

STATIONS OF THE CROSS 2022

Our theme for this program year has been the core stories of the Bible. There are no stories more important than Jesus passion, death and resurrection. If it were not for the narrative of Holy Week, none of the other stories of the Bible would matter to us. The events we look at the next two weeks are the reason we worship.

Today we focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. We follow Jesus from the Garden to the cross. Just before the Pandemic hit two years ago, artists in our congregation completed a series of works that help us to explore the meaning of Jesus' passion. We will stop at nine stations as we follow Jesus on his journey to Golgotha.

Hymn: #220 1,2,3,

Station 1: Jesus on the Mount of Olives – Luke 22:39-46

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

Reflections

Jesus Passion begins in the Garden. Pat McKeighan captures Jesus lonely decision of either following God's will that leads to suffering or turning his back on God's purpose for his life. So, You and I at different points in our earthly pilgrimage are called to make difficult choices. May we choose to follow God's call wherever it may lead.

Unison Prayer

O God as Jesus prayed that the cup may pass him by, so we pray that we might not have to suffer for our faith. Yet give us courage to face the temptations and difficulties of life with faith and loyalty. Amen.

Musical Reflection Organ Solo

Station 2: Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested – Luke 22:47-48

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?"

Reflections

During his Passion, Jesus endured many acts of pain and betrayal. One of the most painful was Judas helping the authorities to arrest him. Judas who had followed Jesus for three years. Judas who had eaten and prayed with Jesus handed him over for thirty pieces of silver. Most painful of all the signal was a kiss. Nancy Mariann portrays the moment of betrayal. So, when we are betrayed by those we love. Jesus understands and stands with us.

Unison Prayer

Faithful Lord, even as your followers break faith with you, your love never fails. Support us when we are betrayed by others and forgive us when we betray you. Amen.

Hymn: #218 1,2,3

Station 3: Jesus is judged by Pilate – Luke 23:13-25

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate, and they all condemned him and said, "He deserves to die." When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgement seat at a place called the pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. Then he handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

Reflections

In her picture, Lynn McConnell renders Pilate as he decides to give the people what they wanted, Jesus' death. Today, in the shadow of the cross, we gather as a community of faith to remember the suffering and death of Jesus, and to name the suffering among God's people today. We name such suffering in the faith that God knows our sorrows and works to bring new life. Threatened by his faithfulness, the people handed Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. We hand our suffering to God in order to be raised to new life.

Unison Prayer *Silence*

Meet us, loving God, at the place of the skull, when we had hoped for a peaceful garden. Meet us in our defeats, when we had hoped for victory. Meet us in our temptation, when we had hoped for clear and easy decisions. Meet us here, O God, in this healing moment, for we need you now. Amen.

Anthem: "O Sacred Head Now Wounded"

Station 4: Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns – Luke 22:63-65, John 19:2-3

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept

heaping many other insults on him. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face.

Reflection

Our Sunday School children helped to make a sculpture that explores the pain and mocking that Jesus endured. In the area where Jesus was being held by the authorities the soldiers made sport of Jesus. They mocked his teachings and how his followers felt about him. So, we too can sometimes be mocked for our faith. In our post-Christian culture, some people make fun of our attempts to be faithful to God. May we endure the taunts with faith and love.

Unison Prayer

Lord you have experienced the taunts, hatred and suffering at the hands of others. They despised your teaching and your response. Teach us to love even those who hate us. Give us courageous hearts to respond to rejection with acceptance and love. Amen.

Hymn: #221 2

Station 5: Jesus takes up his cross – Mark 15:20

Jesus went out, bearing his own cross, to the place of the skull which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. Like a lamb, he was led to slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth.

Reflection

Bob Lynch imagines the moment Jesus picked up his cross. He is alone as he begins his way to Golgotha. Popular culture routinely misinterprets Jesus' sacrifice. "We all have our own crosses that we must bear." By the mere utterance of this statement we too often convey wrong messages. Battered women should accept their "burden" and suffer their torment silently. Abused children should accept "a good beating" as a necessary part of discipline. People who lose their jobs should quietly accept their situations. In these moments we cease following Jesus in the way of the cross and we comfortably join his executioners.

Jesus carried his own cross because a worldly power decreed that he should die. He did nothing to deserve his execution. He committed no errors in judgment. He made no bad decisions. He did not act in his own interest. Jesus carried his own cross because he acted in the interests of others. He acted on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. He acted on behalf of the political officials. He acted on behalf of the Roman governor who signed his death sentence. He acted on behalf of the soldier who nailed him to the cross. Jesus carried his own cross because he acted on behalf of everyone. It was the best and only way to destroy the power of death that abided in the cross.

Yes, some of us still carry crosses in our lives, but not because fate, foolishness, or force have shouldered us with an unwanted burden. We carry them because, like Jesus, we do so by choice. We choose to bring real power to the powerless ones whose lives have been diminished by death in its multitude of disguises. We carry our crosses because strangely, wonderfully, we know that Christ has transformed them into instruments of life.

Unison Prayer

Oh God of incredible power, O God of indescribable compassion, we do not pretend to understand the power of your cross. Our lack of understanding tempts us to trivialize it, to contain it, and to manage it. Do not allow us to insulate ourselves from the power of your cross. Help us to embrace it with our hearts that it may set us free. Amen.

Hymn: #718 1,2,4

Station 6: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross – Luke 23:26

As they led Jesus away, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Reflection

Mary Jane Luce depicts the moment Simon takes the cross from Jesus. Simon neither volunteered to carry the cross nor fled from the call – he was drafted, and he took it. We now name before God all who are drafted into service for a friend, a cause or, even a stranger. For soldiers and politicians, for church workers and volunteers, for family and friends, and for all who are called into service we pray for the blessings of God.

Unison Prayer

Loving God, who continually is called into the lives of your fearful and sinful children, we pray for all who are drafted into service. In the jobs that simply have to be done may your children find meaning and hope. And, O God, prepare for those who serve the glory of your kingdom. Amen.

Musical Reflection

Station 7: Jesus is nailed to the cross – Luke 23:33-38

When they came to the place, which is called “The Skull,” there they crucified him; and with him they crucified two criminals, one on the right, the other on the left, and Jesus between them. And the scripture was fulfilled which says, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

Reflection

As the wounds from the earlier whipping were still evident, they pushed Jesus' back against the jagged edge of the cross. In her depiction of this moment Lynn McConnell focuses on the nail driven through Jesus feet. His feet were fixed, his arms were hung, and they drove nails into his flesh.

Our world knows many who are kicked when they are down, who receive insult upon injury. Our world knows many victims who are blamed for their suffering.

We blame the poor. We call them lazy; we cry ignorance.

And when we blame the victim, we crack that same whip, and drive those same nails.

Unison Prayer

Lord, it is easy to blame the soldiers who nailed you to the cross. It is also easy to join them in blaming victims. Teach us to see hurting people in our society as victims to be cared for and loved. Help us to avoid blaming and revictimizing those on the margins. Amen.

Hymn: #228 1,2,3,

Station 8: Jesus dies on the cross – Luke 23:44-46

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished!" And crying with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And he bowed his head, and handed over his spirit.

Reflection

Our Sunday School Children worked on this painting which records Jesus' last words before he dies, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." In his final moments of life Jesus did what he had always done. He found guidance in his faith. His quote from Psalm 31:5 clearly reminds us that Jesus did not believe that he was alone or that he was entering oblivion. Certainly, this knowledge serves us well at time of crisis. But this is the kind of knowledge that serves us well each day that we live. We are not alone; our lives will not end in oblivion – not if we commit them to God.

Unison Prayer

O God, you are our rock and our fortress. Deliver us from loneliness and despair. Indeed, deliver us into abundant life. Like our Savior before us, help us also to declare, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." Amen.

Anthem: "Crucifixion" Bach

Station 9: Jesus is taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb – Luke 23:50-54

All you who pass by behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. My eyes are spent with weeping; my soul is in tumult; my heart is poured out in grief because of the downfall of my people. “Do not call me Naomi (which means Pleasant), call me Mara (which means Bitter); for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.”

Reflections

Judy Hodge captures the sorrow of Mary as she holds the body of Jesus. She represents all humanity that mourns loss.

LEADER: O Lord, those who loved and mourned for you, tenderly received you from the cross.

PEOPLE: **We pause to remember their grief.**

LEADER: This day we mourn for loved ones passed away. We grieve for those we love who have died; for daughter; for sons; for spouses; for parents; for grandparents; for cherished friends.

PEOPLE: **Lord, remember us in our loss.**

LEADER: Today we hear your words, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

PEOPLE: **Lord, comfort us by your holy spirit. Amen.**

Anthem: “Pie Jesu” Faure

Benediction