

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

Station 1: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-41)

We begin this station by reading slowly this passage from Matthew 26:36-41. As I read this passage, imagine the scene, consider the emotions and conversations. What do you see? What do you feel?

Read: Matthew 26:36-41

At this first station, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we encounter Jesus in his moment of deepest sorrow and pain. So often, we quickly focus on the fact that the disciples fall asleep, but notice first the fact that in this scene, Jesus is not alone. The scriptures say “Jesus went with the disciples...” (Matthew 26:36). He then took his most trusted friends – Peter, James, and John – with him as he began the painful journey that would ultimately lead to new life. Although we tend to give them a bad rap for falling asleep three times, it’s worth noting that, at least they were present with Jesus in these moments in the garden.

Jesus, like us, experienced the full weight of his humanity and the depth of sorrow that is possible in this life. We all have moments of deep sorrow when we need to be surrounded by the love of our friends and family, especially those in the community of faith. As you begin this journey to the cross with Jesus, remember you are not alone. Remember also “at night we may cry, but when morning comes we will celebrate” (Psalm 30:5, CEV).

Take a moment to write down a few of the trusted people in your community. Who do you turn to for comfort in sadness?

Now, take a moment to share your grief and sadness with the Lord, as Jesus did, remembering that even as you share these things with the Lord, you are not alone. You may even choose to reach out to people in the community you previously listed to ask them to partner with you in prayer.

Question for Children: Who can you ask for comfort when you feel sad? Draw a picture to express this relationship.

Station 2: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested (Mark 14:43-46)

We begin this station by reading slowly this passage from Matthew 26:36-41. As I read this passage, imagine the scene, consider the emotions and conversations. What do you see? What do you feel?

Read: Mark 14:43-46

In this scene, Judas disregards all he has seen and known about Jesus for the lure of money and perhaps notoriety with the religious elite. He even goes as far as to kiss Jesus on the cheek in order to signify who Jesus was to the leaders. Grab some coins and hold them in your hand. As you hold these coins, let's say together the words of the Apostle's Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Take a moment to reflect on the words we just said together. Let them sink deep in your mind and heart, as truth concerning the faith we have in Christ. Consider the weight of these words versus the weight of the coins in your hand. In Judas' betrayal, he distanced himself from God, the Father, from Jesus, the Lord, and from the communion of Saints, the disciples who would have been like family. Calling to mind *what we believe* reminds us of the depth of the consequences of betrayal.

As we take a moment in silent reflection, consider where Christ may be calling you into deeper belief and faithfulness today.

Children's Version

When you betray a friend you hurt them by telling a lie about them. Judas was one of the twelve apostles, and one of Jesus' friends. But he also betrayed Jesus by lying to the priests and police about who Jesus was. The priests gave Judas thirty pieces of silver in return for betraying Jesus. While Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas showed the soldiers where he was. Because Judas told lies about Jesus, Jesus was arrested.

Station 3: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71)

We begin this station by reading slowly the words of Luke 22:66-71. Listen closely to what is happening. What does the council assembly say? What does Jesus say?

Read Luke 22:66-71

Although the council is attempting to condemn Jesus, this becomes a moment of testimony for Jesus. Even under the most extreme persecution, Jesus tells the truth about who he is. This story becomes a promise that Jesus truly is the Son of God. In how Jesus loved, how Jesus spoke, and how Jesus lived, he continually proved that he was the Son of God, and he proves it again as he stands in front of the council. We, too, as believers are called to live as God's children, to follow in the ways of Jesus, to speak truthfully, love generously, and sacrifice authentically.

Together, we will pray slowly and breathe deeply, thinking about what it means to live truthfully in the ways of Jesus.

Breathe in deeply.... Breathe out slowly.

Place your hands on your chin or lips.

*Repeat after me: **With this mouth, I will speak God's truth.***

Breathe in deeply.... Breathe out slowly.

Put your hands out in front of you with your palms open.

*Repeat after me: **With these hands, I will serve my neighbors and God's world.***

Breathe in deeply.... Breathe out slowly.

Put your hands on your heart.

*Repeat after me: **With this heart, I will share God's love.***

Breathe in deeply.... Breathe out slowly.

Put your hands on your head.

*Repeat after me: **In all things, I will remember that I am God's child.***

We conclude by spending time in quiet reflection, asking God to reveal how we might speak God's truth, serve our neighbors and world, share God's love, and remember that you are loved by God. Take special note of what area of authentic living God is calling you to today.

For children, think about what it means to honor God with your words, actions, and love.

Station 4: Jesus is Denied by Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)

We begin this station by lighting three candles. Then, turn off the lights in your space. Depending on the time of day, it may not be completely dark, but imagine that it is dark besides the light of your candle.

As we read the passage slowly, blow out a candle each time Peter denies knowing Jesus.

Read Matthew 26:69-75

As we sit in darkness, we think of Peter's bitter weeping, the hope that had fled from his heart and mind. Just weeks before, Peter had mustered up the courage to profess that Jesus was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 13:15). This statement radiates light and hope concerning who Jesus is. But now, when questioned, he denied he even knew his friend and Savior. Here, we don't see how Jesus responds to Peter's denial, but only what Peter's denial does to him. The cost of his denial is hopelessness, darkness, and bitter weeping. In denying Jesus, Peter lets go of hope for that moment.

Take a moment to consider where darkness may have crept into your life, where hope is lacking.

For centuries, Christians have practiced a simple meditative prayer called *The Jesus Prayer*. We will pray this together slowly and repeatedly, considering our need for mercy and our need for hope. Let God's mercy wash over even your darkest moments as we pray.

Inhale. Fill your whole self with breath.

Feel air in your lungs. And then say:

Lord Jesus Christ, son of God,

Exhale slowly and fully. And then say:

Have mercy on me, a sinner.

We will keep repeating this, but I will mute myself so that you can speak these words at your own rhythm and time. Families, feel free to switch to the Children's adaptation of the prayer if you'd like, which is written in the booklet.

Children's Adaptation of Jesus Prayer:

Inhale. Fill your whole self with breath.

Feel air in your lungs. And then say:

Lord Jesus, forgive me with your grace,

Exhale slowly and fully. And then say:

And fill me with your love.

Station 5: Jesus is Judged by Pilate (Matthew 27:15-26)

We begin by reading slowly the passage and imagining the scene. What strikes you about how Pontius Pilate behaves, about what he does?

Read Matthew 27:15-26

In front of this crowd stands the Savior of the world, the Son of God, and yet the crowds demand his crucifixion and let a guilty man go instead. Pilate has a moment of clarity, seeing that Jesus is innocent, and yet he “washes his hands” of the situation and gives the crowd what they want. In the letter of James, it says this, “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” Pilate is physically near God, standing right next to Jesus, and he does wash his hands, but neither of these things matter because Pilate cares more about pleasing the crowd than being in right relationship with God. Together we will sing the song *Give Us Clean Hands*. Let us pray these words with the hope that we can truly purify our hearts and give our sin over to the Lord for forgiveness.

Play or Sing Give Us Clean Hands

With the time that is left, consider where God might be challenging you to live more authentically and where you may need to seek forgiveness from the Lord. Think about a time you refused to stand up for what is right and just by telling yourself “it’s not my problem”. Ask God to give you courage to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly and authentically in our world.

Reflection for Children:

Ask: What does it mean to be responsible?

Explain: Pilate tries to say that he isn’t responsible for Jesus dying, even though he is the one who could have told them that Jesus wasn’t guilty.

Ask: Have you ever not told the truth because you didn’t want to be responsible for something you’ve done?

Explain: When we ask God to give us clean hands, we are saying that we want to be brave enough to live honestly, tell the truth, and do the right thing. Sometimes we “pretend” like we’re doing the right thing, like when Pilate washes his hands, but we are asking Jesus to help us *actually* do the right thing.

Pray: Dear Jesus, help me to be brave and to do the right thing, even when it is difficult. Amen.

Station 6: Jesus Bears the Cross (John 19:13-17)

We begin by reading slowly this passage, hearing the crowds, letting the weight of the scene weigh on us as we read.

Read John 19:13-17

Have a few rocks and the map on hand. As Pilate gives Jesus over to be crucified, Jesus carries the weight of the cross with him. On the rock you have, write down something that has been weighing on you: a sinful behavior in your life, an injustice you see around you, an uncertainty or anxiety.

Take this stone and hold it in your hand or put it in your pocket. As you look at the map, consider not only the weight of what you are holding, but the weight of the broken systems and brokenness in our world: brokenness that has led to food shortages, civil wars, coups, murder, racism, classism, sexism, and so much more. Write down on the map some of the brokenness you see in our world.

As Jesus carries his own cross up to Golgotha, he carries the weight of our sin and also the weight of our world. He carries the brokenness of our systems and the brokenness in our lives, and his death and resurrection speak the potential for life, forgiveness, and healing into each of these places. As we pray now, lift up the places that need redemption and imagine that Jesus is carrying those burdens for us.

Repeat these words after me:

**O Lord, you carry my sin.
O Lord, you carry my pain.
Oh Lord, you carry our brokenness.
Oh Lord, you carry our shame.
Oh Lord, you carry injustice.
Oh Lord, you carry violence.
Oh Lord, you carry recklessness.
You carry your cross, Oh Lord,
To bring us forgiveness.
Forgive us, oh Lord.
Renew us, oh Lord.
Teach us your ways.**

Amen

You may choose to hold onto your stone, but at some point, let it go, either by tossing it outside, or putting it away somewhere. Jesus has carried that weight for you, so that you no longer need to carry it. Jesus has forgiven you, so you are no longer bound by sin. As you look at the map, pray over it. Ask God to bring his hope, peace, forgiveness, and healing to the broken systems in our world... and pray that the Lord might show you how you can be a part of that healing.

Closing Stations

Station Seven: John 19:18-25, “King of the Jews”

As we come back together, I will invite each household or each person to light a candle for our final stations. Also, prepare your communion elements as we will share in communion together. We will reflect together on the account of Jesus’ crucifixion in the Gospel of John, beginning by reading slowly John 19:18-25.

Read John 19:18-25

Take a moment and look around your house. Look for something that is of great importance to you. Also, find something you need everyday, such as clothing or water. Children, you might go and grab something that fits these categories. In this passage, Jesus gets stripped of some of his vital possessions: his clothing. So much of life is us gathering possessions: possessions we need such as clothing and shelter, possessions that we want, such as books, toys, cars, and other things, possessions that we’re proud of and we want others to see. In Jesus’ final moments on the cross, when he barely has anything left, his clothing is stripped from him too.

It feels weighty enough that Jesus’ clothes being taken away leaves Jesus nearly naked on the cross, but then, in the presence of the one true King, the one and only Lord, the soldiers are so distracted with dividing these clothes among themselves and casting lots, that they don’t even pay attention to Jesus on the cross, the savior who was taking on the sins of the world in that very moment.

Like the soldiers, possessions and worries can distract us, leading us to focus more on our possessions than on the presence of our savior.

1. Take one or two dice from your bag, at least one per person. Roll the dice.
2. For each dot that comes up, silently name or write something that distracts you from Jesus’ presence in your life.
3. Confess these distractions to God, and ask that God would empower you to focus on Christ instead.

As we read on, notice that while the soldiers are distracted, Jesus’ attention is still on caring for others.

Read John 19:25-27

Remember that Jesus is present to care for us. Even in his time of great suffering, when he had been stripped of all his possessions, he poured out love and care for his mother and disciple from the cross. This is part of what it is to live in community, to come alongside one another and support one another, to struggle and suffer together, to walk in the ways of Jesus together. We will now celebrate Holy Communion, remembering that even as people scorned, ignored Jesus, gave away his possessions, and were crucifying him, Jesus poured out love, forgiveness, and grace through the shedding of his blood on the cross. Just as he did in that upper room with his disciples, in the upper room when he said:

Communion Liturgy

Lord’s Prayer

Communion

Song?

Unlike the holy cup we just experienced, Jesus’ last drink is sour wine from a sponge, the drink given to him by the soldiers when he says, “I am thirsty”. We will read these last words from Jesus now, reflecting on the forgiveness we receive through Christ’s death. Before we read, I encourage you to once again turn off the lights

in your space. When you hear the words, “it is finished”, blow out your candle. We will end the service with this reading and a time of silence. Stay for as long as you want. You may choose to leave the Zoom, but still take a time in silence meditation. As you sit in the silence and perhaps even the darkness, consider where God feels absent. Consider the darkness of the days between Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Reflect on where you feel alone, where others feel alone. Think about your life before the light of Christ came in. And then pray, for new life, new hope, new light to break through the darkness and break through the silence. Never lose hope - because Easter morning is coming.

Read John 19:28-30

Silence.