

A Journey of the Cross

2020 Prayer Path Experience



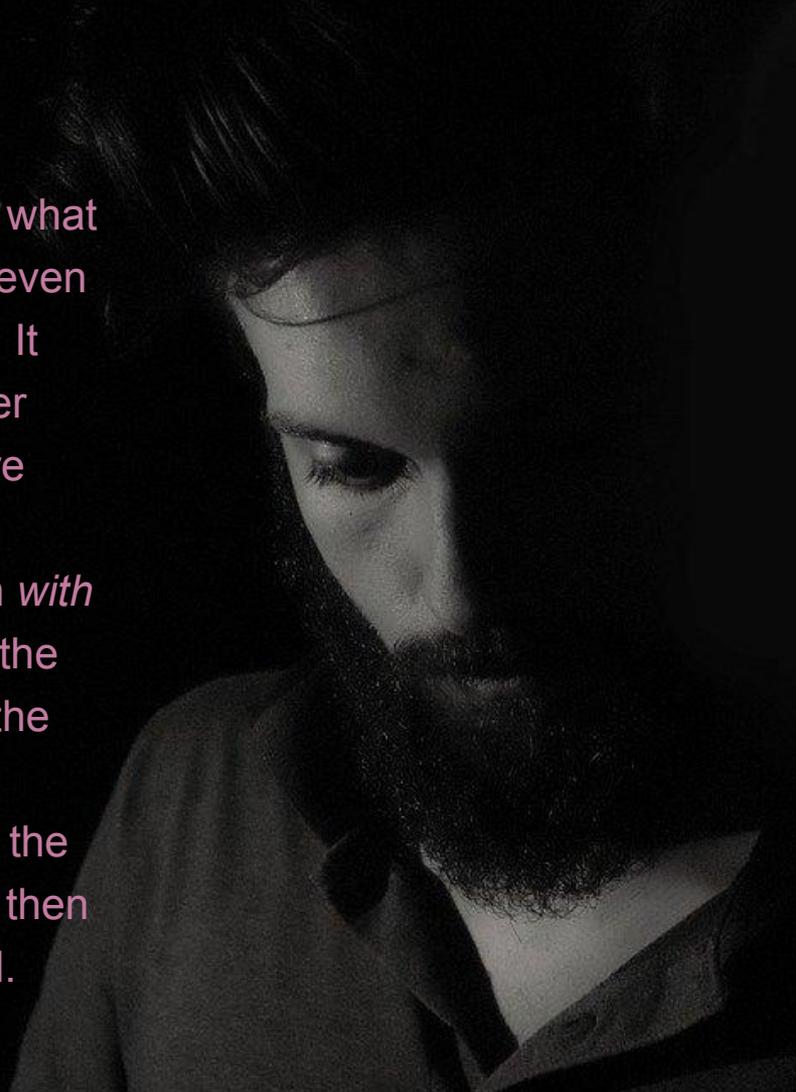
As we enter into Holy Week (the week between Palm Sunday and Easter), we want to offer space for reflection on our lives, for prayer, and for connection to Jesus' own journey on our behalf. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are invited to walk in the steps of Jesus, each and every day. Throughout this prayer journey, you will be walking alongside Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to his burial in the garden tomb. We invite you to be "With" Jesus in heart and mind. Jesus Immanuel, God with Us, walks this path *for us*. Ultimately, it is our path he walks; our cross he carries. Today we walk *with Him*, because he still walks *with us*. Today in Scripture and prayer, we walk together and carry our cross together.

At each Station, you will find a portion of Scripture to read from your own Bible with some reflections upon that Scripture. You will also find an activity designed to help you engage the theme of the Station. Engage these activities prayerfully, being open to what God wants to do in your heart or mind. Take as much time as you need for each station; simply click when you are ready to move forward.

Blessings as you take up your cross and follow!

Sorrow-Read Luke 22:39-46

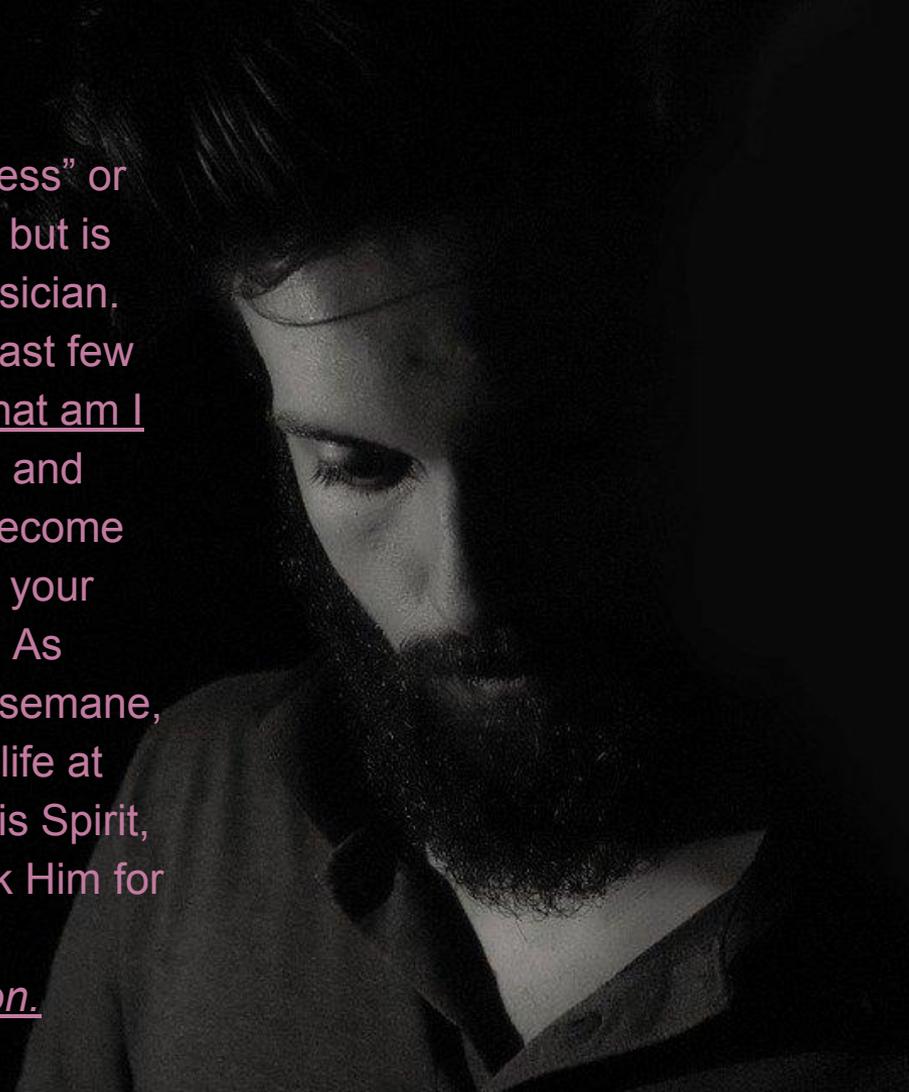
Sorrow is a fog that swallows you. You can kind of hear what is happening around you, but often sound is muffled or even absent. When sorrow is heavy, it has an isolating effect. It cuts you off from friends and family, unable to see further than what is right in front of you. Though his friends were nearby, Jesus sorrowed in the loss He knew was coming...and He sorrowed that His friends did not seem *with Him* in the present moment. Clearly, no one understood the weight of the path he was walking. No one understood the burdens he was carrying. No one except the Father. No substitute would be found. Yet Jesus committed to walk the journey the Father had marked out for Him; if not in joy, then in sheer obedience and submission to the one He loved.



Sorrow

Enter the exercise called “Examination of Awareness” or *Examen*. This is not an exam in the sense of test, but is really more like a doctor’s visit with the Great Physician. Take a minute to quiet your heart and review the last few days, asking: For what am I most grateful? For what am I least grateful? As you reflect on your recent highs and lows and the activities they arise from, you may become more aware of your gifts and passions, as well as your strengths, weaknesses, anxieties and blind spots. As Jesus poured out His heart in the Garden of Gethsemane, invite God into the “lows” you are experiencing in life at this time. Pray that He would minister to you by His Spirit, His Word, and His People. Take time also to thank Him for the “highs” as well.

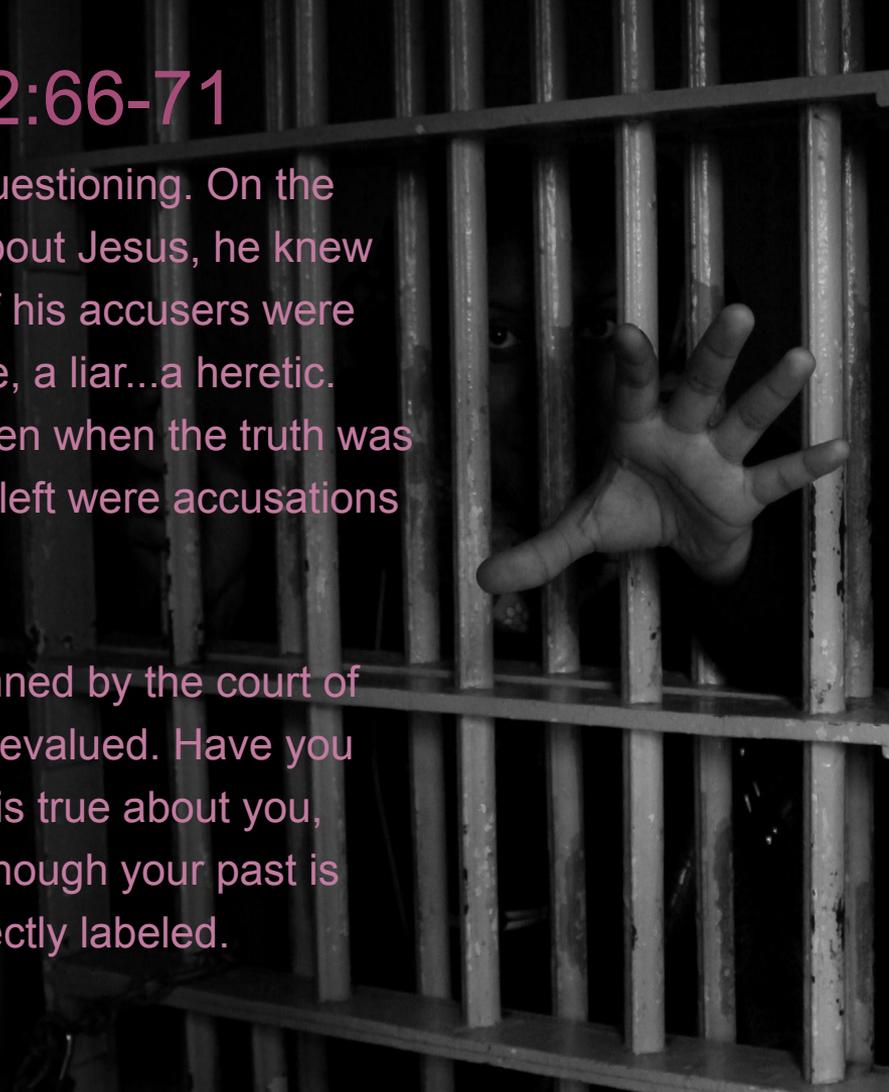
When you are ready, click to the next station.



Condemnation-Read Luke 22:66-71

As Jesus stood before the council, he faced direct questioning. On the surface, the questions seemed to ask for the truth about Jesus, he knew that truth was not what they were after. The minds of his accusers were already made up. To them, Jesus was a fraud, a fake, a liar...a heretic. Jesus was a liability that needed to be dealt with. Even when the truth was spoken, it was discarded as impossible. All that was left were accusations and condemnation.

Jesus knows how it feels to be accused and condemned by the court of public opinion. Misunderstood. Incorrectly labeled. Devalued. Have you experienced a time when others have decided what is true about you, even when they are wrong? Do others treat you as though your past is what is most true about you? Misunderstood. Incorrectly labeled. Devalued. Do you stand accused...condemned?

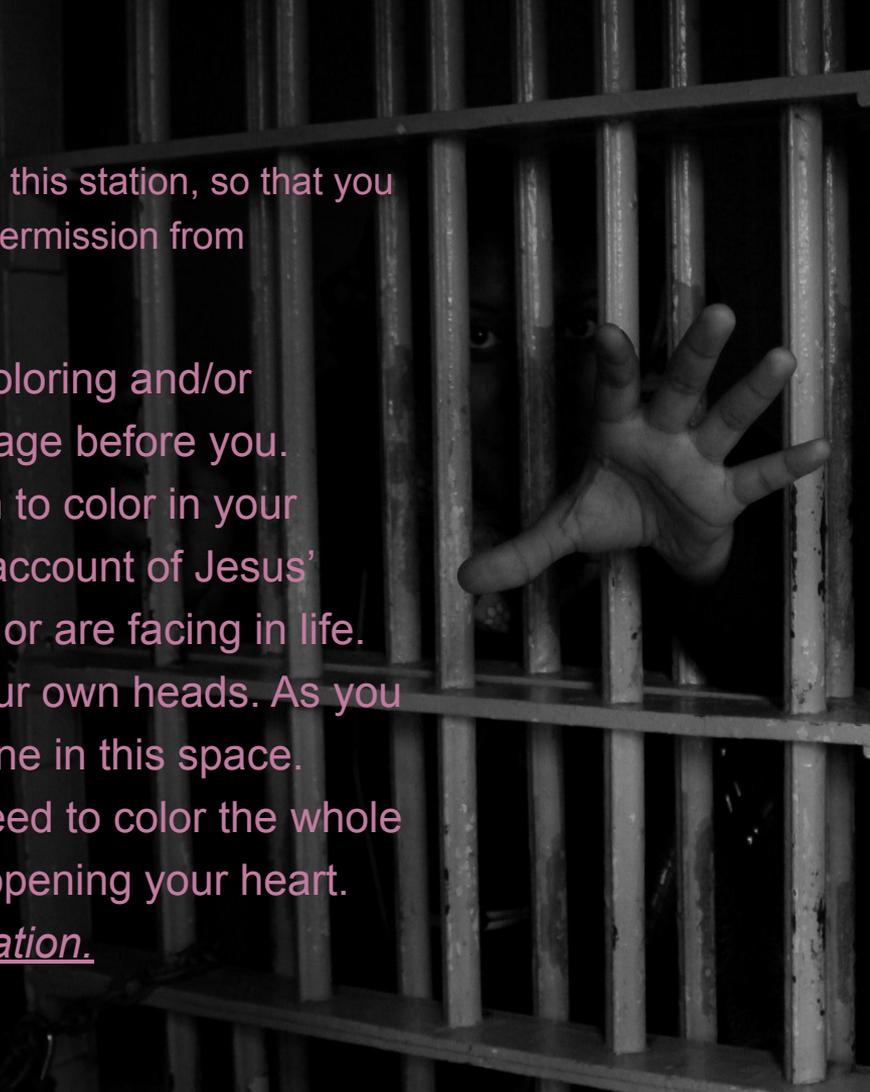


Condemnation

(Hopefully you have an ability to print from your computer for this station, so that you can [click this link](#) and print the page provided with permission from illustratedministry.com .)

With a coloring page before you and some tools for coloring and/or shading, take a moment to look at the details of the page before you. Allow it to draw you in to prayer. As you are led, begin to color in your page, taking your time and being mindful both of the account of Jesus' condemnation and of condemnations you have faced or are facing in life. Sometimes these condemnations come from within our own heads. As you color, continue to remind yourself that you are not alone in this space. Jesus is here walking with you- always. You do not need to color the whole page now, but spend enough time that you feel God opening your heart.

When you are ready, click to the next station.



Judgment-Read Luke 23:18-25

How did it come to this? Declared innocent in one breath, and in the next **judged** guilty.

Sentenced to pay for a crime the judges knew he did not commit. The frenzied crowds lost their bearings. Before they knew it, a man of peace was judged guilty of inciting rebellion, and a rebel leader was declared free of all charges. It is astounding what happens when we lose focus.

If a sense of injustice threatens to distract, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. He offers no complaint. No argument. No appeal. He humbly walks the journey before Him. This is the man to watch in the middle of the shouting crowds, amidst all the noise of life.

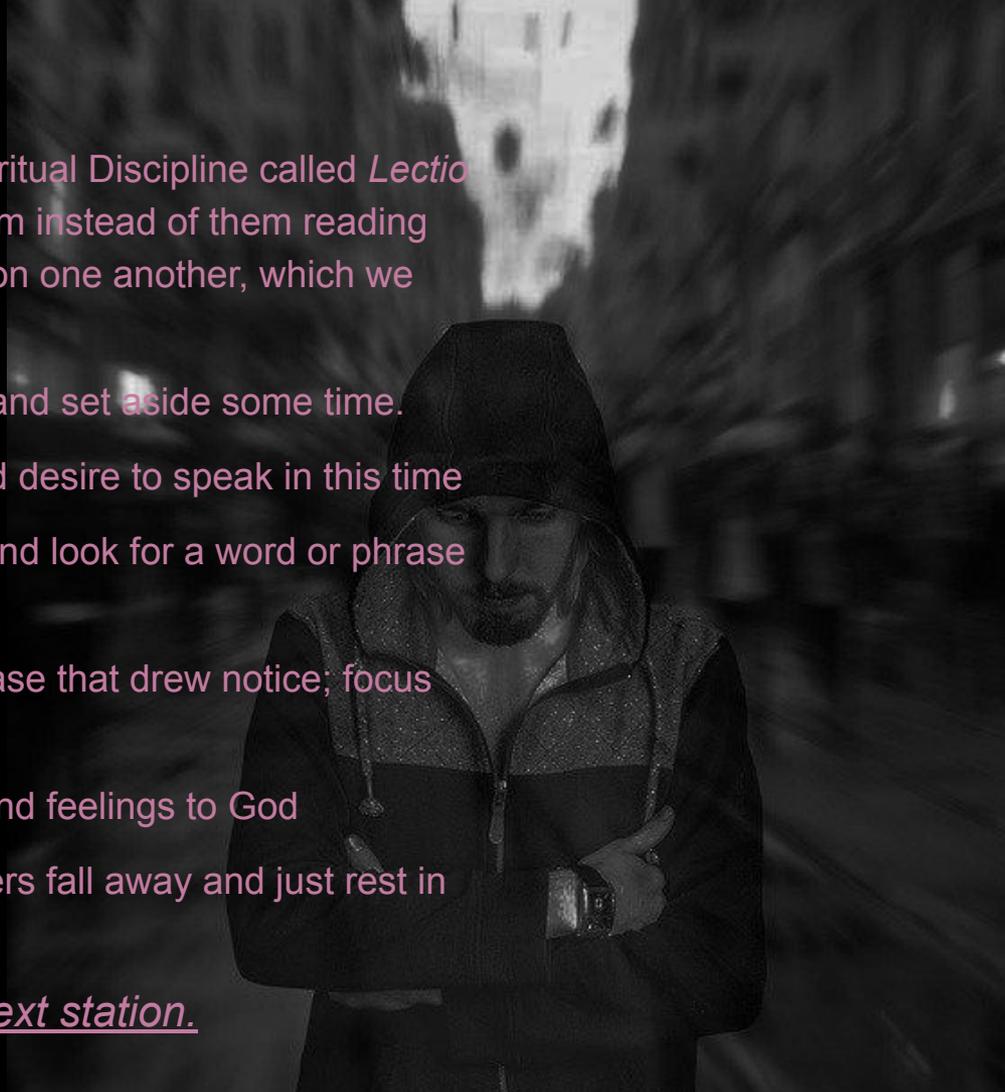
Who are you in this story? Among the crowds who lost focus on the truth before them? The judge who tired of defending the truth? The criminal granted grace? The scapegoat? Are you more than one character? Find your place here without adding judgment to yourself; and as you do so, focus on Jesus relating with you in that space.

Judgment

For centuries, persons of faith have been using a Spiritual Discipline called *Lectio Divina*, “Holy Reading,” to invite Scripture to read them instead of them reading Scripture. It provides structure in six steps that build on one another, which we invite you to use by re-reading Luke 23:18-25.

- 1) **Preparation**- select Scripture, find a quiet space, and set aside some time.
- 2) **Silence**- relax, reflecting on God’s love for you and desire to speak in this time
- 3) **Reading**- read the passage slowly several times and look for a word or phrase that sticks out to you
- 4) **Meditation**- ignore everything but the word or phrase that drew notice; focus on the thoughts and feelings attached to that word
- 5) **Oration**- pray your thankful and/or hurt thoughts and feelings to God
- 6) **Contemplation**- Let all of your thoughts and prayers fall away and just rest in God’s loving presence.

When you are ready, click to the next station.



Bearing-Read Luke 23:26

We've all felt guilt and shame when we do something we know we shouldn't or when someone else experiences the unintended consequences of our actions. It can be a paralyzing weight, destroying health, relationships and community. We hide our shame, managing others' perceptions at the expense of our souls.

But Jesus calls us to brutal honesty with ourselves. We can call our mistakes what they are: sins. And it's safe to do so because Jesus stands *with us*, loving us more than we love ourselves, ready to bear that sin for us. He actually already carried it, all the way from the trial to Golgotha. He died because of it. Then overcame it. He's already paid the price for your burden.



Bearing

Simon from Cyrene physically bore the cross of Jesus and walked with him on the journey. In the same way, Mark 2 tells a story of four friends who carried their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing. This is what true love looks like, carrying our friends to Jesus as we know how; and the best way to do that is through intercessory prayer. It is loving others with God's love for them believing in his ability to meet whatever need.

So let's take time to be intercessors. Begin with an individual or a need. Focus on the whole-person and reflect on the heart of God to whom you pray. Begin to pray out loud. Pray your heart and mind. Pray what you know of God's heart. Pray Scriptures that come to mind. Pray specifically about results, attitudes, events, hopes, and the way answered prayer can glorify God. (Note: its normal for the prayer that is actually prayed to be different than the one intended at the outset). Pray by the power and authority given you in the name of Jesus Christ. Perhaps it would be good to write down whom you are interceding for, so that today's intercession might become a habit of prayer going forward.

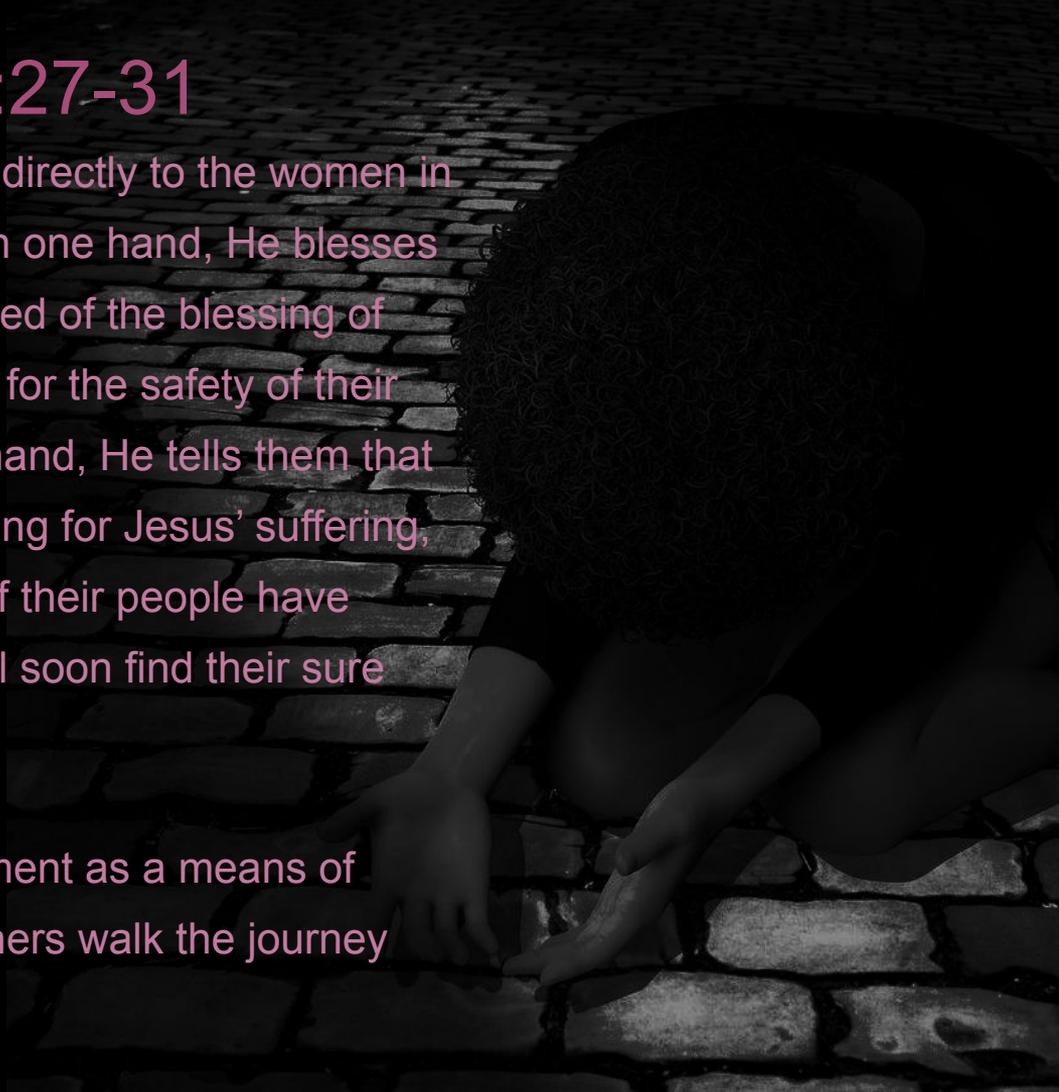
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Blessing-Read Luke 23:27-31

In a surprising moment, Jesus here speaks directly to the women in the crowd of mourning that followed him. On one hand, He blesses those who do not feel blessed- those deprived of the blessing of children-by saying they will not need to fear for the safety of their children in the days to come. On the other hand, He tells them that their sorrow is misplaced- rather than weeping for Jesus' suffering, they should grieve for themselves, that all of their people have missed the big picture of God's plan and will soon find their sure footing has been removed.

Jesus is concerned with re-framing the moment as a means of grace. Even here, Jesus is trying to help others walk the journey forward with all of its ups and downs.

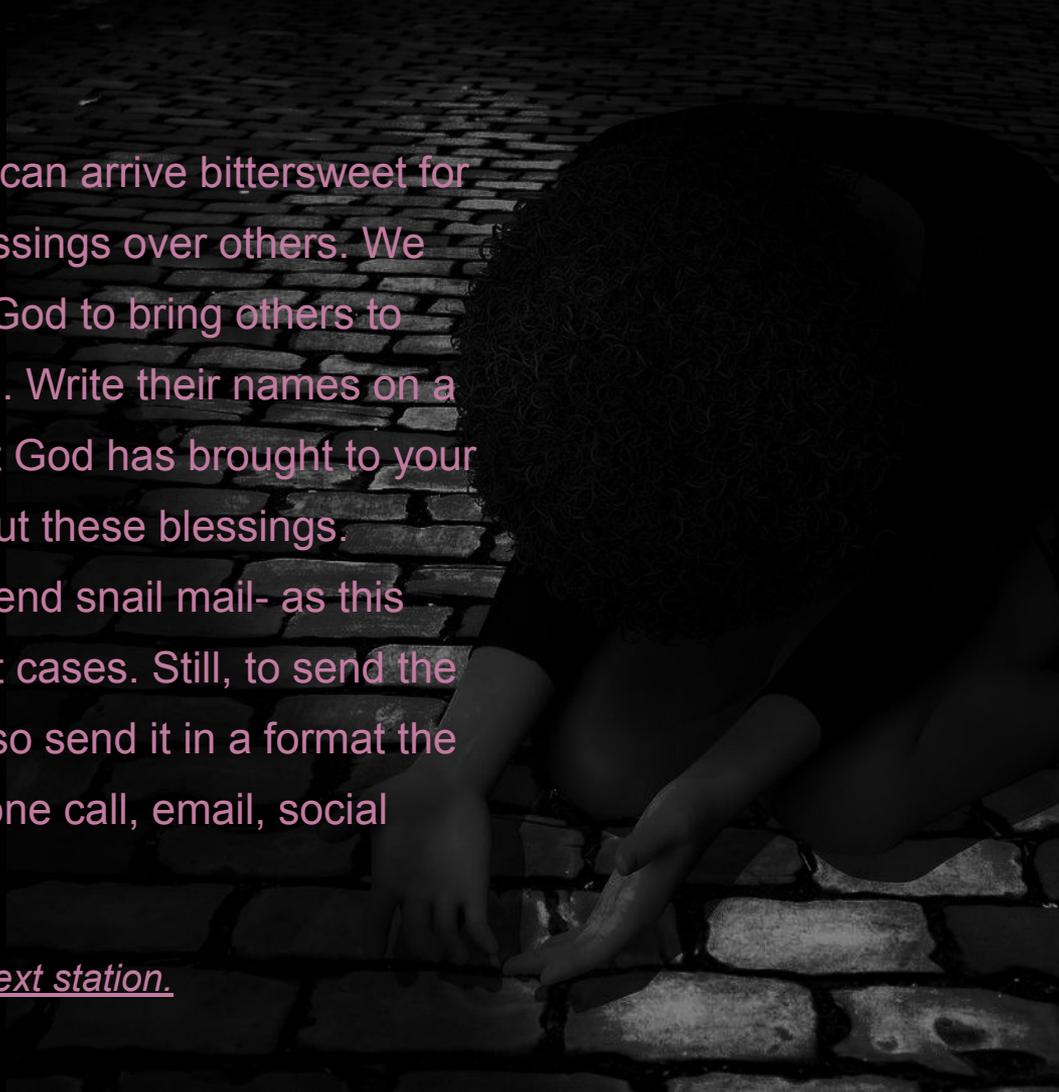


Blessing

While the blessing of Jesus in this instance can arrive bittersweet for us, we believe in the power of speaking blessings over others. We invite you to take out a piece of paper. Ask God to bring others to your attention who are in need of a blessing. Write their names on a paper, as well as any specific blessings that God has brought to your mind. Today or sometime this week, send out these blessings.

Whenever possible, we encourage you to send snail mail- as this increases the impact of the blessing in most cases. Still, to send the blessing is better than to not send it along; so send it in a format the individual may receive it (text message, phone call, email, social media messaging.)

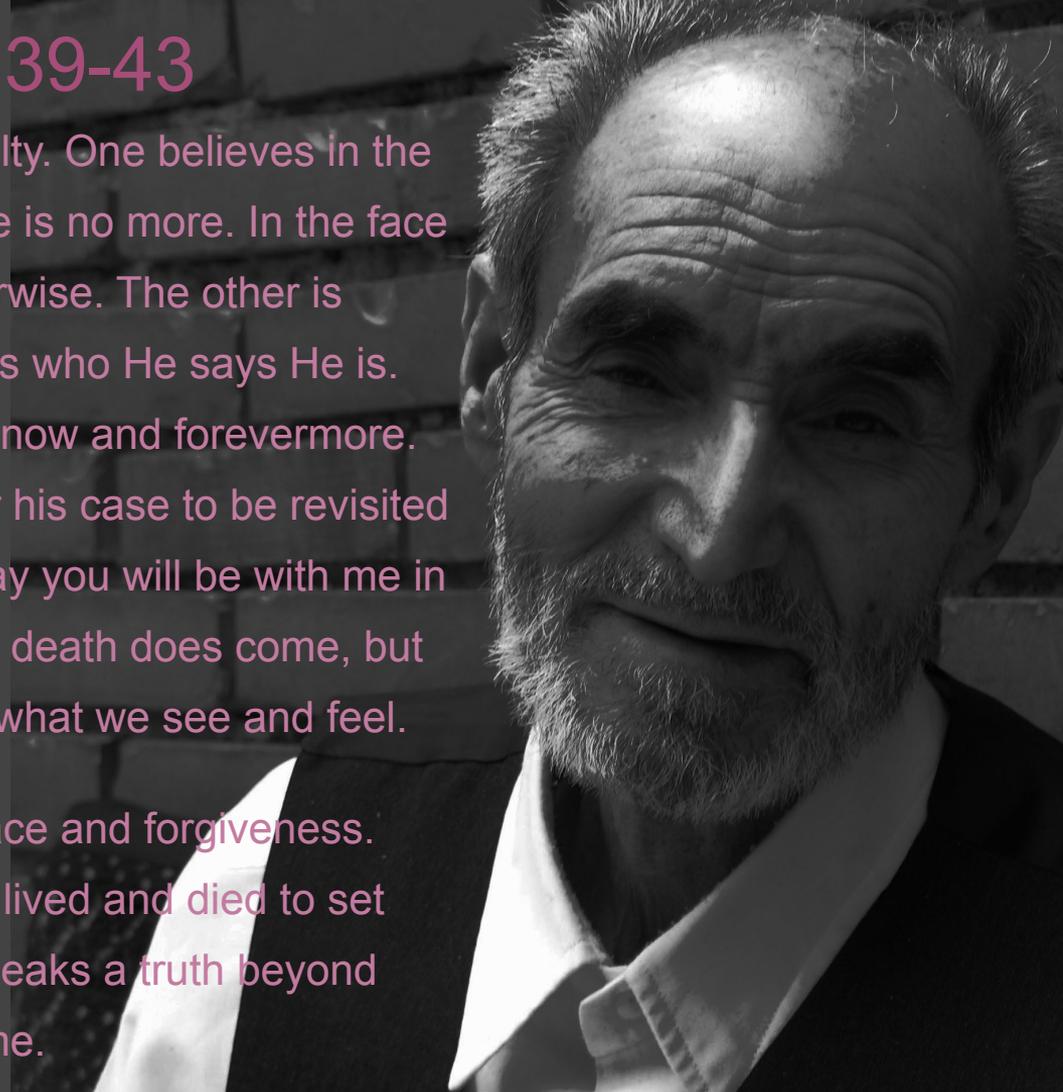
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Promise-Read Luke 23:39-43

Jesus, the innocent, hangs between the guilty. One believes in the finality of their sentence. This is it, and there is no more. In the face of reality, It would be foolish to believe otherwise. The other is willing to hope. He hopes that Jesus really is who He says He is. For that could make all the difference, both now and forevermore. He reaches out to Jesus in hope, asking for his case to be revisited by God. Jesus replies with a promise. "Today you will be with me in paradise." Yes, consequences are paid and death does come, but that is not the end. There is a truth beyond what we see and feel.

This is not a "once upon a time" story of grace and forgiveness. This is the story of Jesus, Son of God, who lived and died to set people free from the finality of sin. Jesus speaks a truth beyond what is seen, a promise of things yet to come.



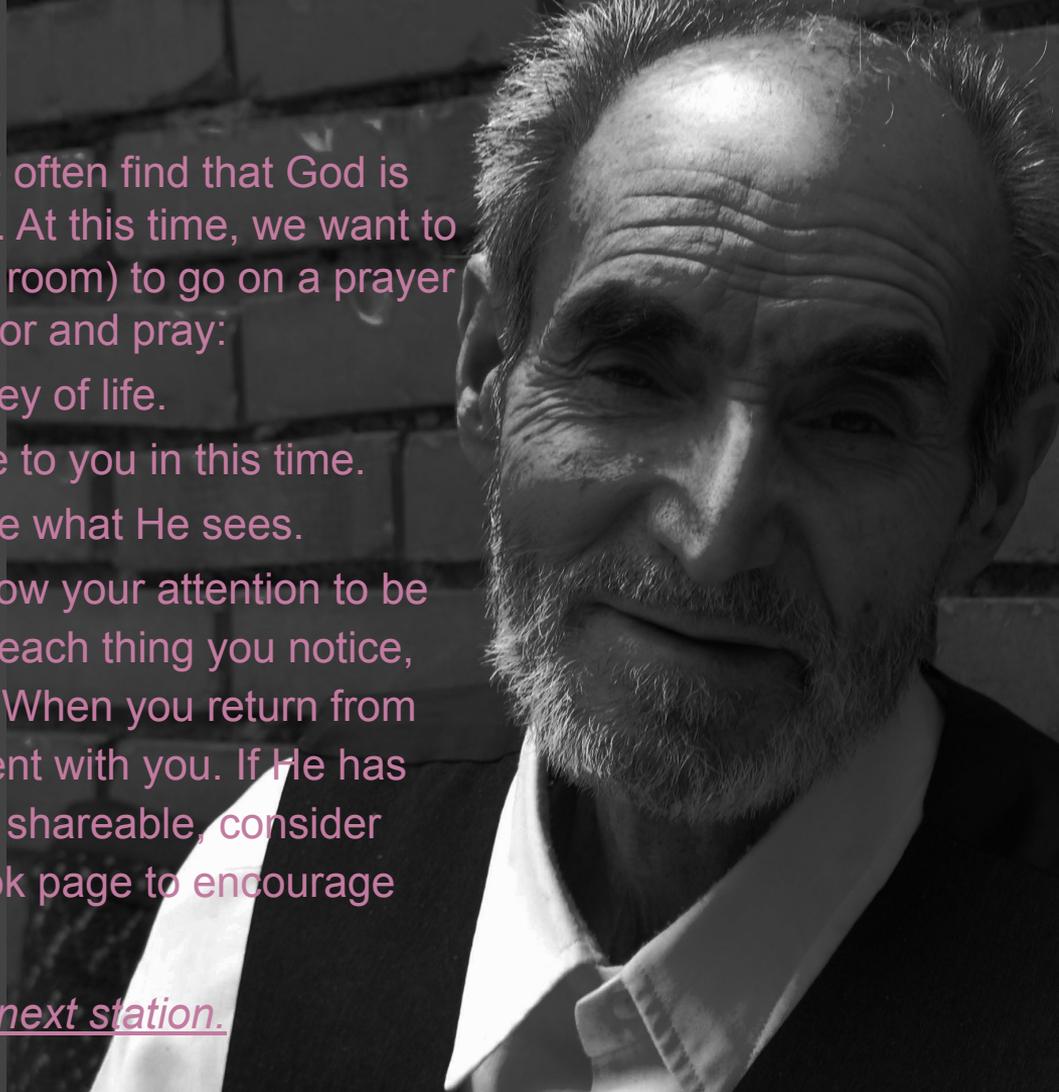
Promise-

When we open our hearts and our eyes, we often find that God is speaking to us through the world around us. At this time, we want to invite you outdoors (or even just out of your room) to go on a prayer walk. Once you are ready, pause at your door and pray:

- Thank God for being with you on the journey of life.
- Pray that God would speak a word of hope to you in this time.
- Pray that God would open your eyes to see what He sees.

Now go on out with eyes and ears open. Allow your attention to be drawn by things great and small. Pray over each thing you notice, that God would reveal His promises to you. When you return from your prayer walk, thank God for being present with you. If He has revealed a word to you and you believe it is shareable, consider sharing it on the Kidron Mennonite Facebook page to encourage others.

When you are ready, click to the next station.



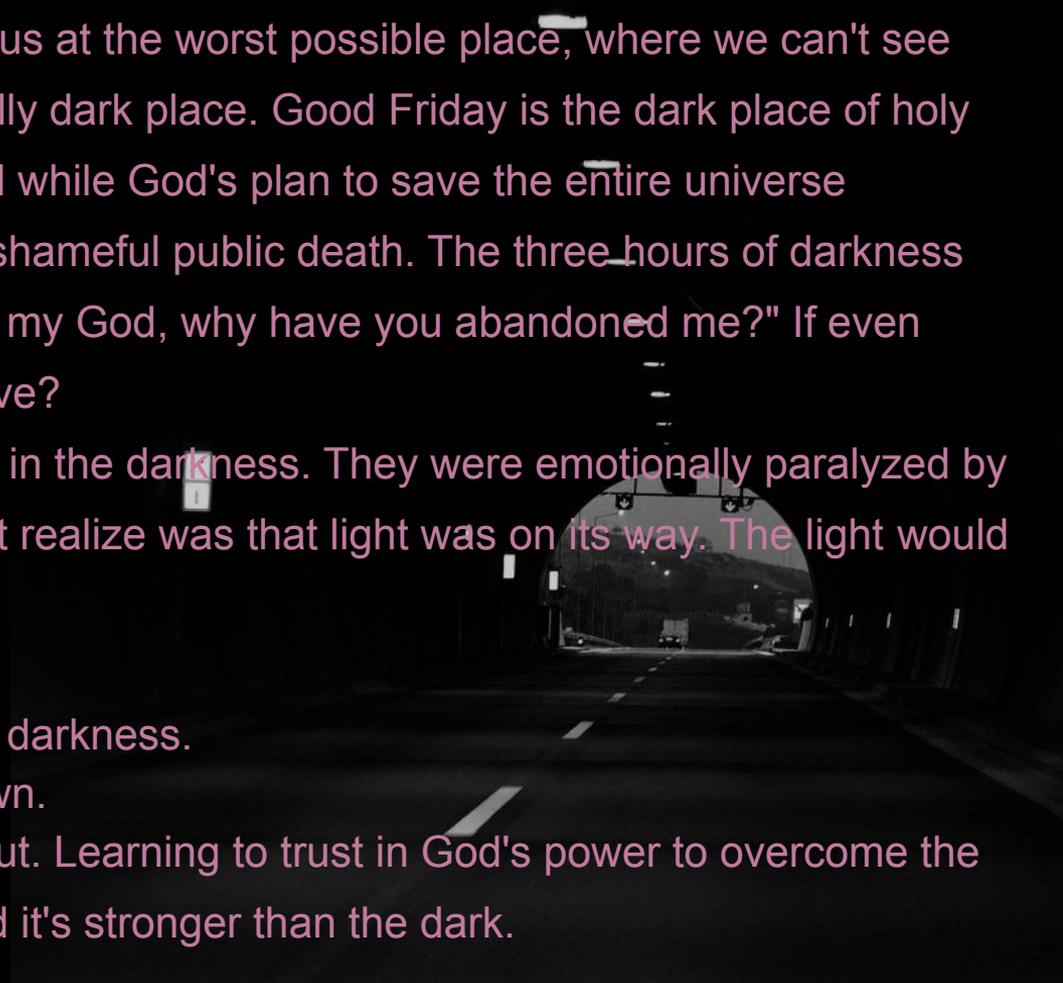
Darkness- Read Luke 23:44-49

Fear can stop us in our tracks. And it stops us at the worst possible place, where we can't see our way out. It's an emotionally and spiritually dark place. Good Friday is the dark place of holy week. For three hours, the sun disappeared while God's plan to save the entire universe screeched to a halt as his only son died a shameful public death. The three hours of darkness culminated with Jesus crying out, "my God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" If even Jesus felt abandoned, what hope do we have?

It's no wonder the disciples felt immobilized in the darkness. They were emotionally paralyzed by the dark events of that day. What they didn't realize was that light was on its way. The light would reveal that the plan was still at work.

- Jesus would conquer death.
- The light of the world would overcome darkness.
- The captivity of sin would be overthrown.

Going through the darkness **was** the way out. Learning to trust in God's power to overcome the dark is the way to "see." It's called faith, and it's stronger than the dark.



Darkness-

Watch the embedded video, allowing the lyrics of the song (taken from some of the Church's oldest statements of core beliefs) to provide a stabilizing anchor in times of darkness and unknowing. We await the rescue that Jesus Christ, Son of God, our LORD brings.

Come, LORD Jesus. Amen.

