

Good Friday service – 2 April 2021 – Stations of The Cross

Welcome and Intro - Brian

The service today is based on the Stations of The Cross - a devotion that was developed in the Middle Ages by the Franciscans as a way of allowing people who could not travel to the Holy Land to walk where Christ walked on the day of his passion. By the end of the 17th century many churches had stations, or stops, ranged at intervals along their walls - each with a cross and under that cross a representation of an event in the passion narrative. The Stations were revised in 2005 so that all of the stations are based in Scripture.

For each station there will be a reading from Scripture, a visual that you will see on the screen, a reflection and for some stations there will also be a tactile element – these are in the plastic bag and we will tell you what pieces to pull out when. these pieces are yours to take home to continue your reflection over this Easter weekend.

The service will be quiet and reflective, and we invite you to completely immerse yourself into the experience. Each station will end with a prayer that we invite you to join and say all together.

Prayer - Brian

God of power and mercy, in love you sent your Son that we might be cleansed of sin and live with you forever. Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death that we may learn from his example the way we should go. We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord. Amen

Song – something about garden or a really mellow/somber mood setting something...

STATION 1: JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Matthew 26:36-46



Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up,

let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Reflection

Get the leaf out of your pack. Hold it in your hand and look at it and feel it as we reflect...

All is quiet in this garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem tonight. The full moon casts an eerie shadow through a tree that foreshadows another tree in the not-too-distant future. While Jesus prays his disciples sleep. "Keep watch and pray;" Jesus tells them. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Are you sleeping through the times when you need to be watching and praying?

Speak to God now, and confess to him the things that hold you back. Ask him to help you stay awake, and follow his will

(quiet music in background for silent reflective time)

Leader Together we pray

Prayer - Lord, grant us your strength and wisdom, that we may seek to follow your will in all things

STATION 2: JESUS IS BETRAYED BY JUDAS AND ARRESTED

Matthew 26:47-56



While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large 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; arrest him.” At once he came up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you are here to do.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?” At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to

arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Reflection

The silence of the moonlit garden is shattered with the sound of a crowd carrying swords and clubs. They are going to arrest Jesus, the one whom Judas will ironically identify with a kiss. The shadows cannot conceal their deadly intentions.

Take a moment to imagine that you are there with Jesus at this time... Where are you when the crowd come? Are you standing beside Jesus, ready to fight those who plan to take him

Artists: Beverly Beckman, Rocky Boelter, Mary Brainard, Fred Dingler, Bonnie Featherstone, Sandra Koeger
<https://popmn.org/scriptural-way-of-the-cross/> Additional tactile parts adapted from <https://network.crcna.org/faith-nurture/lent-children-simplified-stations-cross>

away? Are you cowering behind the crowd, scared for what will happen to him, or what will happen to you?

(A moment's silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us the courage of our convictions that our lives may faithfully reflect the good news you bring.

STATION 3: JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN

Matthew 26:57-68

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.' " The high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" They answered,



“He deserves death.” Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, “Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?”

Reflection

At whom are they looking? These men are the Jewish high court called the Sanhedrin and they need false evidence to convict this Jesus who has just been arrested. This council of 70 gathered in a hastily arranged meeting at the home of Caiaphas; the high priest. To put Jesus to death, these religious men only need to prove him to be a false prophet.

If you were there and they questioned you, how would you answer? Is he a prophet? A king? A Messiah? What charge

could you make? What evidence would you present?

(a moment's silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us your sense of righteousness that we may never cease to work to bring about the justice of the kingdom that you promised.

STATION 4: JESUS IS JUDGED BY PILATE

Matthew 27:22-24



“‘What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ Pilate asked. They all answered, ‘Crucify him.’ ‘Why? What crime has he committed?’ asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’ When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood,’ he said; ‘It is your responsibility.’”

Reflection

As the night of darkness progresses, only the Roman governor held the right to capital punishment. Anyone making Messianic claims was a threat to the Roman government and deserving of crucifixion. According to custom, Pilate could release any prisoner chosen by the crowd and they choose Barabbas, sealing Jesus’ fate. In a symbolic act of hand washing, Pilate declares that he is not responsible for what happens to Jesus. He’s done with him! But blood does not wash away so easily. Everyone in this scene has blood on their hands and in their hearts.

Pilate washed his hands to tell people that Jesus’ death was not his fault. Have you ever tried to not take responsibility for something wrong you did? Or have you done something you weren’t allowed to do and pretended that you didn’t do it?

Silently ask God to forgive you and to help you make things right. (Pause for silent reflection.)

Song - “What can wash away my sin?”

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us discernment that we may see as you see, not as the world sees.

STATION 5: JESUS IS DENIED BY PETER



Matthew 26:69-75

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

Reflection

In the ever-increasing darkness of this night, you would think it would be easy to hide in the shadows and not be recognized. But no! Three times Peter is called out as a Jesus follower and three times he disowns the One who said, “Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times.” This is what it looks like to hide your face in shame. The night air is filled with “bitter weeping” as the rooster crows its mocking voice.

If you were there, and you were asked, what would you say? Would you deny knowing him?

(a moment’s silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us the gift of honesty that we may not fear to speak the truth even when difficult.

STATION 6: JESUS IS SCOURGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

Matthew 27:27-31

Artists: Beverly Beckman, Rocky Boelter, Mary Brainard, Fred Dingler, Bonnie Featherstone, Sandra Koeger
<https://popmn.org/scriptural-way-of-the-cross/> Additional tactile parts adapted from <https://network.crcna.org/faith-nurture/lent-children-simplified-stations-cross>



“Then (the governor’s soldiers) stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head... they spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.”

Reflection

Get the red ribbon out of your pack. Hold it in your hand and look at it and feel it as we reflect...

More than a painful beating, this is humiliation. The scarlet robe mocks his claim of royalty. Instead of a king’s staff, a stick is used to strike his head again and again. Instead of worship and adulation, this king is spit upon. This king is crowned with a ring of thorns piercing the skin of his head. As the darkness deepens, Jesus experiences betrayal, condemnation, denial, judgment, and now humiliation. Jesus knows what it’s like to be hurt, sad, angry, afraid, alone and even humiliated. Although Jesus is God, he is also completely human, except he never sinned, but he suffered the cross for us, to make you and me his.

Tie the ribbon on your arm, or somewhere that you will see it often as a visible reminder that Jesus is your king, who died for you. As you do, thank him for that.

(Someone brings barbed wire crown of thorns to front with red Ribbon woven around and sat on stool or hung on music stand/lectern so can be seen.)

Song – Love ran red

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us patience in times of suffering that we may offer our lives as a sacrifice of praise.

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STATION 7: JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

John 19:16-17



“Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).”

Reflection

The Roman soldiers had become an efficient killing machine. Convicted criminals bore the additional burden and humiliation of carrying their own cross through the streets to the place of crucifixion. What purpose does this serve? Crucifixion is a stark reminder to the local population of what happens when you defy Rome. One cannot conceive the pain and exhaustion of carrying this weight after the torture of beatings, scourging and the blood loss that would result. This ordeal is too much for any human being to bear.

Are there times when you feel “weak and heavy-laden”? Are there days when you are “cumbered with a load of care”? Take some time now to give your load to Jesus, and remember that he carried it all for you...

(a moment’s silence) *“What a friend we have in Jesus played in background”*

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us strength of purpose that we may faithfully bear our crosses each day.

STATION 8: JESUS IS HELPED BY SIMON TO CARRY HIS CROSS

Mark 15:21



“A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.”

Reflection

Find the wooden stick out and hold it as we reflect on this station. Feel it's roughness. Feel the sharp point at the end. The cross that Jesus was carrying was probably not smooth and small like this stick, but rough and heavy.

Jesus is bloodied and beaten, carrying his own cross to his death and the soldiers force Simon to take the cross and carry it for Jesus. One can only imagine that the soldiers wanted to finish this job and Jesus, beaten to near death, was not able to lift this weight. So Simon makes his brief appearance and does what is necessary. This image embodies Jesus earlier words to “take up your cross and follow me.” Perhaps Simon is like all of us who set aside our selfish agendas and “take up the cross.”

There is another hand in the image and this is the hand of Christ, lending all that he can give to Simon. As you hold the stick, think about what you need to set aside in order to follow Christ? Ask God to help you to do that.

(large cross is carried in - a moment's silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us willing spirits that we may be your instruments on earth.

STATION 9: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Luke 23:27-28



“A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.’”

Reflection

These women know Jesus and they weep specifically for Jesus. These are not the Galilean women we’ve come to know in the course of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. These are the “daughters of Jerusalem,” and in their distress they wail and cry and beat themselves in deep sorrow. They heard Jesus teach in the temple. They witnessed his healings and miracles. They heard the false claims that bring him to this death walk. He has done nothing to deserve this and they weep in deep sympathy. We, like the women of Jerusalem,

are witnesses to this tragedy as well. Can you feel their deep sorrow? Are you angered by this injustice?

(a moment's silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us gentle spirits that we may comfort those who mourn.

STATION 10: JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

Luke 23:32-38



As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Reflection

Find the nail and hold it in your hand....

Jesus is dying, crucified just outside one of the city gates of Jerusalem at this place called the Skull. How convenient, to execute your criminals in a graveyard? He will eventually die as a result of blood loss, dehydration, and asphyxiation. Above his head is a “titulas,” a board detailing his crime, carried before the condemned and then hung above the victim. It reads *INRI*, an acrostic which means: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”. Can this be his crime? Is this just cruel mockery or the harsh penalty for defying Rome?

Our sins, whether they seem big or little to us, are the reason that Jesus had to die on the cross. That’s the only way that God could put the world he created right again. No person could do this — only God could. As you hold your nail, remember how *your* sins put Jesus on the cross.

(Someone uses hammer to pound 4 nails into the cross, one through cardboard sign showing “*INRI*” at top, others at hands and feet. Cross will need to be on ground for hammering, and stood up on stand when finished. Barbed wire crown of thorns is also hung on cross here. Song starts playing in background during hammering) Then all sing

Song - Were you there v 1-3

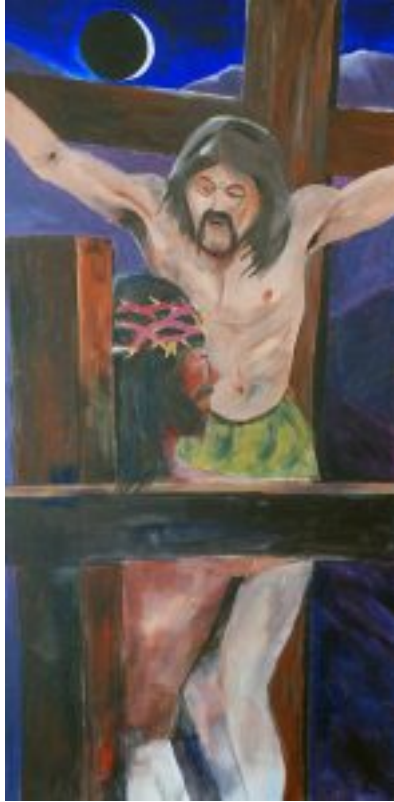
Together we Pray -

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Lord, grant us merciful hearts that we may bring your reconciliation and forgiveness to all.

STATION 11: JESUS PROMISES HIS KINGDOM TO REPENTANT THIEF

Luke 23:39-43



“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

Reflection

For the Roman death squad, it was highly efficient to execute criminals together. These unnamed thieves portray dramatically different attitudes regarding their impending doom. One hurls insults at Jesus, as the other recognizes Jesus’ innocence and asks for his mercy. One tries to bait

Jesus into using his Messianic powers to save them all, while the other sees they are getting what they deserve. Some scholars believe this scene depicts the kind of transition that’s necessary for any follower of Jesus; to turn away from defensiveness and selfishness and embrace this new kingdom of love and peace that Jesus promises to bring.

Have you embraced Jesus’ kingdom of love and peace? Will you join Jesus in paradise?

(a moment’s silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us perseverance that we may never stop seeking you.

STATION 12: JESUS ENTRUSTS MARY AND JOHN TO EACH OTHER

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John 19:25-27



“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

Reflection

The long night of darkness is almost over and, in this scene, Jesus entrusts his mother into the home and care of John, described as the “disciple Jesus loved.” The wellbeing of Mary seems to weigh on Jesus’ heart and this new arrangement assures that Mary will have the support she needs for the future. Do you notice who is absent from this scene? Where are the other disciples? It is clear that Jesus’ closest followers abandoned him in his final moments. Only John remains, the same person who will write this gospel account that we read today. The women who remain at the cross on this dark night will also be the first to witness his resurrection.

Can you place yourself at the foot of this cross? What are you feeling? take a moment to think and pray about that now...

(a moment’s silence)

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us faithfulness that we may be willing to stand by those in need.

STATION 13: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Matthew 27:45-54



“From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land...and when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.”

Reflection

Find out the Black cross.

The eclipse of death is complete. “It is finished.” Throughout history a celestial eclipse is a sign from the gods that this emperor or ruler is, indeed, divine. There is no mistaking this darkness of three hours in the middle of the day as announcing the death of the “king of kings.” The whole earth shakes in agony as rocks split and tombs break open. The

scriptures tell us that many “holy people” who had died experienced resurrection in that moment. Even the death of Jesus Christ cannot hold back the powers of Easter resurrection. Can you feel hopeful at the very moment that Christ dies?

Jesus loves each of us so much that he died for us. His death was painful and hard, but he was willing to give himself up for us to make us right with God. At this point in the stations of the cross, the world is black and bleak, just like the black cross you hold in your hands. But I know that under the black there is colour, and behind the actions of Jesus is the joy of life in Christ waiting to be revealed. But just like the people with Jesus that day, the colour will not be revealed just yet. For now, hold to the black cross and then bring it back on Sunday Morning...

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us trust in you that when our time on earth is ended our spirits may come to you without delay.

STATION 14: JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Luke 23:50-53



“Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.”

Reflection

Take the stone and hold it in your hand...

The darkness of death covers the earth. In the shadow of the cross, at some distance, stand those who knew him and the women who followed him from Galilee. Joseph and his friends had been entrusted with the body of Jesus and the followers of Jesus watched them take Jesus from the cross and carry him to a newly hewn tomb. There, the body of Jesus is wrapped in burial cloths and laid to rest. A large stone was rolled across the entrance to the burial chamber. And so it ends. Or does it? Is something in “the air”? Can you glimpse a hint of resurrection light coming from the tomb?

Even though Jesus died and was placed in a tomb with a huge stone by the door, it wasn’t the end... we know what comes next but for now, just hold the stone and let it’s weight, and the weight of Jesus rest on you for a bit. Keep the stone where you can see it until Easter morning to remind you that God raised Jesus from the dead!

Together we Pray -

Lord, grant us your compassion that we may always provide for those in need.

Closing prayer- Brian

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Lord Jesus Christ, your passion and death is the sacrifice that unites earth and heaven and reconciles all people to you. May we who have faithfully reflected on these mysteries follow in your steps and so come to share your glory in heaven where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God, for ever and ever.

**“We ask you to leave in silence when you are ready
Stay Covid Safe”**

Reflective Song – “*Wondrous Story*” (*Dom and Katrina*)

People make their way out when they are ready in silence.