

Ipswich Methodist Circuit

Stations of the Cross

Holy Week 2020
5th - 11th April

Experience at your own pace the Way of the Cross through a series of images and readings depicting the Passion Story with accompanying questions for contemplation. We invite you to reflect on the love Jesus modeled for us in his willingness to die on the cross, forever illuminating a path of reconciliation for all humanity.

The Stations of the Cross commemorate Christ's last day on earth as a man. The 14 devotions, or stations, focus on specific events of Christ's last day, beginning with Jesus being sentenced to death by Pilate. Eight of the fourteen stations come generally from Scriptures, with the remaining ones being drawn from tradition and legends.

The artwork depicted here is a set of photographs that were taken of the Stations of the Cross installation in St. Mary at the Elms, Ipswich. Used with permission.

Instructions

1. Optional: Play some quiet music while you walk the Way of the Cross.
2. Start by praying the opening prayer. Then proceed to the first station.
3. At each station, focus on the picture to recall and ponder that specific event from Christ's last day, read the scripture and meditate on the reflection in the leaflet. When you are ready, pray a short prayer of your own, and then proceed to the next station, until you have visited all 14 stations on your mini pilgrimage.
4. Finish by praying the closing prayer.

Opening Prayer

God of life and love, be with me now as I take this journey on the Way of the Cross. As I recall the sacred story of Jesus' life and of his suffering and death on the cross, may I also remember that Jesus lived, died and rose so that we might understand more about you and your mercy and your love of humanity. In your graciousness, bless this holy time as I make this solemn pilgrimage. Amen.

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death



Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was starting. So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I'm innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It's your problem." All the people replied, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified. (*Matthew 27:24-26*)

Reflection: Not everyone accepted Jesus as the Messiah. When God is doing a new thing, how often do we miss God's inbreaking into our lives? As we live through this time of self-isolation, what new thing is God trying to birth in you? What old patterns of thinking, feeling and living might God be stretching for you?

Second Station: Jesus Accepts His Cross



It was customary during the festival for the governor to release to the crowd one prisoner, whomever they might choose. The governor said, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" "Barabbas," they replied. Pilate said, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify him!" But he said, "Why? What wrong has he done?" They shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"
(*Matthew 27:15, 21-23*)

Reflection: Evil can find expression in the frenzy of crowds, communities, and nations seeking to relieve their own failure, anger, guilt, and bitterness. We have seen the effects of mass hysteria with panic buying over the last few weeks. It is easy to get swept up by the crowd. Ask God to calm your fears and help you to remain strong in your power and beliefs despite the voices of disagreement that may surround you.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time



It was certainly our sickness that he carried, and our sufferings that he bore, but we thought him afflicted, struck down by God and tormented. He was pierced because of our rebellions and crushed because of our crimes. He bore the punishment that made us whole; by his wounds we are healed.
(*Isaiah 53:4-5*)

According to the legend, when Jesus fell the first time the guards were in a hurry to go home. They cruelly rushed him to get up and keep moving. The crowds pressed in but no one stepped forward to help. Instead of adoration, Jesus endured mockery.

Reflection: Think of a time when you were unfairly treated. How did it make you feel? The spread of the coronavirus may be worse because of those who have not followed some of the safeguarding rules, such as those who kept partying or went to the beach. You may have to stay isolated for longer because of the actions of others. Jesus found the strength to endure.

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother



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

Reflection: The women that he was closest too stood by Jesus until the end, even though it was hard to see what he was going through. Is there anyone that you can help who is struggling right now?

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus



When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the military coat and put his own clothes back on him. They led him away to crucify him. As they were going out, they found Simon, a man from Cyrene. They forced him to carry his cross. When they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place, they gave Jesus wine mixed with vinegar to drink. But after tasting it, he didn't want to drink it. (*Matthew 27:31-34*)

Reflection: We do not know if Simon of Cyrene was a follower or a passer-by. Think about an instance in which someone else, through word or action, lessened your burden. Is there a way, in the safety of your home, that you could lift a burden from a stranger's shoulders? Perhaps consider a gift to one of the charities like FIND that are struggling to meet demand.

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus



Then the king will reply to them, 'I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.' (*Matthew 25:40*)

According to legend, Veronica is a woman of Jerusalem who offers Jesus a profound, if simple, kindness on his sorrowful journey through Jerusalem. She wipes the sweat from his brow. Miraculously, an imprint of Jesus' face remains on the cloth.

Reflection: Think about a spontaneous act of compassion you have witnessed. Which is more challenging for you, receiving compassion or giving compassion? How can you use this time of isolation to practice both giving and receiving compassion?

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time



Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to the disciples, "Stay here while I go and pray over there." ... Then he went a short distance farther and fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it's possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want." (*Matthew 26:36,39*)

Jesus, the Son of God, falls again. He is not allowed to rest, but instead is hit and pushed, and compelled to continue. It is in this moment that we can recognize His great love for us.

Reflection: Watching someone in pain is hard, especially when we are powerless to stop it. The temptation is to avert our eyes. What injustices have you looked away from? How can your actions speak hope to the world?

Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem



A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him. Jesus turned to the women and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. The time will come when they will say, ‘Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘*Fall on us,*’ and to the hills, ‘*Cover us.*’ If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:27-31)

Reflection: Jesus, in the depths of his own pain stopped to offer a word to some women. Have you ever been so caught up in your own self-absorption, that you have failed to see the struggles of another? Who are you overlooking?

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls for the Last Time



My life is stuck in the dirt.

Now make me live again according to your promise!

I confessed my ways and you answered me.

Now teach me your statutes!

Help me understand what your precepts are about
so I can contemplate your wondrous works!

My spirit sags because of grief.

Now raise me up according to your promise!

(Psalm 119:25-28)

After a painful journey, Christ finally arrives at the foot of Mount Calvary, only to fall once again. Even though he is crushed for a third time by the weight of the cross, His love for us remains.

Reflection: Jesus did not give up. When you get weary, discouraged or depressed, think of the load that Jesus carried. Pray for the strength to get up again.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Clothing



The governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the governor’s house, and they gathered the whole company[a] of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a red military coat on him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand. Then they bowed down in front of him and mocked him, saying, “Hey! King of the Jews!” After they spit on him, they took the stick and struck his head again and again. When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the military coat and put his own clothes back on him. They led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:27-31)

Reflection: Have you ever lost your dignity? Or been harassed, teased or bullied? Take a moment to sit with Jesus in his pain.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross



After they crucified him, they divided up his clothes among them by drawing lots. They sat there, guarding him. They placed above his head the charge against him. It read, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." They crucified with him two outlaws, one on his right side and one on his left. Those who were walking by insulted Jesus, shaking their heads and saying, "So you were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, were you? Save yourself! If you are God's Son, come down from the cross." In the same way, the chief priests, along with the legal experts and the elders, were making fun of him, saying, "He saved others, but he can't save himself. He's the king of Israel, so let him come down from the cross now. Then we'll believe in him. He trusts in God, so let God deliver him now if he wants to. He said, 'I'm God's Son.'" The outlaws who were crucified with him insulted him in the same way. (*Matthew 27:35-44*)

Reflection: Imagining Jesus, or anyone, being nailed to a cross is unbearable. His courage and compassion for us is immeasurable. How much would you be willing to give up, or to endure, for those you love most?

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross



From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. At about three Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?" After hearing him, some standing there said, "He's calling Elijah." One of them ran over, took a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink. But the rest of them said, "Let's see if Elijah will come and save him." Again Jesus cried out with a loud shout. Then he died. (*Matthew 27:45-50*)

Reflection: Jesus gave all he had for us. Jesus loves you. Take some deep breaths. As you breathe in, say *Jesus loves me*. As you breathe out, say *Thank you Jesus*.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross



That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus. He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate gave him permission to take it. (*Matthew 27:57-58*)

Reflection: Think about a loved one you have lost. What actions keep their memory alive?

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb



Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting in front of the tomb. (*Matthew 27:59-61*)

Reflection: What hope is in your heart for your future and the world's future? Offer it up in prayer.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, we believe that in Jesus' life, death and resurrection we have the great sign of hope for the world. In this world, people love with compassion, forgive without regret, and work for justice without counting the cost. May we go this day blessed by your great love, inspired by the self-less love of Jesus, and enlivened with the hope of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Easter story did not end on Friday with Jesus' death.
The Easter story begins anew on Sunday with his resurrection!
We are Easter people of hope, resurrection and new life.
*May you be blessed this Easter season and every season of your life.
God loves you and so do we.*

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Scripture quotations are taken from the Common English Bible.



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and an online service on Easter Day.