

## #14 Jesus is Laid into the Tomb

We are reminded that, “You can know your life was a success if in the living of it you were an inspiration, and in the memories a benediction.” We take this walk to remember Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. We would probably not be taking this walk if we did not find inspiration in Jesus’ life. Although, you may be taking the walk as you want to learn more about this life. We pray that you have found inspiration in it.

A benediction is often seen as the end of our worship. The reality is, it is the beginning of the week that the worship is sending us out to live. We always pray that in some way, that the worship inspired you with the strength, commitment and grace to be the presence of Christ, to take up your crosses and other’s crosses daily, and to work toward resurrection.

### Prayer:

We have journeyed with You O Christ through these final hours of Your life, Your crucifixion and death. As we walked with You we learned that there is nothing that You have not experienced in Your life, so we can know we are understood and not judged even in our most difficult times. We know You bring an understanding love to us that seeks to guide us in the best ways to find resurrection providing the return of hope and promise to our lives. May we continue to let your life inspire us, so we may be an inspiration to others.

## Reflections on the Stations of the Cross



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## #1

## In the Garden

Jesus retreats to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray to God. We experience the conflicting emotions he is wrestling with as he seeks to prepare himself to face what is imminently about to happen. God, if it is possible, please let this burden pass from me. Yet, there is still the trust in God's presence and love, and he continues, "Not my will but yours be done."

When we face the difficult times in our lives, do we not also ask God to fix what is happening, to take it away. Can we also show the trust Jesus has in God's love and pray, "Your will be done."

Prayer:

Gracious God, as we face our difficult times in life, may we not run from them, but trust in Your love and compassion to help face them and experience the depth of Your grace knowing that all things can work together for good for those who love You (Romans 8:28)

## #13

## I Commend My Spirit

Jesus finally gives up his life force and dies to his physical life. Even after all he has faced and experienced, he does so with the confidence that his Spirit now ascends to God. How we wish everyone could enter into their final moments with the confidence that God is waiting to receive them. "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I tell you that I go to prepare a place for you and after I prepare a place, I will return and take you to myself." (John 14:).

What would life be like if everyone knew this? Too many people do not know they are loveable and are already in the heart of God, and live as if no one could care. So many people live their lives in their fears and of not being good enough. This prevents them from pursuing the hopes and dreams that God has for them and for us all.

Prayer:

Gracious God, may I, or anyone, ever doubt how precious we are to you. The cross shows us that even this most cruel of acts will not stop You from loving us. You forgive us in this moment, telling us we are loved anyway. This is the day of salvation, may we embrace it. May we live as it is true. May we discover and live the hopes and dreams You have for us personally, and as the people of God collectively.

## #12

## My God, My God

It is one thing to know something intellectually, and to believe it with every ounce of faith we have. But there can be those times where we have come to a place where we can endure no more. We cry out, “God where are you?” “Have You abandoned me?” “In the moment I need You the most I do not feel Your presence!” Yet, we cry out anyway, because we know God is there and that God hears us.

It is usually when we can no longer do anything on our own to help ourselves that we turn to God for help. We are at a place of hopelessness and helplessness and the only option left to us is crying out to God for help. We are now ready to receive the gift of grace that has been patiently waiting to be called upon for help.

Prayer:

Compassionate God, there are many reasons we try to fix ourselves and our lives before we turn to You. We know You wait patiently just waiting for us to cry out for You and are now ready to receive Your healing love. May we learn that it is to You where we need to turn from the very beginning, so we do not find ourselves without hope.

## #2

## Judas Betrays Jesus

How deeply Jesus must have been hurt as he was betrayed by one of the very inner core of his disciples. They had faced so much together. They had sat around the fire and shared hopes, dreams, and amazement in the trust God placed in them.

The reality is, it is almost always the ones we are closest to that cause us to feel betrayed, as they are the ones we hold in esteem and have expectations of. How are we to act when we feel let down by another? How do we hope people respond to us, when in our humanness we, at times, let someone we love down?

Prayer:

God, when we are hurt, we may want to practice the old “eye for an eye” response. Yet, when we are responsible for letting someone we love down, we pray for their forgiveness and the renewal of our relationship. May we be slow to anger and abounding in love.

### **#3 Jesus Before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin**

Jesus is brought before the group that has choreographed this moment in his life. Jesus was very clear that he did not come to do away with the law or the prophets, (the recognized sacred writings at this moment), but to fulfill them. He was sent by God to help people return to being the chosen people of God entrusted to bring shalom, God's peace to the world. Why would those who Jesus came to minister to and with, reject him and his purpose?

It is not easy to try and fulfill the gospel and have it rejected by those who misunderstand, who feel threatened by it or simply do not care. One author writes that many people believe that the church and our faith are simply crutches we need to face the reality of life. The truth is the church is an oasis in the community we seek to find the truth and practice it so we may take it back into the world. We will indeed experience resistance.

Prayer:

Gracious God, we pray for Your strength to be a person of faith, to be the church that seeks to fulfill the gospel, even when it becomes difficult to do so. May we help Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

### **#11 Woman, Behold Your Son**

When love is our character, it surfaces even in the most difficult of times, as it is who we are. God is love (1 John 4). Women in Jesus' day had no social rights. They had to rely fully on the men in their lives for sustenance and support. Legend suggests that Mary, Jesus' mother, is a widow and must now rely on her sons for her needs. As Jesus is dying, he directs his beloved disciple to now adopt her as his mother, with all the responsibilities this entails as a son. And he charges Mary to rely on this beloved disciple for her ongoing needs as she would any son.

We are reminded that in the midst of loss, it is the one left behind that needs our deepest love and concern. We grieve with them, and we do not walk away. We extend ourselves, we help them carry their cross so they may keep going. They are assured that they are special to us, and that they can trust us to be present when needed. What a gift.

Prayer:

Ever-present God, we know that you never abandon us as Your love is always present. What a sense of peace it brings knowing You are ready to give us the strength we need to face the crosses of life. What a gift it is to know we have people in our lives who are willing to help us carry our crosses.

## **#10 Today You Join Me in Paradise**

Who's in? Who's out? Jesus is crucified between two thieves. One begins to mock him and taunt him. The other challenges him and says, we deserve to be here, but this man is innocent and has done nothing wrong. Then he asks Jesus to remember him when You enter into Your kingdom. "Today," Jesus says, "you will join me in paradise."

When the thief honored Jesus and brought him into his life, the very worst day of his life was transformed into the promise of being his greatest. We believe that both thieves are included in God's unfailing commitment to love, but only one had the encouragement of it in what was now happening.

Prayer:

Gracious God, when we entrust our lives to You, we receive so many assurances about who we are, the trust in being loved, the promise of eternal life, all of which help us face the hardest days of our lives. May we walk with You daily so we may experience and learn to trust in the hope that is ours through Jesus our Lord.

## **#4 Jesus Before Pilate**

The Jewish leaders may have choreographed this moment, but they do not have the power to carry it out. They must now get the political leader, Pontious Pilate, to issue the decree for crucifixion. The root word for politics is the Greek word, polis, which literally means city. Politics literally asks, "How do we order the city for life?"

We are called to bring the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, but we do not always have the authority to do so simply as people of faith. We are called to be holy, which means to be made whole and set apart to do the work of God. John Wesley reminds us that there is no holiness except social holiness. Scripture continuously asks us to practice justice and righteousness in our lives. Righteousness means to act as beneficently towards others as we can, and justice asks us to bring righteousness to the greatest number of people we can.

Prayer:

Compassionate God, You entrust us with so much, even the wellbeing of each other. We are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Help us to be Your holy people and be strong wherever we find resistance to Your shalom, Your call to bring healing wholeness and wellbeing to all. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. (Matthew 5:9).

## **#5 Scourging and Crown of Thorns**

People saw all the good Jesus did in his life. Those who were healed, those who found new understandings about how deeply loved they are by God. A message of love and compassion for your brothers and sisters as beloved children of God, all turned in a way to be used against him. We see even today that to undermine another and their message, one does not focus on the message, but on demeaning the messenger.

Jesus is mocked and ridiculed, which then allows the soldiers to dehumanize him and then beat him. How many times and places are we seeing this happen even now in our own society. If we can belittle and demean them as human beings, then we can mistreat them in their lives.

There is a church in Jerusalem called the Church of the Flagellation, that is dedicated to the abused and brutalized people in our world.

Prayer:

Compassionate God, You have called us to be compassionate as You are compassionate. To be compassionate means to be willing to suffer with another, to walk with another in their journey so we may encourage and support them. Help us be Your compassion to those who face the pain and rejections of the value of their lives.

## **#9 Jesus is Crucified**

Did the world win? Did those who chose darkness over the light (John 3:17) snuff out the love of God's presence? God is supposed to be all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. Is this not true, or are we missing something important in what we think we are seeing and experiencing?

It is difficult for us to imagine the deep sense of pain, fear and confusion during this moment. We know Easter is coming so we may be a little more unmoved by what is happening here. We were never told that when we followed Jesus, life would be one great joy ride. In fact, to take up your cross daily asks us to make some hard, personal choices. It may be the harder path to follow.

When we choose our crosses, we do not know what will happen either. We are not sure if we simply experience the pain of the cross, or that there may be an Easter moment waiting. It is why we must continue to trust and seek God's will to be done.

Prayer:

God of the cross, we ask for Your strength to allow us to take up our cross and the crosses of our brothers and sisters, so we at least give the chance for Your will to be done, and the chance for an Easter miracle to happen.

## **#8 Jesus Speaks to the Women**

As Jesus continues his journey to the cross, he hears the deep wails and cries of the women grieving for him. His reply, at first, seems somewhat harsh. Don't cry for me, for what is about to happen to me will also be experienced by you, and maybe even worse. Maybe it was a warning to them.

If we allow others to be mistreated and abused, why do we believe it will not eventually happen to us? If we do not bring holiness to our world, why would we not expect to experience the brokenness and even chaos of life? Remember all holiness is social holiness.

All it takes for bad things to happen is for good people to do nothing.

Prayer:

Caring God, we may ache for what we see happening to others in their lives and pray that it will never happen to us. We may not want to see it, as we feel there is nothing we can do anyway. Help us always to work for shalom, for it is the only way we can experience the truest sense of Your kingdom in our midst.

## **#6 Jesus Receives His Cross**

Jesus' humiliation and what he is facing in his life are now put on public display. This may be the first time many, if not most of his followers become aware of what is happening. They must be in disbelief and maybe even shock. How can this be? Surely this is the Messiah, the Chosen One of God. Has it all been just wishful thinking and not real hope?

We can imagine that his followers felt lost, intimidated and confused about what, if anything, they should do in response.

Jesus had taught them that this day would come, and that if any wanted to follow him that they, too, would need to take up their cross daily and follow him.

Have you ever seen a wrong taking place and want to do something about it, but felt unsure, anxious, or inadequate?

Prayer:

Holy God, we want to do Your will and to bring love and justice, peace and hope to Your world. We want to overcome the pain of crosses and find Easter moments of resurrection. Help us to know that we never face anything alone, but You are with us always.

## #7

## Simon Helps

After being beaten, scorned and mocked, after dragging this heavy cross through the streets, its weight starts to become unbearable. His back aches, his knees buckle, and his hands shake as he tries to grip the wood. Finally, Simon is enlisted to help him carry his cross. What a relief.

How often have you tried to carry the burden of a cross alone? There is an adage that states, “A burden shared is a burden halved, and a joy shared is a joy doubled.” Love is a relationship that is prepared to help in the hard moments, and to celebrate life with you in the joyful moments. It is all about being a gift of grace in whatever form is appropriate.

Prayer:

Gracious God, we may not always be mindful of the blessings that are ours because of Your grace. When we pray to You, hopefully we remember that grace means Your unfailing commitment to love. Love prepares us to share our strength in hard times, and to express joy for another in the beautiful moments of their life. Thank You for Your love.

