

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

FOREST HILLS CHURCH

A devotional and prayer guide using photos from
the film *The Passion of the Christ*.

Station 1: "Jesus Prays Alone" - Luke 22:39-44

"39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. 40 On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." 41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."



Consider, if you will, how you would feel if you were faced with the absolute knowledge that all you ever loved was about to be denied to you. Jesus prayed in the garden alone, knowing that his death was about to take place and knowing that his beloved disciples would abandon him in his most dire need.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, forgive me for my forgetfulness and the times I take you for granted. Help me to be mindful that in my sinfulness I have offended you and grievously hurt you. Have mercy and forgive my shortcomings.

Station 2: "Jesus Is Arrested" — Matthew 26:47-56

47 "While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." 49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. 50 Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. 51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" 55 In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."



Think about how Jesus must have felt, having had compassion on so many and having healed so many of their infirmities, only to be met with angry, cursing people who intended to repay his goodness with harm. A betrayal from a trusted friend became an additional torment.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, so many times have I abandoned your teachings in favor of expediency. I have left behind all that you taught so many times and have neglected my duty to love others as you have loved me. Forgive me and bless me with your strength.

Station 3: "The Sanhedrin Tries Jesus" — Mark 14:61-64

61 "But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." 63 The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64 "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death."



Think of how Jesus must have felt being tried by the very spiritual leaders with whom God the Father entrusted his Holy Word. We might at least have called them hypocrites, but Jesus never said a word in his own defense. Instead of an angry outcry, his loving heart forgave them for their deceit and lack of love.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, sometimes I find myself confronted by unjust accusations from people I considered to be my friends. The pain I felt was so terrible at this betrayal; yet in your case, you forgave them before they did you harm and attempted to defame you. Teach me how to be humble and forgiving, but most of all how to love so completely.

Station 4: "Pilate Tries Jesus" — John 18:33-37

33 "Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" 34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" 35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" 36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." 37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."



Consider how Jesus must have felt being abandoned by his own people and turned over to unbelievers for judgement. Jesus was not guilty of anything, yet he was being tried by one who knew nothing of the Scriptures or of the Heavenly Father. Think of what it must have felt like to be accused by liars and deceivers before someone so unforgiving as the Roman governor.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, sometimes when I feel I have been let down by those I care about the most, I want to abandon them and go my own way. I have no right to be this way nor to feel as I do. Teach me always to be just and compassionate if ever I am in a position when I must make a decision concerning someone else.

Station 5: "Pilate Sentences Jesus" — Mark 15:6-15

6 "Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. 9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. 12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. 13 "Crucify him!" they shouted. 14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" 15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified."



Consider how Jesus, after being scourged and crowned with thorns, was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the cross.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, it was my sins that condemned you to the cross; and I ask you by the merits of this sorrowful journey to assist my soul in its journey toward eternity. Never permit me to separate myself from you again, and help me to grow in my love of God the Father and appreciate your sacrifice for me.

Station 6: "Jesus Wears a Crown" — John 19:5

5 "When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"



Consider the pain of having sharp, hardened thorns shoved violently onto your head. Consider the blood flowing freely down your face and burning your eyes, blurring your vision so you cannot even see your tormentors. Remember Jesus' last commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, open my eyes when I am troubled so I don't lose sight of the suffering of others. I have never thought about how it must have felt to be tortured as you were: beaten, scourged, and forced to wear a crown of thorns that ripped into your scalp. I could never bear the pain as you did without a cry of pain, let alone forgive my tormentors and continue to love them. Help me, Lord, to learn your perfect love so that I may be one with you in all that I do.

Station 7: "Jesus Carries His Cross" — John 19:17-18

17 "Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle."



Consider how Jesus, in making the journey with the cross on his shoulders, thought of us and offered for us to God the death he was about to undergo.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I accept all the tribulations I will have to endure for the rest of my life. I ask you, by the merits of the pain that you endured, to grant me strength to endure and carry my cross through life with patience and resignation. I repent of my sins and ask that you help me keep from separating myself from you ever again.

Station 8: "Simon Carries the Cross" — Luke 23:26

26 "As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus."



Consider how the religious leaders and fickle crowd, after seeing Jesus weaken with each step and fearing that he would die before he was crucified, recruited Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross behind our Lord.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I accept the cross I have to bear. You died out of love for me. Grant me strength to live for you; and if I die, let me die for love of you. Help me with your grace that I may be aware of your will for me always.

Station 9: "Jesus Speaks to the Women" — Luke 23:27-31

27 "A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" 31 For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"



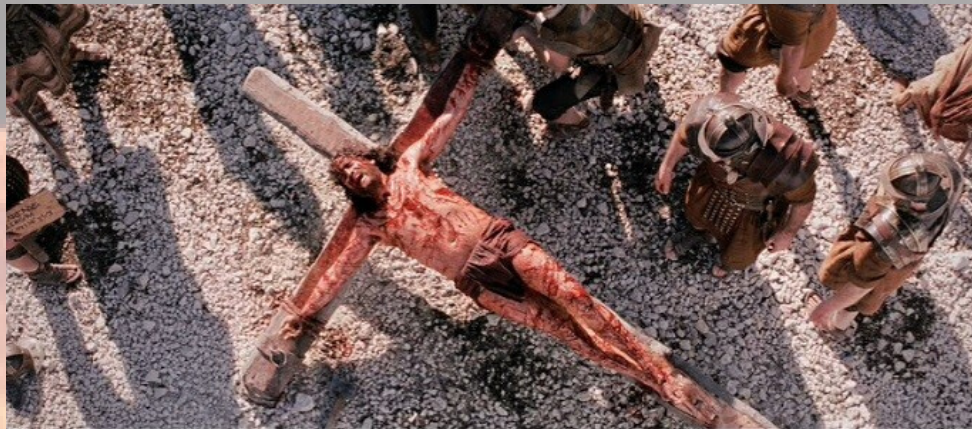
Consider how those women wept with compassion at seeing Jesus in such a pitiful state, streaming with blood, weakened and scorned by onlookers as he walked along. Consider Jesus words, "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I weep for the sorrows I have caused in my life and for the offenses I have committed against God. You have loved me so much; and it is that love that causes me to have such great sorrow for my sins. Forgive me, Lord, and strengthen my resolve that I may never offend you again.

Station 10: "Jesus Is Crucified" — Luke 23:33-34

33 "When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."



Consider how Jesus felt being thrown down upon the cross, ripping open the wounds of the scourger whips. Consider how he extended his hands, allowing those terrible nails to be driven blow by blow into his outstretched hands. Consider those awful nails being driven into those feet, those feet that walked so far and tirelessly, bringing the good news of salvation to a hurting and hungering world. Jesus offered to God the sacrifice of his life for our salvation. His captors fastened him with nails to the cross, raised the cross, and left him to die in anguish and great suffering.

(No prayer, just silent meditation. At this time, you may go to the cross and write down a sin/burden and nail it to the cross.)

Station 11: "Criminals Speak to Jesus" — Luke 23:39-43

39 "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."



Consider the pain and anguish that Jesus must have felt being hung between two criminals and being ridiculed by the very people he loved so much and to whom he had so many times extended compassion and healing. Consider the courage he had to forget his pain and minister to the criminal who asked for forgiveness, promising the man that he would be in paradise that day.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, so many times I have been so selfish in my pain that I forgot how others too feel pain. Sometimes I have forgotten to help out when I could have, and I violated your final commandment that we love one another.

Station 12: "Jesus Speaks to Mary and John" — John 19:25b-27

25 "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."



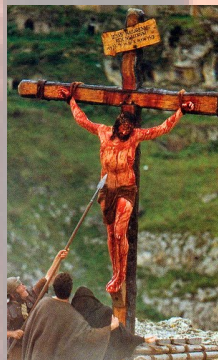
Consider the pain in a mother's heart as she beheld her son nailed to a cross amid a crowd of jeering spectators. Consider her pain in seeing those cruel wounds from the scourges whip, the crown of thorns embedded into the brow, the terrible nails holding the hands and feet that she had bathed as a baby. Consider the guilt of the beloved apostle, who once ran away in fear, standing at the foot of the cross and looking up at his dying friend and Lord. Get a sense of the enormity of Jesus' love as he forgives John by granting him the privilege of caring for his mother. Consider forgiveness given in the midst of great pain and anguish.

Prayer:

My Lord Jesus, by the sorrow you experienced in this great meeting, grant me the grace of a devoted love of your mother and your beloved apostles. Let their example of devotion become my own; let their goodness in life become real in me. Forgive me when I turn away from you, and grant me strength to return to you humbly.

Station 13: "Jesus Dies on the Cross" — John 19:28-34

28 "Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. 31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water."



Consider how Jesus — after three hours of agonizing pain on the cross — consumed at length with his anguish, abandoned himself to the weight of his body, bowed his head in submission and died.

Prayer:

My dying, Lord Jesus, I embrace devoutly as I behold the cross you died on for me. My sins have merited for me a miserable death; but by your death, I have hope. Let me die embracing your feet and burning with a love for you.

Station 14: "Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb" — John 19:38-42

38 "Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. 39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. 40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. 41 At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. 42 Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."



Consider how the disciples of Jesus carried the body of Jesus to bury it. Consider the grieving mother, who arranged the body in the sepulcher with her own hands. As they closed the tomb and withdrew, they carried a burden of pain deep within their hearts.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you rose again on the third day. I ask you by your Resurrection to make me rise gloriously with you at my last day. Let me be always united with you in heaven to praise you, love you, and glorify you forever.

