believe **some betray**  
*today we choose...*

Today we choose...  
 To shout for life **to follow the cross**  
 to break bread **to hold belief**  
 to trust love **and tell the world**  
*we choose to follow Jesus!*

## Grace Notes

**This hymn's author,** Isaac Watts, was the son of a schoolmaster, and was born in Southampton, England, July 17, 1674. He is said to have shown remarkable precocity in childhood, beginning the study of Latin in his fourth year, and writing respectable verses at the age of seven.

Watt's tunes would go on to be some of the most prolific in the Christian world for the next four centuries.

All bread is gluten free and all cups contain non-alcoholic grape juice.

## MINUTE FOR MISSION

### OFFERING

### ANTHEM

*"When I Survey The Wondrous Cross"* arr. Gilbert Martin  
Seed

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of Glory died.*

*My richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
save in the death of Christ, my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small;*

*Love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all!*

## WE GATHER AT GOD'S TABLE

### INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

### THE SURSUM CORDA

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

### THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

### THE COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

### THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

## Grace Notes

Please remember to keep your bulletin for daily devotional readings for Holy Week.

†PARTING HYMN #102

*"Were You There?"*

WERE YOU THERE

†CHARGE & BENEEDICTION

†POSTLUDE

## WE DEPART IN GOD'S NAME

## WORSHIP NOTES

**WORSHIP LEADERS TODAY** are Pastor Robert Lowry, Music Director David Austin, Liturgist Sahr Lebbie, and the Westover Hills Chancel Choir.

## THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

**MIDWEEK MANNA BIBLE STUDY** meets on Wednesdays at 12:05. The weekly group meets from 12:05-12:55 to give those who work and want to participate time to join during lunch. The study, on Romans, meets in the New Chapel and attendees are invited to bring lunch and join in the conversation. Access will also be available by Zoom; see the CareLine for the link. To learn more, contact Pastor Robert.

**NEW YEAR NEW YOU YOGA** meets Thursdays in the New Chapel at 10am. This low-impact exercise is for all comers and is a great way to keep in shape and stay flexible.

**ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING** The third recipient of One Great Hour of Sharing offerings is the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) (in addition to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Self-Development of People). PHP grants funds, more than \$1.2 million in 2021, to organizations from Florida to Madagascar that address hunger and its root causes. In the US grant money is going to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a human rights organization in Florida that has fought corporate giants and others to improve farm labor standards and establish fairer wages.

An ocean away is Action for Rural Women's Empowerment, which works for women's rights in Uganda. In the country, "women are often cheated out of their inheritance and their land by a variety of different organizations and this organization helps women learn how to stand up and claim their land, so they can continue to farm their land and feed their families," says Eileen Best, Advisory Committee member for the Hunger Program.



**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S DAY OF MISSION GATHERING** April 22, 2023 (Saturday) Presbyterian Women's Day of Mission Gathering at Ferncliff Camp, sponsored by Presbytery of Arkansas PW. There is a \$10 registration fee which includes lunch. Registration is from 8:30 to 9:30am. They are asking women to bring vegetable and flower seed packets and/ or new garden gloves for the Ferncliff Farmstead. Wear comfortable clothing as we will be working in the farmstead (weather permitting) or in the Disaster Assistance Center. If anyone wants to spend Friday night, rooms are available (\$109 double occupancy) on a first-reserved basis. Deadline for room registration is April 1<sup>st</sup>. Call Vicki Erickson (479-659-2398) to reserve a room. Kay Stephens has registration forms for those who would like to attend. Please let Kay know so she can send in your name. This should be fun!



**SAVE THE DATE** April 29<sup>th</sup> is free shred day in the South Parking Lot. If you have any documents that need to be shredded bring them on down. Free shredding will be available from 9:00 to 11:00am, so tell all your friends and family!

**REMINDER FOR DEACONS** Deacons will gather briefly in the parlor after worship to distribute flowers to the TLCs.

**PRAYER LIST UPDATE** The prayer list will be updated on April 11<sup>th</sup>, so if you, your family, or friends want to remain on the prayer list please send any requests to the office at [office.westoverhills@gmail.com](mailto:office.westoverhills@gmail.com)

**CALENDAR UPDATES AND SESSION DOCUMENTS** should be sent to the office and copied to Candice Misenheimer.

**PLEASE SEND NEWS FOR CARELINE** to [office.westoverhills@gmail.com](mailto:office.westoverhills@gmail.com). If you would like to receive the twice-weekly church e-newsletter (CareLine), please fill out a contact card from a pew rack, add 'CareLine request' and drop the card in an offering box

**FOLLOW US** on Instagram [@westoverhillspc](https://www.instagram.com/westoverhillspc) or on Twitter [@ChurchWestover](https://twitter.com/ChurchWestover)

## PASTORAL CARE

**PLEASE INCLUDE IN YOUR PRAYERS** Val (friend of Pastor Robert's who is undergoing treatment for cancer in Pittsburgh); Carol-Ann Blow (health issues); Shirley Garlington (auto accident in Texas); Rev. Marion Humphrey and family (death of his mother, Doris Pendleton); Mark Jennings (friend of Pastor Robert's- recovering from a stroke); Miriam Holt (Liz Branch's sister- recovering from a fall); Michael Thompson (Son of Alice Ahart's friend- diagnosed with leukemia); Vivianna McAtee; Andrea Campbell; Jane Estes (recovery from long haul Covid and toxic mold healing and remediation of their home); Betty Glenn (recovering at home); Mary Chrisman (broken arm); Jonathon Simpson (friend of Ann Patterson, awaiting kidney transplant); Chriztine and the people of Ukraine (Ukraine collaborator with the WHPC PW on 2013 water project, Chriztine has moved to Hungary for safety); Ljubica and Stanislav Radovic (volleyball coach Tanja Eckart's parents who live in Croatia, anxiety over nearby war); Barry Wood (grandfather of Sydney- awaiting heart surgery); Survivors of recent tornadoes in MS and AL; Earthquake survivors in Turkey and Syria; Community impacted by shootings at The Covenant School in Nashville, TN; TLC (at home) members; church staff: Pastor Robert, Ulysses, David, Tammy, Sydney and Shawn; Preschool kids, families and staff.

**DEACONS FOR APRIL** are Nancy Blackstone and Joy Thomas.

## CALENDAR

The church calendar is available on the website  
(scan QR code or visit [www.westoverhills.org](http://www.westoverhills.org) to be directed to our website)

### WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207

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# HOLY MONDAY

DAILY PRAYER APRIL 3, 2023

## OPENING CONTEMPLATION

*Let all the earth acclaim the Lord! Worship the Lord in gladness. (Psalm 100:1)*

## PRAYERS

### ADORATION

Lord God, the wonders of your creation, the splendor of your heavens, the beauty of your earth, the order and richness of nature, all speak to us of your glory.

The coming of your Son, the presence of your Spirit, the fellowship of your Church, show us the marvel of your love. We worship and adore you, God of grace and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### CONFESSION

God of mercy, God of love, in humbleness of heart I (we) confess my (our) sins. I (we) forget to love and serve you and wander from your ways, fail to care for your world, talk of concern for others but fail to match my (our) words with action.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

### *Moment of Personal Confession*

Merciful God, forgive my (our) sins and bring me (us) to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Savior. Amen.

## READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 42:1-9

PSALM

36:5-11

NEW TESTAMENT

Hebrews 9:11-15

GOSPEL

Matthew 21:1-17

## ENGAGING THE WORD

Mason King

It's Monday morning and Jesus is in the temple teaching—and not to a few people, but crowds. It was probably hard to find a seat (if it wasn't standing room only). He enters the temple, which was meant to be a house of prayer, full of people from all nations. He knows what it is full of now—a kind of strip mall or flea market of booths, tables and stalls of goods for sale—all to profit off the faithful who had come to obey God's law. It was an entire ecosystem dependent and preying upon the devotion of Jews to their God, and it made Jesus sick.

This is probably the one time someone gets to really use the term righteous anger and no one questions it. Though we all like to think of our anger as righteous, there are few times

when that's really true—but this is the moment. Jesus flips tables over. People are shouting. Coins spill and skitter across the stone floor. People push and dive to grab the money. Animals are squawking. There are angry voices and angry hearts, but only one that's righteous. These guys are kicked, shooed and harassed out of their workplace, and they're not happy about it—but they've been squatting in someone else's space for way too long. And Jesus isn't having it.

The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees are watching with a mix of emotions and thoughts, probably angry at what they're seeing, because they have a profit share in the money on the ground and the guys who are now outside of the temple. Jesus has just threatened their bank accounts, and He's created civil unrest. Both moves are threats to the religious leaders, and now He's crossed civil lines, into Roman authority, by disturbing the peace. Jesus spends the day teaching in a temple clear of mess, and then makes the hike back out to Bethany that night.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Where in the world do you see tables that need to be overturned or systems that need to be challenged by the Gospel?

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.

### THE BLESSING

Be with me (us), O God, as the day of resurrection draws near. Fill my (our) heart(s) to overflowing with hope in the risen Christ. Amen.

# HOLY TUESDAY

DAILY PRAYER APRIL 4, 2023

## OPENING CONTEMPLATION

*O Lord, open my lips. And my mouth shall proclaim your praise. (Psalm 51:15)*

## PRAYERS

### ADORATION

Eternal God, we rejoice this day in the gift of life, which we have received from your grace, and the gift of new life you give in Jesus Christ. Amen.

### CONFESSION

God of mercy, God of love, in humbleness of heart I (we) confess my (our) sins. I (we) forget to love and serve you and wander from your ways, fail to care for your world, talk of concern for others but fail to match my (our) words with action.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

### *Moment of Personal Confession*

Merciful God, forgive my (our) sins and bring me (us) to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Savior. Amen.

## READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 49:1-7

PSALM

71:1-14

NEW TESTAMENT

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

GOSPEL

John 12:20-36

ENGAGING THE WORD

Prof. Matt Skinner

### **What Does Jesus Smell Like?**

The vividly sensuous nature of this passage encourages us to think about the gospel in ways beyond words, speaking, and reading. Does grace have a scent? It can be worth the effort to reflect on Jesus and his work in terms of meaningful smells and sensations.

Rudyard Kipling wrote, *“Smells are surer than sounds or sights / To make your heart-strings crack.”*

Most people have experienced a smell that floods the mind with arresting memories of a person, place, or event. Olfaction, emotion, and memory share closely networked real estate in the brain's limbic system. Our sense of smell relates closely to how we experience life and process significant memories. I have had foul odors from an unseen dumpster literally stop me in my tracks because they conjure sights and sounds I experienced as a teenager on a life-changing visit to a Haitian slum. I cannot tell most perfumes apart until I'm in a crowd and I chance upon someone wearing the fragrance my wife wore when we were dating.

Mary's gift emits an aroma that saturates the house and the minds of everyone in it. How does that passionate aroma persist even today? What real-life experiences does Jesus' death forever define, like a scent we never forget?

### **The Sweet Aroma of Jesus' Death**

The pairing of Mary and Judas creates a rhetoric of contrast. Notice a variety of oppositions:

- ◆ Mary and Judas contrast true and false discipleship, as well as true and false love.
- ◆ The fragrance of the perfume strikes a contrast to Jesus' death and burial. Our interpretation of the scene cannot ignore the gloom. Mary does not anoint Jesus as king or Messiah; she anoints a corpse. If the beautiful scent and ugly crucifixion seem incongruent, then we are onto John's strange logic whereby Jesus is lifted up onto a cross so that he might attract all to himself (12:32).
- ◆ Lavish devotion contrasts critical stinginess. This passage gives permission, so to speak, to honor Jesus in extravagant ways, perhaps even by giving a massive donation to the poor. It warns against mistaking discipline for discipleship. It embraces affection as part of a devotion to Jesus that is nothing less than the costly, precious gift of one's whole self—down to every last strand of hair.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What smells evoke memories for you?

Reflect on the contrasts in this text. In addition to the oppositions noted above, what oppositions do you encounter in the life of faith? In Jesus' ministry?

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.

### THE BLESSING

Be with me (us), O God, as the day of resurrection draws near. Fill my (our) heart(s) to overflowing with hope in the risen Christ. Amen.

# HOLY WEDNESDAY

## DAILY PRAYER APRIL 5, 2023

### OPENING CONTEMPLATION

*Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing. (Psalm 5:1)*

### PRAYERS

#### ADORATION

God of all mercies, I (we) praise you that you have brought me (us) to this new day, brightening our lives with the dawn of promise and hope in Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### CONFESSION

God of mercy, God of love, in humbleness of heart I (we) confess my (our) sins. I (we) forget to love and serve you and wander from your ways, fail to care for your world, talk of concern for others but fail to match my (our) words with action.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

#### *Moment of Personal Confession*

Merciful God, forgive my (our) sins and bring me (us) to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Savior. Amen.

### READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 50:4-9a

PSALM

70

NEW TESTAMENT

Hebrews 12:1-3

GOSPEL

John 13:21-32

### ENGAGING THE WORD

*"Let's Be Kind to Judas"*

William E. Flippin, Jr.

One of my favorite sermons that I have ever read is this title delivered by Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, President of Morehouse College, my alma mater from 1940-1967. Mays offered a different interpretation of the role of Judas as not a villain or "betrayor" but as the fulfillment of the plan of redemption for the world thus we must be kind to Judas.

"Jesus made me do it."

Other scholars assert that the role of Judas as "betrayor" especially from the Greek was misinterpreted for "hand over." The claim that "Jesus made me do it" is, in effect, what an ancient document called the Gospel of Judas attempts to do for the great betrayer.

As you know, there is no Gospel According to Judas in our Bible, and, in fact, Judas himself is presented there as a sinister figure, a traitor and betrayer of Jesus. In this Judas gospel, Judas still gives Jesus over to the authorities, but both Judas and Jesus are portrayed differently from how we know them from the New Testament. Jesus is described as considering himself as a spirit trapped in a physical body, and Judas is not a betrayer, but a dutiful lieutenant following Jesus' orders to betray him so that Jesus'

mission could be accomplished.

But that mission, as N.T. Wright notes in his book, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus*, is not at all the mission as described in the canonical gospels. In the gospels of the New Testament, Jesus' mission is the salvation of the world, and his bodily resurrection represents a profound defeat of sin, death and the devil.

In the Gnostic gospel Judas acts on Jesus' orders, but the Jesus of this gospel is a selfish Jesus who saves only himself. That's why in the Judas gospel, Jesus says to Judas, "You will exceed all of [the other disciples] for you will sacrifice the man who clothes me," the flesh that "clothes me." Judas will kill the body, but the soul will thereby escape. This gospel, then, makes Judas the hero. Wright, N.T. *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus*. p. 51-52 Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2006.

Thus, from Judas' gospel version of the Passion, Judas would have grounds to say "Jesus made me do it."

Consider our reading from John's gospel. It records an incident at the Last Supper where Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him. And while they are all wondering who it can be, Jesus privately hands to Judas a piece of bread, which he had said would signal the betrayer. John then tells us, "After [Judas] received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him." Luke also attributes Judas' action to the Devil, saying, "Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve" (Luke 22:3). Matthew and Mark simply report Judas' action without laying it on Satan, but they clearly describe it as an act of betrayal. There is no mention in any of the New Testament gospels of Judas' acting on any kind of instruction from Jesus, and all four agree that Judas acted against Jesus.

But return a moment to John's statement that Satan entered into Judas. Throughout his gospel, John has been concerned to explain the life, ministry and death of Jesus theologically, and not just to report specific facts. Thus, when narrating Judas' betrayal of Jesus, he sees what is going on in cosmic terms. In other words, as far as John is concerned, in the soon-to-occur crucifixion and the events leading up to it, as well as in the ultimate outcome of salvation for all who believe, the real opponents are not Jesus and Judas, but Jesus and Satan. Or, to say it even more broadly, the struggle is between the most-holy God and the Prince of Darkness.

Thus, although John had previously branded Judas as a thief who stole money from the common purse he carried for Jesus and the other disciples (John 12:6), John does not attribute the betrayal to Judas' greed, but to Satan's invasion of his heart (John 13:2). What's more, although the other three gospel writers tell us that Judas received money from the chief priests for his perfidy, John doesn't even mention the cash, effectively discounting the possibility that Judas was motivated by avarice.

No, as John understands it, the devil made Judas do it.

But let's be honest. That's a hard conclusion to swallow. A few decades ago, comedian Flip Wilson, while in the guise of his comic character Geraldine, would tell of some outrageous thing she'd done and then excuse it by saying, "The devil made me do it." And we'd all laugh. [We'd laugh because we knew the claim was ridiculous and was supposed to be tongue-in-cheek. And we are likely to feel that way about John's claim regarding Judas as well, even though John was completely serious.

So we can understand why whoever wrote the Gospel of Judas would take the position he did and try to change the story to "Jesus made me do it."

But let's give John his due. He was looking at the big picture, which was the salvation of the world. From that perspective, Judas was no more than a bit player. Jesus didn't come to rescue us from Judas, but from sin. And John saw Satan as the author of sin. This is what I believe Dr. Mays was interpreting in his wonderful sermon on Judas.

My interpretation of Judas is a bit different, I follow the traditional interpretation that Mark, Matthew, Luke, John in this order were written all describing the character and role of Judas. In each Gospel the character of Judas becomes darker and sinister culminating in John that Satan got into him

almost taking away his culpability. I believe that the character of Judas didn't exist originally and to make sense of the death of Jesus by the time the Gospels were written to make sense of his death Judas was created. We know that the Greek mythologies and literature has very prominently a betrayer in explaining the death of great persons. Such as Julius Caesar his assassination became prominent not when his enemies stabbed him but when he thought his trusted friend Brutus was apart of the conspiracy "Eh tu Brute" (You too Brutus). What about the John f. Kennedy assassination fifty years now it is hard for the American people to believe that a random man could kill such a great and promising President so the American people to make sense in the grieving process must create many conspiracy theories. Perhaps this happens in the creation of the character Judas to free the Roman occupation for killing this innocent man who was with no fault or guilt? So instead of being kind to Judas let's examine if Judas actually existed?

John says that Satan was the motivator in Judas' betrayal of Jesus, but we're best to understand that to mean that despite all the time Judas had spent in Jesus' company, he had not committed his will to Jesus. Judas was not Jesus-possessed, the Gospel of Judas notwithstanding.

On this Maundy Thursday, we're invited to be obedient, to obey the commandments of Jesus. We are invited to be "Jesus-possessed." If there's any talk of a hero, it's clearly Jesus, not Judas, and if we're interested in hero worship, we'd best worship Jesus.

If we worship Jesus, we can be kind to our neighbors just as the outpour of his gracious love to us in bringing redemption, reconciliation and ultimately resurrection.

## † THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## † THE BLESSING

Be with me (us), O God, as the day of resurrection draws near. Fill my (our) heart(s) to overflowing with hope in the risen Christ. Amen.

HOLY WEEK WORSHIP AT  
WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Worship with Communion

Thursday April 6

6pm

GOOD FRIDAY TEPEBRAE

Contemplative Worship

Friday April 7

6pm

EASTER SUNDAY/RESURRECTION DAY

Sunday April 9

Flowering the Cross 10am

Worship with Communion 10:30am

Easter Egg Hunt (following worship)