



Holy Week
REFLECTIONS

Easter 2024

Dunwoody Baptist Church

A Letter from Pastor

ALLEN JACKSON

In the past, we have set up stations in some rooms around DBC and created a prayer experience that the Dunwoody community could enjoy as they contemplated the events of Good Friday. Each room had a picture and some a sensory object to help persons pray through and think inwardly about the events of the last week of Jesus' life.

Increasingly, we have realized that every person's situation is different. Some of you might not be able to come to the church, some of you would rather pray alone, and some of you need to share this experience with others who might not feel ready to come to a church. We want to celebrate that each of you might be in a different place with your discipleship journey. Again, this year, we have created the "prayer experience to go" so that you can choose your own location.

I recommend picking a place for your own personal prayer experience. Maybe you would visit the walking trail at church and make your way around as you pray. Perhaps there is a park or walking trail near your home or office. It might be that you have a favorite spot at your house, but I recommend something that changes your normal devotional routine, something that allows you to move from one place to another as you remember Jesus' journey to the cross.

In the booklet are nine stories written by our staff, each with a description of a location where something happened during the last week Jesus was on earth before His resurrection. I encourage you to walk a while and stop to pray, maybe having a seat on a bench or log or something else. Read one of the stories and imagine that scene over 2000 years ago. Maybe even imagine being there, talking to other people who were there, sensing the emotional tension with the gathering storm cloud that led to Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

I have one more request. Will you let us know about your experience? Email me at ajackson@dbc.org or our Prayer Director, Esther Ortiz at eortiz@dbc.org and let us know how you did your prayer experience, where you might have walked or hiked or even mentally journeyed through the locations described in the booklet. I look forward to the stories.

The Garden of Gethsemane

DERRICK MILNER

In Mark Chapter 14 we see several different encounters that Jesus has with his disciples from Jesus telling Peter that he will deny him three times all the way to Judas betraying Jesus. Those are very important and powerful moments that happen in this one Chapter of scripture but one that sometimes we glance over is Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is an intimate moment amongst all the chaos where Jesus begins to feel the pressure of the cross. In verse 34 it says

*“Then he said to them, my soul is swallowed up in sorrow -
to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.”*

Jesus starts to feel the weight of the sacrifice he is going to make and as he goes up to pray, he says

*“Abba, Father All things are possible for you.
Take this cup away from me.
Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.”*

Jesus prays this prayer to the Father, and in this moment asks the father to take the cup away from him. Jesus asks the father that if there was any other way to go about this that it be made possible, but then Jesus says this, Not my will but what you will. Jesus experienced the agony and the pain before even stepping foot towards the cross all this weight of our sin was thrown upon him and even in the darkest moment Jesus still paid the ultimate price. Jesus loved us so much that even though he could have backed out at any moment before going through all the pain and suffering he still did it.

The truth is that everything you love has a part you don't like. Every relationship, every job, every sports team, and anything else that you can possibly love always has a part that we don't like. Following Jesus will have some parts that you don't like but here is the truth even though we may not like the circumstance we are in we can trust that the father will deliver us through them, Jesus knew that this twas the only way but it doesn't mean that he liked it. It just means that he loved us so much that he was willing to do anything for us.

The Betrayer's Kiss

ROBERT COMEAUX

Mark 14:45-46

*And when he came, he went up to Him at once and said, "Rabbi!"
and he kissed Him. And they laid hands on Him and seized Him.*

Betrayal by a friend has to be one of the worst violations of trust we can face. To think that a person we loved, who was so close to us, could turn their back on us in betrayal is painful at a deep level. Scripture tells us that Jesus knew every human emotion, and Judas' betrayal certainly gave Him a taste of one of the most difficult dimensions of our human experience.

As we consider the various steps that Jesus took on the road to the cross, this difficult step is one that must bring us face to face with our own humanity. When I read of terrible things that people do to one another, I always remind myself of these words: "There but for the grace of God go I." Consider for a moment that you were one of Jesus' followers, and you could have profited by telling the Sanhedrin where to find Him. Judas was the treasurer for the disciples, so he probably came from a profitable occupation like Matthew, the tax-collector.

Maybe following Jesus around with only the clothes on his back made Judas long for the comforts of days gone by. In what appeared to be a momentary lapse of judgment, he let all of Jesus' teachings fall by the wayside as his human desires took over. Don't we do the same thing in different ways all the time?

As we ponder this stage of Jesus' walk to the cross, let's take time to consider and confess. Consider the ways that you and I have betrayed Jesus on many occasions. Consider the decisions we've made that have ignored the bonds of friendship. Now let us confess to the Father that we are sinners in need of God's grace -

Just . Like . Judas.

Peter's Denial

GARY MCENTIRE



There was a moment early in Jesus's ministry when He asked His followers, "Who do you say that I am?" One of Jesus's followers, Peter, jumped right in and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" As far as "starts" go, that's not a bad one. Unfortunately, just as those TV financial advisors are quick to disclaim, past performance is not indicative of future results. Strong starts do not guarantee strong finishes.

The night before Jesus died, Jesus took his disciples to a garden to pray. However, Jesus was the only one who knew what was waiting for them once they got there. He tried to warn them. He informed them that they would all fall away on account of Him. Peter, however, was of a different opinion. He defiantly declared to Jesus, "Even if all fall away because of you, I will not!" Jesus assured Peter that not only would Peter fall away, but there would be three times when he would go so far as to deny ever having known Jesus. Three times! All before morning! Peter wasn't convinced. He assured Jesus, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you!"

Peter was wrong.



In Peter's defense, he tried. When a group of leaders came to arrest Jesus, Peter impulsively struck one of the guards with a sword. Jesus not only rebuked Peter for his attack; He healed the guard prior to being led away. Still, Peter tried to stay near Jesus. But, dazed by doubt and confusion, it seems that Peter was not ready for the accusations that would soon be hurled at him.

"Hey! Aren't you one of his followers?" "Nope."

"Are you sure?" "I don't know the man!"

"I've SEEN you with him!" "I SAID I DON'T KNOW HIM!"

The rooster's crowing that followed must have been a piercing dagger of condemnation. Suddenly, Peter realized that he did exactly what he told Jesus he would never do. A few hours later, Peter's friend, teacher, and Lord was dead, and Peter was left broken. The darkness that shadowed much of the morning looked bright compared to the darkness that had taken captive his soul. From that moment forward, every time Peter would hear a rooster's crowing, it would be a biting and condemning reminder that he had made grand promises that were eclipsed only by the grandness of his failure to keep them. Peter's brashness and confidence would forever be replaced by unabating guilt and shame. Peter would forever have to live knowing that his last act toward the one who loved him most was to deny ever having known Him.

How can he ever live with such guilt?

What Peter didn't know, but maybe should have, was that the Jesus story was not quite yet finished. Sunday was approaching, and hope was coming with it.

Matthew 16:13-19; Matthew 26:31-35; Matthew 26:69-75

Before Pilate

BRIAN SMITH



What do you do when you are confronted with the truth? Often a “confrontation with truth” occurs because you have been dishonest. Maybe a “confrontation with truth” is something you want to avoid because it means you are about to be caught. How do you respond when you are “confronted with the truth?” According to Pastor Craig Cooper there are only two options...

*“When confronted with the truth we have two options.
We can either determine to change and conform to the truth
or try to modify the truth to fit us. The former shows wisdom,
while the latter is pure foolishness.”*

- Craig Cooper

Back around 33AD, a governor named Pontius Pilate came face to face with The Truth. You can read about this moment in John 18:28-38. Jesus is captured, tortured, and forced to endure a sham trial. The religious leaders who arrested Jesus brought him to Pilate because they wanted Jesus executed.

28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They did not enter the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover.

29 So Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?"

30 They answered him, "If this man weren't a criminal,[a] we wouldn't have handed him over to you."

31 Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law."

"It's not legal for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared. 32 They said this so that Jesus's words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die.

All of this was unfair and the charges that were presented against Jesus were untrue. In the middle of this unjust moment, Pilate asks Jesus a series of questions.

33 Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?"

35 "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

36 "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."

37 "You are a king then?" Pilate asked.

“You say that I’m a king,” Jesus replied. “I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

38 “What is truth?” said Pilate.

Pilate asks the question, “What is truth?” Little does he know that the humble man who stood before him was The Truth, The Way, and The Life. Pilate has come face-to-face with the truth. As you pray and reflect on the scriptures above, ask yourself this question. Have I come face-to-face with Jesus? When I am confronted by the truth of who He is and convicted by the truth that He teaches, how do I respond? Do you intentionally change your life to conform to Him, or are you trying to force Jesus to conform to your preferences? One of those responses leads to abundant life, and the other leads to sheer hopelessness.

The Scourging and the Crown

BRIDGETTE POAG



John 19:1-3

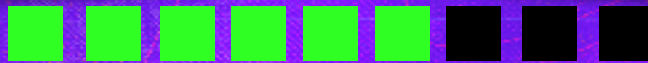
“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.”

Pilate was not convinced Jesus should be crucified so he commanded he be flogged in hopes it would appease the Jews. During the process of being flogged, the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus by taking thorns they had twisted into a crown. They placed it down into his flesh, removed his clothes, and replaced them with a purple robe. They began teasing him by calling him “The King of the Jews.” It is interesting that in their mocking, they were actually placing the very items on him which reflected kingship. At the time, they had no idea the truth they were speaking aloud. Jesus had just told Pilate, “everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” So, the soldiers mocking of Jesus spoke truth to all who truly knew him and condemned the very ones who spoke it aloud.

How often do we speak aloud the very things that end up condemning us in the end? We have all passed judgment on others without recognizing the lack of truth in our words. We have all betrayed truth when we don't speak it into the very people God places in our path. We are called to reflect the truth for which Jesus was brutally tortured. As followers of Jesus, we can never forget the immense sacrifice. From the moment he was arrested to the moment he was flogged, people who claimed to know him fled. They ran; they hid; they feared. May we not do the same in moments of weakness!

Bearing the Cross

ALLEN TALIAFERRO



Some weeks before those fateful events in Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples,

“If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it.” (Lk. 9:23-24)

... Take up his cross daily?

Why would we want to do this? And since we are not supposed to carry around crosses in the literal sense, what, exactly, are we supposed to carry? Are these even the right questions to be asking? “Come with Me” makes sense. “Deny himself” makes some sense. But “take up his cross?”

Jesus used the phrase “take up his cross and follow” at least five different times in scripture. Clearly He had something specific in mind by repeating this thought.

“Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). John 19:17

Just as Jesus carried His cross to the place of His death, we have to bear the price of following Him. It means letting go of our agenda. It means re-prioritizing our time and interests. It means sacrifice.

When we take up our cross, we are denying the things to which we are entitled. We are setting aside the things that are comfortable or easy. Instead, we take on acts of service, acts of submission, acts of love. Our sacrifices will never equal what Jesus did on the cross but these intentional acts hint at what our redemption cost Him.

In carrying his own cross, Jesus was demonstrating his love for us and his obedience to the Father. He was willing to suffer and die on our behalf so that we might be reconciled to God.

When we follow Him in obedience, we are saying, "Lord, I am willing to suffer for you, to lay down my own desires and ambitions, and to follow you wherever you lead me." We do this because He first loved us and was willing to lay down his life for ours.

Read Isaiah Ch.53. Reflect on what it meant for Jesus to be obedient, even to the point of death on a Roman cross.

Sharing in His Sufferings

JEFF REAMS



“As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.” Matthew 27:32

“Rejoice inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” 1 Peter 4:13

It was the most pivotal weekend in human history. The Son of God, the Word made flesh, the One for whom and through whom all things were created, was being sacrificed for the redemption and restoration of the world.

For Simon, it was a day like any other. He was from a town called Cyrene, in modern day Libya. A North African who had settled near Jerusalem, he was making his way in from the fields when he heard a commotion. People were shouting, weeping, while some stood nervously silent.

Simon wanted to see what was going on so he pushed his way to the front. Just then he saw three men with crosses stumbling their way up the stone pavement. Suddenly, one of the men, the one that most people seemed to be aiming their fists and voices at, fell to his knees. He was brutally beaten, more than usual for victims of crucifixion. He seemed unable to take another step.

Angrily, a Roman soldier grabbed Simon by the arm and thrust him into the line. "Carry his cross," he ordered.

No longer a spectator, Simon was now a participant, just inches away from the sweat and blood of the Savior. Did he know who he was helping? If he did, perhaps it changed the experience of carrying the cross from a burden to a blessing.

This scene gives us a vivid image of sharing in the sufferings of Christ. The sufferings may come at any moment, on what seems like any ordinary day, whether we want them or not. But like the apostles and their Leader, we know that on the other side is displayed greater power and glory. The man from Cyrene also knew this truth. Just a few days after Simon carried his cross, he would hear of Jesus' resurrection. Few would have been more surprised and probably overjoyed than Simon.

In the same way, let us commit ourselves to sharing in the sufferings of Christ so that we too may be 'overjoyed when his glory is revealed.'

The Crucifixion

ALLEN JACKSON



Read the following account from Matthew's gospel:

Matthew 27: 32-56

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 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!" In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "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. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 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?"). When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." 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. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. 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!" Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

His sacrifice unlocked forgiveness for you and me, no matter what we have done. When we accept Him as Savior and begin to follow Him, we are new. We are not perfect, but we are forgiven.

Have you ever begun the journey of following Jesus? If this prayer experience has brought you closer to God, you may want to

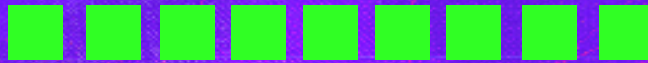
- **Tell God** about your mistakes and ask for His forgiveness, based on what Jesus did on the cross. You can pray something like this:

God, thank you for making forgiveness possible because of what Jesus did on the cross. Please forgive me of my sins and allow me to feel your presence. Please give me the strength and courage to make the changes I need to make and to tell others about this moment. Amen.

- **Renew your commitment** as a follower of Jesus as you contemplate the gravity of the crucifixion. You can pray right now and ask God for direction as you move ahead.
- **Invite someone else** to experience this prayer journey—it doesn't even have to be today – just show them how to go access this guide.
- **Make sure you plan** to attend worship on Easter Sunday morning. We would love to see you at DBC, but wherever you worship, make sure to connect with God and other people on that very special day.

A Borrowed Tomb

JOHN HUME



One of my first funerals was for a young man who did not follow Christ. At the end of the service, his mom was lying on the casket, crying, a sound that I can only describe as desperate and hopeless. It was difficult leaving the graveside.

Matthew 27:57-61 describes the burial of Jesus as seeming hopeless.

After the death of Jesus, a place was needed to place his body. Joseph of

57 When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released. 59 So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, 60 and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated facing the tomb.

Arimathea, a wealthy Jewish member of the Sanhedrin, used his personal tomb for the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin, brought myrrh and other spices to use in the burial of Jesus. These men showed their love and respect for their friend and, I believe, their Savior in this way.

Isaiah 53:9 is a prophecy that says he would be placed in a rich man's tomb. Merriam-Webster says borrow is

to receive with the implied or expressed intention of returning the same or an equivalent.

A borrowed tomb belonging to a respected community member served as a fitting place of rest for Jesus.

Have you ever experienced a Good Friday service that ends with the burial of Christ? It seems hopeless. No resurrection. No "joy in the morning." Jesus' body was placed in a tomb meant for someone else. No realization that this is not a final resting place, but a pause before something greater happens.

S.M. Lockridge (1913-2000) was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego, CA, from 1953-1993. He has a famous sermon that I listen to every year around Easter. Here is a link to the video ([YouTube.com/watch?v=8gx6_rGLz20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gx6_rGLz20))

It's Friday...But Sunday's Coming

*It's Friday
Jesus is praying
Peter's a sleeping
Judas is betraying
But Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
Pilate's struggling
The council is
conspiring
The crowd is vilifying
They don't even know
That Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
The disciples
Are running
Like sheep
Without a shepherd
Mary's crying
Peter is denying
But they don't know
That Sunday's a comin'*

*It's Friday
The Romans
Beat my Jesus
They robe him in scarlet
They crown him
With thorns
But they don't know
That Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
See Jesus walking
To Calvary
His blood dripping*

*His body stumbling
And his spirit's
burdened
But you see,
it's only Friday
Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
The world's winning
People are sinning
And evil's grinning*

*It's Friday
The soldiers nail
My Savior's hands
To the cross
They nail my
Savior's feet
To the cross
And then they
Raise him up
Next to criminals*

*It's Friday
But let me tell you
something
Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
The disciples
Are questioning
What has happened
To their King
And the Pharisees
Are celebrating
That their scheming
Has been achieved*

*But they don't know It's
only Friday
Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
He's hanging
On the cross
Feeling forsaken
By his Father
Left alone and dying
Can nobody save him?
Ooooh
It's Friday
But Sunday's comin'*

*It's Friday
The earth trembles
The sky grows dark
My King yields his spirit*

*It's Friday
Hope is lost
Death has won
Sin has conquered
and Satan's
Just a laughin'*

*It's Friday
Jesus is buried
A soldier stands guard
And a rock
Is rolled into place*

*But it's Friday
It is only Friday*

Sunday is a comin'!

If you have any questions or would like more information about DBC, contact info@dbc.org .

For intentional prayer over your requests, contact prayer@dbc.org .

Join us Easter Sunday as we celebrate the resurrection!

7:00 am Easter Sunrise Baptism - Sports Center

8:30 am Traditional Service - Chapel

11:00 am Contemporary Service - Worship Center

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