

A graphic for Passion Week Friday. It features a purple rectangular box with the words "PASSION WEEK" in large, white, serif capital letters. Below this box, the word "FRIDAY" is written in white, sans-serif capital letters. The background is a collage of images: a landscape with green hills and a sunset sky on the right, and a close-up of a textured surface, possibly a crucifix, in the center and left.

PASSION WEEK

FRIDAY

Good morning. It's Good Friday of Passion Week. It's titled Good because what happens will save people from their sin. And that's more than good. But make no mistake, for Jesus and his disciples, it is most difficult.

As sundown comes on Thursday, Friday begins. The disciples have prepared the Passover meal, and they are gathered. Matthew 26:20. When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the 12. And while they were eating, he said, truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.

They were very sad. And they began to say to him, one after the other, surely you don't mean me, Lord. Jesus replied, " The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go, just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man.

It would be better for him if he had not been born." Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi." Jesus answered, " You have said so." 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.'" Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until. Until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus told them, " This very night, you will all fall away on account of me. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter replied, "even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

Truly I tell you. Jesus answered, " This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. We'll learn if they did.

The scriptures continue. Matthew 26:36. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, " Sit here while I go over there and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful, troubled.

Then he said to them, " My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with me." And going a little further, he fell on his face. And he prayed, saying, " My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping.

And he said to Peter, "So could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, " My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." And 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 again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, " Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

And while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the 12, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them. The one I kiss is the man. Arrest him.

And going at once to Jesus, Judas said, greetings, Rabbi, and kissed him. In the typical Jewish sign of respect. Judas took Jesus' hand and kissed it. But there was nothing respectful about it. Jesus knows what Judas is doing, but he doesn't stop him.

Because it is a part of God's sovereign plan to get Jesus to the cross. Verse 50. Jesus replied, Friend, do what you came for. Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, Peter reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Put your sword back in its place, Jesus said to him. For all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels. The point Jesus' life was not being taken from him. He willingly gave it up to be a sacrifice for our sins.

And what did his disciples do? Well, they fled in fear because they had not prepared themselves in prayer. Jesus is taken first to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, to commence the first of six trials, three by the Jewish leaders and three by the Romans.

While there, we learn about Peter's wavering faith. Matthew 26:69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him.

You also were with Jesus of Galilee, she said. But he denied it before them all. I don't know what you're talking about, he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, this fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth. He denied it with an oath, I don't know the man.

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away. Then he began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, I don't know the man. And immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Isn't it true our greatest moments are when we confess our faith, and our most grievous moments are our denials. Well, Jesus is taken back and forth until he finally ends up before Governor Pilate, who questions him, hears his answers, and makes the judgment. I find no fault in him. But when he presents his decision to the religious leaders, they will not have it. They want Jesus dead.

So, seeking to appease them, Pilate has Jesus flogged, whipped 39 times to bring him near death. He hands them over to the guards who form a crown of thorns and mash it into his skull. They place a robe on him, mock him, spit on him, slap him. And like a lamb being led to slaughter, Jesus does not open his mouth. In fact, the only time he speaks up is to minister to those who are before him.

But to defend his innocence, he does not do so. Pilate believes the people will be satisfied as he presents a beaten, bloodied Jesus. However, they are not only death will satisfy them. Matthew 27:15. It was the governor's custom at the feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd.

At that time, they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So, when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, which one do you want me to release to you? Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ? Verse 20. The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

So, they cried out, Barabbas, what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ? And they all answered, "Crucify him. Why? What crime has he committed?" Asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him." And 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. And all the people answered, " Let his blood be on us and our children."

And so it would be. Jesus is given a crossbeam to carry down the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering. Along the way, he is mocked and jeered. He finally falls beneath the weight of it. And another will carry it the rest of the way.

When they arrive at Golgotha, they lay his body onto the cross and nail it. His hands nailed, his feet nailed. He still wears the crown of thorns. The cross is lifted up between heaven and earth and set in place. And there Jesus hangs for hours between two thieves.

The suffering is horrific. No wonder he only spoke seven brief phrases. And each one a statement that revealed something of benefit to those who heard and to us who now read them. Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. Today you will be with me in paradise.

Woman. Behold thy son. Behold thy mother. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

I thirst.

It is finished. That's a statement of his accomplishment. The sacrifice was made. And then finally, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. The sacrifice was successful.

And with that, Jesus breathed his last and died. To confirm his death, a spear was thrust into his side. There was no reaction. Blood and water flowed, confirming his death. His body would be taken off the cross and buried in a tomb.

Guards would put a stone in place to make sure his disciples didn't steal the body. Tomorrow we'll reflect on the day between Jesus' death and his resurrection. For today, we are humbled and grateful for the sacrifice made for us. Be grateful. Say that with me.

Be grateful. All through this day. Be grateful. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you for suffering and dying for us.

Father, thank you for forgiving our sins and cleansing us today. We are grateful. And now you continue. God bless.