



THE STORY *continues...*

*Join us each week as God weaves His Story into the fabric
of our daily lives.*

Chapter 26 The Hour of Darkness

Listen to *The Story*

Read Chapter 26 of The Story

The hardest part of God's Story to read ... the suffering and sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. It is easier for me to think of Jesus dying for the world, I can see sin and brokenness all around me. It is harder for me to think of Jesus dying for me, because then I must admit my culpability. And every event and act of cruelty in this chapter and in this Holy Week becomes my direct responsibility—I need to own my part of this “Hour of Darkness” chapter, my part of God's Story where His Son suffered and died for me. It was my sin that put and held Him there on that cross. *Not a great feeling!* But no truer words from Isaiah 53:4-6:

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. [ESV]*

A dark chapter in *The Story*, a dark chapter in history, a dark chapter in our lives ... but the good news is *The Story* is far from over!

Learn *The Story*

Look for ways in which God's story and your story connect this week.

At the end of each day, when the natural light has left our world, pause and reflect on your thoughts and actions of the day. “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” *Psalm 139:24-24 [NIV]*

Create for one week a journal of “*the price of love.*” Commit to paper your transgressions and sins of the week for which you are most glad that you do not face the wrath and punishment of God but Jesus Christ did in your place. When the week is over, before you come to celebrate the next chapter, The Resurrection. Proclaim Jesus' words, “It is finished!” and live the truth “*that by His wounds we are healed.*” Enter into the celebration of Jesus' Easter Resurrection with a deeper understanding of your freedom and the burden Jesus bore for you, so that you might be free indeed!

Love *The Story*

Intentionally take a step forward in faith.

Weeks go by with a blur of activity ... Holy Week is no different. Find a way to press pause in your journey. Discover space to kneel before a cross in great gratitude for all that Jesus went through for YOU! Consider the cost.

Embrace the love and savor it! Let it transform you. To aid you in your contemplation, darken the room ... but remember that God's light always shines again.

Come, journey with Jesus through His Hour of Darkness in Holy Week Worship: Maundy Thursday at 11:30am and 7pm and Good Friday at 7pm (Tenebrae).

Luther's Explanation

Jesus was on his way to the cross, and the disciples didn't understand. They couldn't – we can hardly understand it today. What we *have* learned is that no matter how we are tempted and how we fail, Jesus stands by us to encourage us, to love us and to forgive us.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus gathered in the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples. He asked them a small favor, "remain here and watch with me," but they fell asleep. When Jesus found them sleeping, he said to Peter, "So could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you might not fall into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:40)



In our baptism, our new spiritual nature may be strong but it is still burdened by the flesh - our old, sinful self. Still, we rest in the unconditional love and grace of God in Christ Jesus.

"O Father, we are faint and ill, and the trials in the flesh and in this world are severe and manifold. O dear Father, hold us and do not let us fall into temptation and sin again, but give us grace to remain steadfast and fight valiantly to the end. Without your grace and your help we are unable to do anything." (Luther's Works 42:80)

PROMISE

This week, cling to God's promise for you:
"I am your father and you have My promise:
My light will shine again."

The EXTRA Mile



The story of the thief who was crucified next to Jesus is one story we don't very often think about. Listen to *How Love Wins* by Stephen Curtis Chapman on YouTube.

(<http://youtu.be/HMRi6XDeeRo>)