



STATIONS OF THE CROSS



“...until the gospel of Jesus Christ burst upon the Mediterranean world, no one in the history of human imagination had conceived of such a thing as the worship of a crucified man.”

-Fleming Rutledge-

THE PURPOSE of this prayer exercise is to help you enter the mystery of the crucifixion of Jesus.

It has been said that if the Resurrection of Jesus, which we celebrate at Easter, is about the power of God, then the events leading up to his resurrection, which we remember on Good Friday, are about the weakness of humanity.

Christians believe that, in and through the life of Jesus, God entered our human weakness to be with us, to bless us and to save us. Nowhere is that more clearly on display than in the suffering and death of Jesus.

Each of the “stations” featured in this prayer exercise focus on Jesus’ experience (and therefore God’s experience) of some of the most difficult aspects of being human. We see Jesus struggling with the will of God. We see him being betrayed and disowned by his friends, unjustly condemned by a corrupt justice system, and suffering humiliation, pain, and death.

But in these events, we also see the mystery of God’s strength at work in our human weakness. Jesus (and therefore God) willingly sets aside his power and privilege for the sake of his unreliable friends and hate-filled enemies. On the cross, we see him praying for the forgiveness of his tormentors, promising paradise to a penitent murderer, making a family out of his heartbroken followers and removing the barrier between us and God.

WE INVITE YOU to look at these images, to reflect on the accompanying scripture passages, and to pray the accompanying prayers in whatever way you can. And we hope that you will encounter the strength of **JESUS** in the humility and weakness of his cross.

ALMIGHTY GOD,

whose Son was crucified

yet entered into glory,

may we, walking in the way of the cross,

find it is for us the way of life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you

and the Holy Spirit,

one God,

now and for ever.

Amen.

JESUS PRAYS, IS BETRAYED AND ARRESTED

Matthew 26:36-56



Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane... 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... 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.’**

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve [who had agreed to betray Jesus to the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver], 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... Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

PRAYER: God our help, your Son was betrayed by one who called himself a friend. May we who call him Lord be transformed by his grace and remain his faithful people.



JESUS IS CONDEMNED AND DISOWNED

Matthew 26:57-75

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...

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... 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.'

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.

PRAYER: Lord, you were condemned by the authorities and disowned by your friends. Make us able to resist injustice and to speak the truth.



JESUS IS JUDGED, FLOGGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

Matthew 27:1-2,24-26

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, '**You say so.**' But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Pilate said to [the crowd], '...what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!' So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' ...after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters... They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

PRAYER: Lord, you did not strike back but overcame hatred with love. Make us willing and able to do the same.



JESUS BEARS THE CROSS

John 19:16-17, Mark 15:12, Luke:23:27-30

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha (*John 19:16-17*).

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus (*Mark 15:12*).

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, **‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us”; and to the hills, “Cover us.” For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’** (*Luke:23:27-30*).

PRAYER: Lord, you took up your cross for us. May we take up our cross daily and follow you.

Grant us willing spirits to help those who struggle as Simon of Cyrene helped you.

And give us courage and faith to not only lament the evil and suffering that remain in this world, but to act as instruments of your goodness and love.



JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

Luke 23:33-34, John 19:19-25

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, **‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’** (*Luke 23:33-34*)

Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ Many of the Judeans read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”, but, “This man said, I am King of the Jews.”’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.’ This was to fulfil what the scripture says, ‘They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ And that is what the soldiers did. (*John 19:19-25*)

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are our king, though your crown is thorns and your throne a cross.

Grant that the peoples of the earth, now divided and enslaved by sin, may be set free to live together under your gentle and loving rule.

JESUS MINISTERS FROM THE CROSS

Luke 23:39-43, John 19:25-27



One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And

we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, '**Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.**' (*Luke 23:39-43*)

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, '**Woman, here is your son.**' Then he said to the disciple, '**Here is your mother.**' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (*John 19:25-27*)

PRAYER: Lord, even in your suffering your compassion for others remained undimmed. Teach us to always rely on your goodness and to follow your example of steadfast love.



JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

*Matthew 27:45-46, Luke 23:46,
Matthew 27:50-52*

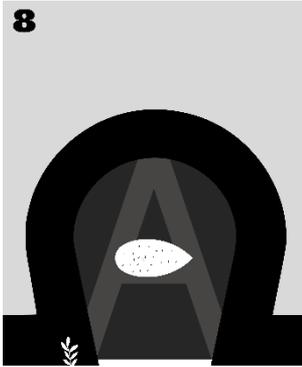
From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (*Matthew 27:45-46*)

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. (*Luke 23:46*)

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised (*Matthew 27:50-52*).

PRAYER: O God, by the passion of your blessed Son, you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life.

May our lives be so transformed by his passion that we may witness to his grace; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.



JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB

John 19:38-42

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jewish leaders, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus.

Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

PRAYER: Send down your abundant blessing, Lord, upon your people who devoutly recall the death of your Son in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. Grant us pardon; bring us comfort. May our faith grow stronger and our eternal salvation be assured. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

JESUS CHRIST

yesterday and today,
the beginning and the end,
Alpha and Omega,
to you be glory and power
through every age forever.
Amen.

By His glorious wounds
may **CHRIST OUR LORD**
guard us and keep us.
Amen.

MAY THE LIGHT OF CHRIST,
rising in glory, dispel the darkness
of our hearts and minds.
Amen.