



Journey to the Cross

Good Friday service
Grace Honolulu

April 7, 2023

I. Jesus Celebrates the Passover

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *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."* When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Matthew 26:26-30

Reading:

It would be a Passover like no other.

God instructed the Israelites to celebrate the Passover every year to remember how He had rescued His people from slavery and bondage in Egypt. They would read about their history of 400 years of slavery in Egypt and joyously celebrate God's deliverance and faithfulness to keep His promises.

They would also partake in a special meal: lamb to remind them of the sacrifice that protected them from the final plague – the death of the firstborn, bitter herbs to remember the difficulty of being enslaved, and unleavened bread to remind them of how their ancestors left Egypt so quickly that their bread didn't have time to rise.

Think about Jesus walking into this Passover meal, knowing that it would be his last meal before giving His life. It probably didn't feel like a time of joyful celebration for Him. He was preparing to step into the embodiment of the True sacrifice that the Passover meal had been foreshadowing. His heart must have ached as He looked around the table, knowing that these men whom He loved so dearly would betray Him and deny Him within hours.

He explained to them that His body would be broken and His blood shed to pay the price to rescue people from their sins. He urged them to remember this sacrifice when they partook of the bread and wine in the future.

Jesus was the fulfillment of what was before, only a shadow. Through Jesus, God provided a way to rescue people from their sins. This Passover meal that Jesus shared with His disciples was the first communion.

To this day, we carry the symbols of communion with us as a powerful way of remembering and reflecting on what Jesus endured for us.

We will have a time of communion at the end of our service. May it be powerful and meaningful as you consider the extent of what Jesus did because of His great love for you.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for the sacrifice You made when Your body was broken and Your blood was shed so we could have forgiveness of sins and a relationship with You. Please help us to understand the magnitude of Your grace and mercy more fully.

Reflection:

II. Jesus Prays in the Garden

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."*³⁷ *He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.*³⁸ *Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

³⁹ *Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*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."*

⁴² *He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*⁴³ *When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.*⁴⁴ *So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.*⁴⁵ *Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.*⁴⁶ *Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"* Matthew 26:36-46

Reading:

In this beautiful garden, Jesus is aware of the full scope of what He's about to endure – the beating, the mocking, the crucifixion, bearing the crushing load of every sin ever committed.

As we consider the peacefulness of this garden, the quietness of the night, think about the anguish Jesus must have felt and the mental strain He endured as He wrestled with the Father's will.

If you've ever had to wrestle through a difficult decision and been in anguish over making the final call, Jesus can relate. He had to choose to accept the most brutal and difficult assignment anyone has ever been tasked with, given to Him by His own Father.

Throughout the Old Testament, the cup signifies God's wrath. It was a symbol of God's judgment against sin. Jesus was the only person who lived with no sin to contribute to the cup. He didn't deserve God's wrath, yet in the Garden of Gethsemane, He surrendered to God's will and chose obedience to the very end.

The Garden of Gethsemane shows us that just when we needed someone the most, Jesus rose to the occasion. No one else could do for us what Jesus did, and He was faithful to get it done at significant cost to Himself. We can rely on Him who was faithful to His Father, faithful to God's mission, and faithful to us.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for accepting Your mission; thank You for being the one person whom we can fully place our trust. You knew what it would cost, yet You drank from the cup anyway. You didn't run away. Thank You that although I deserve God's wrath, You drank from that cup in my place. Thank You for being obedient and creating a way to reconcile me to my Heavenly Father and remove the burden of my sin. Amen.

Reflection: _____

III. Jesus is Betrayed and Arrested

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests¹⁵ and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver.¹⁶ From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. Matthew 26:14-16*

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.”⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.⁵⁰ Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. Matthew 26:47-50

Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. Matthew 26:56

Reading:

In the Old Testament culture, thirty pieces of silver were the value of an enslaved person accidentally gored to death by an ox (Exodus 32:32). In a prophetic fulfillment that occurred centuries later, that same sum of thirty pieces of silver was all it took for Judas to agree to hand over Jesus to the religious leaders.

Imagine Jesus looking into the eyes of Judas, knowing what was about to happen - the sting of betrayal that pierced His heart. Yet, Jesus continued to love Judas, even calling him "friend" in the moment of betrayal.

Judas wasn't the only one to deny Jesus. Just a few verses following Judas' betrayal, Matthew tells us that all the disciples deserted Him and fled. Jesus spent over three years teaching, serving, traveling with, living with, and loving these men, and in the end, they all deserted Him.

Have you ever been betrayed by someone you loved? Someone you trusted? Have you experienced the pain of someone you love the most hurting you in the deepest part of your soul?

Jesus understands.

Or, perhaps you relate more to the disciples in this story? Have you been tempted to flee to your comfort and security, preserving your reputation rather than following Jesus to the service of the cross? Are you running to Jesus, or are you running from Him? Are you speaking up for Him in your family, work, and school, or are you remaining silent?

Are you willing to stand with Him and for Him, completely alone, if need be, or will you flee?

Prayer:

Jesus, at times I have felt betrayed and all alone, but I now see that You were with me all along, knowing exactly how I felt. Though it was painful, I thank You for allowing me to share in a small way Your sufferings. At other times, Lord, I confess that I have been the betrayer. I have denied You and ignored You. Forgive me, Jesus, for the times I chased after my own desires and placed them in higher importance than You. I recommit my heart to value You above all else, to treasure the faith You've made possible and to give all I have to be a servant of Your kingdom. Amen.

Reflection: _____

IV. Jesus is Condemned to Die

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome. ⁵⁹ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. Matthew 27:57-59*

“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked. They all answered, “Crucify him!” ²³ “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!” 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!” ²⁵ All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!” ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus scourged, and handed him over to be crucified. Matthew 27:22-26

Reading:

Jesus was a man who was tried, accused, and condemned by a system relentlessly trying to prove Him guilty and see Him sentenced to death.

There had never been anyone like Jesus. He loved so radically and modeled such a different way of living.

The religious leaders didn't even know what to do with Him. Everything about Jesus deeply offended them to the core of their being. He was threatening their beliefs and their power. Their rage and hatred ultimately drove the very nails into Jesus' body.

Jesus was perfectly and completely innocent. Overnight, Jesus was convicted in a Jewish trial and a Roman trial. Both were riddled with false testimony, injustice, and no evidence.

The very people Jesus came to save were the ones who condemned Him to death. Jesus endured the shame of a false sentence to win us back to our Heavenly Father.

Although Pilate washed his hands and said Jesus' death was the responsibility of the Jewish people, he was not innocent of Jesus' blood. He knew Jesus had done no wrong. He knew that handing Jesus over was consenting to His death.

Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? Imagine being falsely accused of something so heinous that it carried the death sentence.

Jesus accepted this shame because He was more concerned about completing His Father's will and accomplishing our salvation than His comfort or reputation.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, forgive me for demanding better treatment from others than Your Son received. I am grateful that there wasn't a single legitimate charge against Your Son; I am thankful that He was willing to endure the lies in order that I could one day know the truth. Help me stand for truth as Jesus did – with courage and integrity. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflection:

V. Jesus is Mocked, Scourged, and Stripped

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him⁶⁸ and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?" Matthew 26:67-68*

Then [Pilate] released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus scourged...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. Matthew 27:26-31

Reading:

As horrific as the cross was, it was merely the culmination, not the beginning, of Jesus' suffering. The kind of torture that the Roman and Jewish leaders inflicted on Jesus was so painful that Roman law forbade it for any Roman citizen. The victim was bound to the scourging post and beaten with the flagellum, which pierced and ripped open the skin with each strike. Many didn't even survive this.

As if the physical pain wasn't enough, it came with arrogant mockery. The crown of thorns Jesus was forced to wear contained thorns sharp and strong enough to dig into the skin. The beatings, mocking, and shame Jesus endured during His final hours demonstrated the Jewish leaders' hateful malice toward Him. There was no place on Jesus' body untouched by beating, scourging, shame, and torture.

While the enemy intended to defeat Jesus through beating, scourging, and torture, God turned these into instruments of salvation. He brought the peace of His presence into the suffering, hope instead of despair, and healing instead of hurt.

Whatever satan or this world throws against you to harm or destroy you, God can use those same events to develop maturity, give you hope, bring healing, and build your character. God is able to build heavenly glory out of earthly pain.

Prayer:

Jesus, it is overwhelming to think about how Your body was crushed on my behalf. Thank You for being pierced for me. As You turned these instruments of torture and hatred into tools of healing and salvation, I pray You will do the same in my own life. In Your name I pray, Amen.

Reflection: _____

VI. Jesus is Given His Cross and Simon Helps Him

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *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").*
Matthew 27:32-33

Reading:

After Jesus was horrifically beaten, He was given His cross to carry on His shoulders as we walked the path to where He would be crucified. This path was appropriately called the Via Dolorosa or "Way of Sorrow."

Wood wasn't common around Jerusalem, so crosses were often re-used. Most of the images of the cross we see today are clean and polished, but Jesus' cross was most likely a scuffed, stained, filthy, bloody piece of a tree that had borne the death of several others but was soon to become the path to life for the entire creation.

As you look at the cross, imagine being beaten, your flesh torn apart, spit on, hungry, thirsty, and then having to carry a heavy cross uphill in a significantly depleted state, knowing that you were stumbling your way to your death.

At any moment, Jesus could have called upon the forces of Heaven to intervene. He could have avoided shedding another drop of blood. Yet, Jesus kept walking. He was determined to complete His mission of paying the penalty for sin, so you wouldn't have to.

Seeing that Jesus was struggling to carry His cross to Calvary, the soldiers enlisted a man named Simon of Cyrene from the crowd to help Him.

Do you have someone like Simon who has helped you when you felt weak, weary, discouraged, or perhaps couldn't take another step? Take a moment to consider the people who have been influential in your life and your walk with God.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for making this journey to the cross. Thank You for enduring when You were exhausted. Thank You for the sacrifice You made which makes my journey from spiritual death to spiritual life possible. Thank You for surrounding me with people who have helped me carry heavy burdens and point me to You. I am so grateful that You have given me a spiritual family to encourage and support me.

Reflection: _____

VII. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *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.* ³⁸ *Two rebels 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. Matthew 27:34-44*

He was delivered over because of our transgressions. Romans 4:25

Reading:

Some people think that because they didn't drive the nails into Jesus' hands and feet, they don't bear any of the responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ.

Paul tells us in Romans that our sins – my sins, your sins – put Jesus on the cross. He needed to be *delivered over because of our transgressions*.

The cross requires us to accept our part in Christ's crucifixion. We must bear our responsibility by admitting and understanding that our sins led the Son of God to the cross and made it necessary for these events to occur. You may not often think about how your sin led Jesus to be killed, but it did. You may not have intended that "doing your own thing" would require Jesus to endure such a brutal death, but it did. Our sins nailed Jesus to the cross.

Think about the sins that have weighed you down or the memories that continue to condemn you. Picture writing them down and nailing them to the cross. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, our sin was nailed there too. The sacrifice was made, and the price has been paid for our forgiveness.

Let the cross be a powerful reminder that you have left your old life behind and Jesus has made you a new creation in Him.

Prayer:

Jesus, You are my only hope for forgiveness of sins. Because of what You have done for me on the cross brings I can approach You boldly and enjoy a relationship with You. My access to the Father, assurance of forgiveness of sins, and entry into eternal life, are all because you willingly laid down Your life to pay the penalty for my sins. I trust You and I worship You for who You are and what You've done. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflection: _____

VIII. Jesus Dies

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... 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, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). 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 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!" Matt 27:45-54

Reading:

In that final moment before Jesus died, He experienced the total crushing weight of the world's sins upon Him – all the darkness, evil, hatred, violence, injustice, lawlessness, and selfishness was thrust on Him.

Probably the part that tore Jesus apart the most was the reality that because He bore the weight of our sin, He also experienced the wrath of God. His loving Father, with whom He enjoyed constant communion, turned away from Him. The pain was so great that one of Jesus' final statements was, "*Why have you forsaken me?*"

Jesus died in darkness, abandoned by all His friends and alienated from the comfort and friendship of His Father. When Jesus died, it was the middle of the day, yet Scripture tells us that the world went dark. For three hours, the sun did not shine. Perhaps God painted the sky black as a way of mourning the death of His son.

Imagine what it was like to be a bystander at the crucifixion and see the sky go dark. It was such an intense experience that one of the Roman centurions guarding Jesus exclaimed, "*Surely he was the Son of God!*" The first person who acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God was one of the people contributing to His death. Possibly others, too, were wondering if they had made a mistake in putting Jesus to death.

Jesus is the light of the world. His presence illuminates everything around us. Without Jesus, there is no light, no hope.

The crucifixion was the saddest hour in all humanity – the world was filled with complete darkness. It would seem that hope was lost, but thankfully this is not where the story ends. This darkness signifies that Jesus completed His mission, the price was paid, and His work was finished.

Prayer:

Jesus, there is no way we will ever be able to truly know or understand how it felt to bear our sins on that cross. We will never know the extent of the darkness You experience in those final moments or the anguish of being separated from the Father. As I reflect on Your final moments on earth wrapped in human flesh, all I can say is, "Thank You." Thank You for finishing the work and being obedient even to death because of Your great love for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflection:

IX. Jesus is Buried

Scripture:

This is the Word of God... *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. Matthew 27:57-61*

Reading:

Think about how Jesus' disciples and followers must have felt after Jesus died. They had just watched their leader, who they had followed and given three years of their life, be wrongly accused and suffer a horrific death.

They believed He was the long-awaited Messiah, but now He was gone. With the death of Jesus came the death of their hopes and dreams, and they were left alone, hopeless, and confused.

They were not able to save Him. Their hearts must have ached as they longed to be with Him again! Imagine the shame, failure, and despair that set in as they reflected on how they had abandoned and denied their Lord when He needed them the most. Consider the fear and anxiety they may have felt, knowing that if the Jewish leaders came for Jesus, they might come for them next.

Have you gone through a season where you were confused or anxious? Uncertain about the future?

God promises to be with us. He says that He will never leave us or abandon us. Trust Him to bring clarity in the seasons of uncertainty.

In the darkness of Friday and the uncertainty of Saturday, Jesus is at work to make everything new. This includes you – In Christ, God can make you a new creation. This is the Good News of the Gospel!

*“The Gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ.
He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died...
in our place. Three days later, He rose from the dead proving that He is the Son of God,
and offering the gift of salvation and forgiveness of sins to anyone
who repents and believes in him.”* Dr. Rice Brooks

Prayer:

Lord, sometimes my life feels like it must have felt that Saturday after You died – confusing, clouded, hopeless. I thank You that I can have peace even in those moments because I know that You are always with me. Because of Your death and resurrection, I can have hope because You are at work and making all things new. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflection: _____