


"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. A Good Friday Stations of the Cross Devotion

Station 1: The Last Supper—Maundy Thursday—Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the  covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Reflect: Today is Good Friday and as we remember the King of Kings today, I want us all to find ways to mark his sacrifice in the ordinary and every day places we pass by every day. Observing the Stations of the Cross is way for Christians not to overlook the details of Jesus' betrayal, trial and crucifixion as we look forward to Easter morning and his resurrection.

My prayer for us today as we journey through the stations of the cross is that we seek grace in every step we take.

Station 2: Garden of Gethsemane—Matthew 26: 36-56

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁵² "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

⁵⁵ In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶ But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Reflect: Jesus goes to pray and leaves his disciples to watch. They fall asleep. How often do we let the pressures distract us from the fellowship we are offered with Christ. Jesus asks us and his disciples to pray. How often do we, like the disciples, take action in the midst of crisis, instead of praying. We fight back first when we have failed to pray.

Lord, help us to become someone who prays before all else. May our prayers be without ceasing and full of faith knowing you have already answered even before we ask. O Lord, Hear Our Prayers

Station 3: Peter Disowns Jesus—Matthew 26: 31-35; 69-75

³⁴ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

³⁵ But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

⁷³ After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don't know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Reflect: We all know the shame and regret of failing to keep a commitment to Christ or anyone who trusts us. The guilt from this can be crushing. Jesus is on his way during this journey to the cross to redeem our guilt and shame. Take this opportunity to confess and leave your guilt at this station.

Lord, your children are sinners saved only by your grace. Help us to seek grace in every step we take. O Lord, hear our prayers.

Station 4: Pilate Condemns Jesus—Matthew 27:11-26

²⁴ 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!”

Reflect: For all Pilate's power, he cannot find the courage to do what is right. So he does what is safe. Are we ever tempted to do what is safe instead of what is right?

Jesus was falsely accused. Have you been falsely accused? Perhaps you have not spoken up for others when they needed a voice.

Lord, help us to have the courage to do what is right and to speak up for others when they are falsely accused. O Lord, hear our prayers.

Station 5: The Crown of Thorns—Matthew 27: 27-31

²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ 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.

Reflect: I am confident the crown hurt—but the idea of what it represented probably hurt Jesus even more. He was being mocked and humiliated by the soldiers. During Holy Week this year, we all are being affected by the Coronavirus, the virus that literally means the

crown. Certainly some of us have it but all of us are being changed by it, in some ways temporary but some changes will be permanent, life or death changing.

Lord, we know you wore the crown for those who mocked you and for those who loved you. May we be grateful for what we do not deserve. May we find strength to trust our future to you. O Lord, have mercy on us.

Station 6: Simon Helps Carry the Cross—Matthew 27: 32-33

³² As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”).

Reflect:

The weight of the cross was a heavy burden after Jesus had been beaten by the soldiers. A simple bystander, Simon of Cyrene, was forced to help. We all face challenges we do not ask for—an unexpected illness, a loss of a loved one, a change in a job situation, or a disappointment that is heart wrenching. May we see our situation as one that God is not only aware of but acting as a loving shepherd who sees us through our darkest days and helps us with our most difficult grief.

Lord, May we take up our cross—your cross with resolution and joy. We ask you to heal us—spiritually and physically. Help us to trust you when we are frightened and help us to love others in practical ways during their difficult days. O Lord, hear our prayers.

Station 7: Jesus is crucified—Matthew 27: 34-37

³⁴ There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵ When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶ And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷ Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Reflect: The same garments that Jesus used to wash his disciples feet the day before was divided by lots by his executioners. The symbol of his service to his disciples is used to devalue Jesus as he hangs on the cross. There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. Jesus actively demonstrates that to us as he is nailed to the cross. Reflect on that that for a few moments.

Lord, we are humbled by your sacrifice. May we never forget the cost. May we never take it for granted. May we serve others even when the cost is great. May we seek YOUR grace in every step we take. O Lord, Have mercy on us.

Station 8: Jesus and The Thieves—Matthew 27:38-44

³⁸ Two thieves were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in

God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"⁴⁴ In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Reflect: Jesus was crucified with two thieves. They mocked him along with the crowds. But at some point, one of the thieves asked Jesus to save him. Salvation is available to all who ask, no matter what sin we have committed because Jesus bears our sin. There is no sin too great that Jesus' sacrifice is not sufficient.

Lord, help us to believe in the power of your forgiveness. Your grace is sufficient. O Lord, help our unbelief.

Station 9: Jesus Dies on the Cross—Matthew 27: 45-54

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, ^[a] lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").^[a]

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵² and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and^[a] went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Reflect: It's the middle of the day—it seems the world is coming to some frightening end, but the reality is our world is being given a new hope—the hope that Jesus is the Son of God and our access to him is now complete—the temple curtain is forever torn. Then, they thought you were dead. We know differently now. We come face to face with you, the holy of holies. And the earth shakes.

Lord, you gave the ultimate sacrifice on the cross. We cannot fully comprehend all that it means but we know you loved us to the end—your mercy and grace are greater than our sin. Thank you! O Lord, make us grateful.

Station 10: Buried in the Tomb—Matthew 27: 55-66

⁵⁵ Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph,^[a] and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

⁵⁷ As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big

stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Reflect: At the end of a very long day that began in the early morning hours, Jesus is dead. Most of the disciples are hiding. The women are stunned and grieving as eyewitnesses to the horrific events. They watch as Joseph from Arimathea takes Jesus' body to an empty tomb places a boulder at the opening. Pilate sends soldiers to guard the tomb. It seems it is all over. We wait for Easter Sunday to see that it is only the beginning.

Lord, we wait—knowing that you are full of grace. We seek to walk in your grace while we wait. O Lord, be gracious to us.

I hope you will take the opportunity to walk your own stations of the cross journey this Easter weekend. This Easter will be different than we have had before during my lifetime. We will gather for worship on-line with the risen Lord. See you Sunday at 10 or 11 for worship.