

JESUS PRAYS ALONE

READ:

"Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. There he told them, 'Pray that you will not give in to temptation.' He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, 'Father if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.' Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood."

LUKE 22:39-44 (NLT)

REFLECT:

Jesus is facing a complicated reality. He is struggling with God, trying to understand and get guidance. The purpose of Lent is to invite us to the same level of seeking. At this moment, we can admit our struggle and ask for guidance through it.



JESUS IS ARRESTED

READ:

"And even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests and elders of the people. The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: 'You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss.' So Judas came straight to Jesus. 'Greetings, Rabbi!' he exclaimed and gave him the kiss.

"Jesus said, 'My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for.' Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.

"'Put away your sword,' Jesus told him. 'Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?'

"Then Jesus said to the crowd, 'Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there teaching every day. But this is all happening to fulfill the words of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures.' At that point, all the disciples deserted him and fled."

MATTHEW 26:47-56 (NLT)

REFLECT:

As we see here in this text with Peter, violence is a reaction to fear, anxiety, and loss of control. Jesus's example to us is one of love and healing, not revenge.



THE SANHEDRIN TRIES JESUS

READ:

"But Jesus was silent and made no reply. Then the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?'

"Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven.'

"Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, 'Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?'

"'Guilty!' they all cried. 'He deserves to die!'"

MARK 14:61-64 (NLT)

REFLECT:

The translation of the word "Messiah" is "anointed" in Hebrew (what the Old Testament was written in), and "Christ" in Greek (what the New Testament was written in). "The Messiah," Jesus is established as *the* spokesperson for God, *the* person who reconciles others to God, to one another and as *the* ruler of God's kingdom. Jesus claims this identity here for the first time in Mark.



PILATE TRIES JESUS

READ:

"Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked him.

"Jesus replied, 'Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?'

"'Am I a Jew?' Pilate retorted. 'Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?'

"Jesus answered, 'My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.'

"Pilate said, 'So you are a king?'

"Jesus responded, 'You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.'"

"'What is truth?' Pilate asked."

JOHN 18:33-38a (NLT)

REFLECT:

In this conversation with Jesus, we find Pilate responding with the question, "what is truth?" Truth is not an object to hold; it is Jesus himself. Truth is a "who," not a "what." The truth of God is revealed in God's Son, Jesus.

The truth helps us in different ways and can easily give us stability while setting us free. Pray for a willingness to engage in truth when we find it in Jesus, in the Bible, in people who love God, and in the world around us. Ask for an eager heart to know and love God more.



PILATE SENTENCES JESUS

READ:

"Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested. One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual.

"Would you like me to release to you this 'King of the Jews'?" Pilate asked. (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) But at this point, the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate asked them, 'Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?'

"They shouted back, 'Crucify him!'

"Why?" Pilate demanded. 'What crime has he committed?'

"But the mob roared even louder, 'Crucify him!'

"So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified."

MARK 15:6-15 (NLT)

REFLECT:

The crowds who had long supported Jesus have now turned against him. They believed he would restore the political kingdom and overthrow the power of Rome. Now they send him to the cross. Here we find human desires forgetting the word of God and the role of the Messiah.



JESUS WEARS A CROWN

READ:

"Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, 'Look, here is the man!'"

JOHN 19:5 (NLT)

REFLECT:

"Here is the man." Jesus is both fully God and fully human. He experienced physical pain and was not exempt from shame. Pilate presents Jesus to his accusers as a beaten and humiliated human, made in God's image and obedient to God.



JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

READ:

"The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

JOHN 10:17-18 (NLT)

REFLECT:

At least twelve hours have passed since Jesus was arrested. He has endured physical beatings and psychological abuse, and his friends have abandoned him. Now he must carry a cross probably 2-3 times his body weight onto his execution.



SIMON CARRIES THE CROSS

READ:

"As they led Jesus away, a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, happened to be coming in from the countryside. The soldiers seized him and put the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus."

LUKE 23:26 (NLT)

REFLECT:

This is the only time we meet Simon the Cyrene. It is here where a stranger intersects Jesus's journey to death. It is a journey that each one of us will know, for ourselves and for others.



JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN

READ:

"A large crowd trailed behind, including many grief-stricken women. But Jesus turned and said to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are coming when they will say, 'Fortunate indeed are the women who are childless, the wombs that have not borne a child and the breasts that have never nursed.' People will beg the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and plead with the hills, 'Bury us.' For if these things are done when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'"

LUKE 23:27-31 (NLT)

REFLECT:

Jesus's words are not full of hope and encouragement. The people are mourning, lamenting the impending loss of someone so significant. Mourning is overwhelming, absent of hope and joy, seemingly with no end.



JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

READ:

"When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.' And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice."

LUKE 23:33-34 (NLT)

REFLECT:

As he hangs on the cross and watches hatred, fear, and greed fuel the people he loves, Jesus chooses to forgive. Forgiveness can be hard, messy, and difficult. Some offenses even require coming back to the moment of offense for us to best heal.



THE CRIMINALS SPEAK TO JESUS

READ:

"One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, 'So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!'

"But the other criminal protested, 'Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.'

"And Jesus replied, 'I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

LUKE 23:39-43 (NLT)

REFLECT:

As we say yes to Jesus, he reconciles us to himself. What Jesus did on the cross is an invitation to have life with him. As we say yes to him, he gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can now live a life for him.



JESUS SPEAKS TO MARY AND JOHN

READ:

"Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, 'Dear woman, here is your son.' And he said to this disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from then on, this disciple took her into his home."

JOHN 19:25-27 (NLT)

REFLECT:

Mary had other children to care for her. John did not have to take Mary in, and Jesus did not have to request it. The death journey creates its own family through grief, a family that cares and comforts long after the funeral flowers have gone.



JESUS DIES

READ:

"Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture, he said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. When Jesus had tasted it, he said, 'It is finished!' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

"It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was Passover week). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out."

JOHN 19:28-34 (NLT)

REFLECT:

After three hours of agonizing pain on the cross, Jesus abandons himself to the weight of his body, bows his head in submission, and dies.



JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

READ:

"Afterward, Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away. With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb never used before. And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. "

JOHN 19:38-42 (NLT)

REFLECT:

The burial preparations provided by Joseph and Nicodemus are extravagant. Think about this: seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloe is a quantity used only for royalty. Jesus is buried as their royal king.

