

Wednesday Night Lenten Series Stations of the Cross Service

April 1, 2020; 6:30 pm
First Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, IL

Typically, this service involves walking from station to station. Since we are sharing this service online, I will be filming each station in a different place in our community. After each station, there will be a question and time for silent reflection.

OPENING

Early in the Christian movement, Jesus' followers remembered Jesus' execution and the places where various parts occurred, recounting the details. By the Middle Ages, pilgrimages to Jerusalem for Holy Week were like the Muslim Haj—a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage. When people couldn't go to Jerusalem to walk the *via Dolorosa* with Christ, the ritual of the stations of the cross was born so that people could journey with Christ spiritually in their own parish devotion.

We're going to participate in the ancient tradition of remembering Christ's death by doing an ecumenical version. But I must forewarn you: this worship is not a comfortable journey. For some, the stations of the cross can be an intense spiritual journey where our souls are laid bare before God. For others, we just want it to end because it's too overwhelming, so we check out at various places. However, your response is ok. You're not spiritually defective regardless of how this strikes you. So, knowing that no one here will judge, just enter the experience open to the Lord's presence. You may want to return to the stations later to spend more time in contemplation before the Lord.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Come, let us walk with Christ along the way of his cross.

All: Where you go, we will follow, Lord.

FIRST STATION *Jesus is Betrayed and Arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane*

Matthew 26:36-41 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Mark 14:43-46 While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely." He came and immediately went over to him and said, "Rabbi." And he kissed him. At this they laid hands on him and arrested him.

SILENT REFLECTION

Where are we asleep when God-with-us is sorrowful unto death?

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

MUSIC (*as travel to next station*)

SECOND STATION *Jesus is Condemned by the Religious Council*

Luke 22:66-71 When day came the council of elders of the people met, both chief priests and scribes, and they brought him before their Sanhedrin. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us," but he replied to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I question, you will not respond. But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further need have we for testimony? We have heard it from his own mouth."

SILENT REFLECTION

How have we participated in religious groups that condemn God-with us?

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

MUSIC (*as travel to next station*)

THIRD STATION *Jesus is Scourged and Condemned by Crowd*

John 19:1-3 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly.

John 19:6, 15-17 When the chief priests and the guards saw [Jesus] they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him." . . . They cried out, "Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus . . . out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.

SILENT REFLECTION

How do we participate in groups that beat up the Christ in others?

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

MUSIC (*as travel to next station*)

FOURTH STATION *Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene*

Mark 15:21 The Roman police pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

SILENT REFLECTION

How have we participated in religious groups that condemn God-with us?

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

FIFTH STATION *Jesus is Crucified*

Luke 23:33-34 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

SILENT REFLECTION

Consider: While we were in the act of crucifying and mocking him, Christ begged for our forgiveness.

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

MUSIC (*as travel to next station*)

SIXTH STATION *Jesus Promises His Kingdom*

Luke 23:39-43 Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

SILENT REFLECTION

How do we want Jesus to remember us from his sovereign throne?

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

All: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

MUSIC (*as travel to next station*)

SEVENTH STATION *Jesus Dies on the Cross and is Placed in the Tomb*

Luke 23:44-46 It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"; and when he had said this, he breathed his last.

Matthew 27:57-60 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed.

SILENT REFLECTION

ASCRPTION OF PRAISE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Through your faithfulness, you have redeemed the world.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, who stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who live in tombs of darkness to knowledge and love of your blessed freedom won for us through Jesus Christ to whom be all honor and glory and dominion now and forevermore. For the honor of your name. **Amen.**

CHARGE

Matthew 26:41, Joel 2:14

Watch and pray. Who knows, but that God may yet relent and leave a blessing behind?

DEPARTURE IN SILENCEⁱ

ⁱ Service is from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Theology and Worship <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/stations-cross/>