

prayer, betrayal and denial Luke 22:39 - 65

thought for the week

Jesus retreats to a special place of prayer, a hillside set among some olive groves, overlooking Jerusalem, giving it the name: 'The Mount of Olives'. This was a *waiting place* where he faced the most agonising decision – so great was his grief and anguish that he actually sweats blood. He has to decide whether to trust in His Father's will entirely – a decision that will ultimately lead to a painful death on the cross, or whether to choose something less. Although he had often spoken about the need for His own death, he only knew the outcome of such an action through the eyes of faith, rather than any experience or empirical evidence. What is more, he faces this decision entirely on his own, as his disciples were incapable of sharing in it with him – hence his torment.

verse for the week

*Get up and pray that you will not fall
into temptation.*
Luke 22 verse 46

image for the week



prayer for the week

*I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
Rank me with whom you will;
Put me to doing, put me to suffering;
Let me be employed for you, or laid aside
for you,
Exalted for you, or brought low for you;
Let me be full, let me be empty,
Let me have all things,
Let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all
things to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
Amen.*

Methodist Covenant Prayer

reflection for each day

day one

Pray that you will not fall into temptation

Jesus calls his friends to wait or remain with Him. The temptation he refers to is theirs, rather than his. This is one of the few occasions when Jesus is asking his disciples to do something for him. How are you tempted not to remain or stay with Jesus?

day two

Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me.

Jesus is drawing upon images from the Passover meal, when the cup of God's anger is remembered. What does his prayer, 'if you are willing' tell you about how to approach your own painful cup?

day three

Yet not my will, but yours be done.

Jesus didn't want to die. He didn't have a death wish or martyr complex. It was a necessary death, rather than a compulsive one. How can you make this prayer of Jesus your own prayer for the difficult decisions you have to face?

day four

He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow

'Exhausted from sorrow' is probably a later reflection as the disciples appeared initially ignorant of what was taking place. In what ways do we 'sleep' or opt out when Jesus needs us to remain with him?

day five

Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?

The kiss was probably a sign Judas had agreed to identify Jesus with to the Temple guards. A sign of love, betraying the King of love. What is the difference between a sign of love and a demonstration of love?

day six

I don't know him

Caught between his fear and his battered sense of loyalty, Peter denies Jesus three times. Self protection and the survival instinct are powerful human traits. In what situations in your life are you faced with the decision to deny or acknowledge Jesus?

day seven

He went outside and wept bitterly

Perhaps we shouldn't be too harsh on Peter, he had followed him only to be accused. His sorrow is deep and genuine. How can remorse or regret become a pathway to healing and restoration?

for the group

as you gather...

- What is the biggest decision you have ever faced (v42)? What did it feel like not knowing what would follow? What can we learn from how Jesus faced his biggest decision?
- Consider why Judas betrayed Jesus? He may have been disappointed that Jesus appeared to betray the political revolution he had anticipated. What has been your greatest disappointment? Do we sometimes impose our own ideas upon Jesus, only to be disappointed?
- Jesus demonstrates his willingness to lay down his power and authority in order to serve the greater purpose (v51-53). What can this teach us?
- The bravado of the disciples soon evaporates. Peter follows at a distance, yet the other disciples are nowhere to be seen. Peter wants to do the right thing, yet still screws up his opportunity. We learn from the Book of Acts that Peter finally emerges as a strong, yet still flawed, follower of Jesus and leader of the Church. What does this tell us about the times we mess up and the opportunities we have to put things right?

prayer for the group

Oh Holy Father, I seek you as I feel completely overwhelmed.

*I do not have the time nor the energy,
To sustain myself or my life.*

Everything tells me, there is too much to do.

Show me your hand, in control of all things.

Let me find rest in you. Let me trust that you give me, eternal blessings always.

You alone are sovereign. You alone own time itself. You alone are the Lord.

So I stop at this moment, and look for you,

I feel the soft breeze, of your merciful love, carrying my worries away

You transform me, you change my heart.

I rise up strong again in Christ, and face the world.

My path straight and firm. With faith in your Son.

*In whose great name I pray. **Amen.***



continue the conversation

[here](#)

Apprentice

trial

Luke 22:66 - 23:25

thought for the week

Jesus is arrested and taken on a merry-go-round trip through various tribunals and courts. First he is taken to the religious court (v66) overseen by the Chief Priests of the Temple and the Teachers of the Law (Sadducees and Pharisees). Here, he is accused of breaking the religious law (v70) – a crime punishable by stoning. However, the authorities want him to receive the public humiliation of crucifixion – a punishment reserved for political enemies of Rome, so he is sent off to see Pilate, the Roman Governor, accused of insurrection (v2).

Pilate enquires of his claim to the throne (a political crime), but wants to distance himself from what he sees as an internal, religious dispute, and so passes him onto Herod, under a bureaucratic pretext (v6-7). Jesus, like many Jews of his day, did not recognise the legitimacy of Herod's rule – he neither fully represented Rome, nor the Jews, so Jesus refuses to answer his questions (v9). Having failed to engage Jesus in conversation, Herod resorts to mockery (v11) and returns him to Pilate, the only one able to authorise crucifixion.

verse for the week

*“If you are the Christ,” they said,
“tell us.”*

Luke 22 verse 67

prayer for the week

*Trust in God
Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you;
All things pass:
God never changes.
Patience achieves
all it strives for.
He who has God
finds they lacks nothing.
God alone suffices.*

St Teresa of Avila

image for the week



reflection for each day

day one

And they said many other insulting things to him

We know that words can be really hurtful. They often leave a fingerprint on our lives. Sometimes we can accept the false labels that others put upon us. Come before Jesus now and tell him about the labels you or others have used to describe yourself. Ask him for His label and description instead.

day two

If I tell you, you will not believe

There had been plenty of evidence of his Messiahship but the religious authorities were blinded to who Jesus really was. What blinds others today to who Jesus really is?

day five

*He plied him with many questions,
but Jesus gave him no answer*

Jesus did not need to justify himself before the illegitimate authority of Herod. Do you tend to defend or justify yourself, when instead it would be better to remain silent?

day three

*I find no basis for a charge against
this man*

Even a cruel and corrupt military leader can find no basis to condemn Jesus. There is a lack of any kind of evidence of wrongdoing. The innocent one is blamed. Consider how Jesus shares in the narrative of innocent suffering.

day six

*Away with this man! Release
Barabbas to us*

In the only popularity contest ever held, Jesus finishes second to a convicted murderer. In a society swayed by the noise, rather than the truth of public opinion, how can we remain true to what we believe?

day four

*He stirs up the people all over Judea
by this teaching*

The only charge that appears to stick is that of a trouble maker. Jesus is a true revolutionary - capable of provoking a reaction through his ministry. Do we sanitise Jesus' teaching? What was so revolutionary?

day seven

Crucify him! Crucify him!

It is the crowd, stirred up by the religious leaders, who demand crucifixion. The same crowd who praised Jesus a few days earlier. What does this tell us about human emotion and sentiment? How can we remain steadfast?

for the group

as you gather...

“God is not greater than he is in this humiliation. God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity.” Jurgen Moltman

- The trial was clearly a sham. Jesus’ fate had already been sealed previously by the Temple authorities. How does this make you feel? Angry or resigned to the injustice of the situation?
- Why was Jesus seen as such a threat to the religious authorities?
- Apart from Jesus, who comes across best in these trials?
- Why was Jesus mocked and insulted so much? To what extent should followers of Jesus expect mockery and insult today?
- Why were the crowd so angry? Why were they so easily swayed? What does this tell us about popular opinion?

prayer for the group

Thanks be to you,
 my Lord Jesus Christ,
 for all the benefits you have given me,
 for all the pains and insults
 you have borne for me.
 O most merciful redeemer,
 friend and brother,
 may I know you more clearly,
 love you more dearly,
 and follow you more nearly,
 day by day.
Amen

The Prayer of St Richard of Chichester



continue the conversation
[here](#)

Apprentice

crucifixion

Luke 23:26-43

thought for the week

Jesus begins his painful journey towards his place of execution. During this journey he is mocked and humiliated (verses 34 - 36, 39). Simon, an African, helps to carry his load (verse 26) whilst others mourn for him (verse 27).

Understanding this final journey has been the most profound, symbolic and formative enterprise for followers of Jesus throughout the centuries – sometimes called, ‘the way of the cross’ or the *Via Dolorosa* (sorrowful way). It is a paradoxical journey of total obedience to His Father’s will, yet into an experience of abandonment; a journey of unjust suffering, yet undertaken for our healing; a journey into loss and death in the cause of forgiven, renewal and new life.

verse for the week

There was a written notice above which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS

Luke 23 verse 38

prayer for the week

O God Almighty, who suffered death upon the cross, particularly for my sins, be with me.

Holy Cross of Jesus, have pity on me.

Holy Cross of Jesus, be my protector.

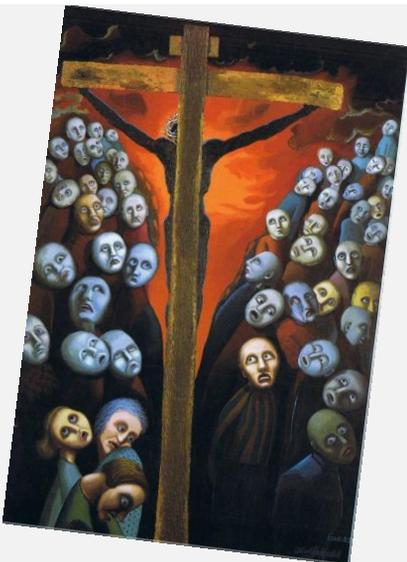
Holy Cross of Jesus, take away all bitter pains.

Holy Cross of Jesus, take away all evil.

Holy Cross of Jesus, let me walk in the way of salvation.

Amen.

image for the week



reflection for each day



day one

Do not weep for me; weep for yourselves

Weeping and mourning for those sentenced to death was a common cultural practice, usually undertaken by women. Jesus turns this ritual on its head, focussing upon the sin and pain of the crowd, rather than his own fate. How does mourning relate to our own death and vulnerability as well as to the person who has died?



day two

If men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?

The metaphor of a 'green' tree when Jesus is with them, contrasts to the 'dry' of when Jesus departs. What would you like to do for Jesus if he was physically present? Do it!



day three

Father, forgive them

Jesus' compassion and love is not inhibited amidst his own unjust suffering - he still finds the capacity to forgive. What does this tell us about the reach of God's love demonstrated to us in Jesus?



day four

they do not know what they are doing

Jesus opens up the whole question of responsibility for what is happening. Who is to blame? The Romans? The Jewish authorities? The crowd? All of us? In ignorance the Lord of life is killed.



day five

He saved others; let him save himself

Jesus' life was surrendered, not forcibly taken from him - he willingly surrenders himself to his Father's will, even though this involved his own suffering and death. His death is a consequence of his self offering and love.



day six

Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom

Even at the end of life, the invitation to come to Jesus remains. This question takes the form of a prayer from the undeserving criminal - it is heartfelt and full of faith. What does this tell you about responding to Jesus?



day seven

Today you will be with me in paradise

Jesus' response is immediate and freely offered - with no strings attached. The offer of new life with Jesus crosses all barriers of time and circumstance - all that is needed is faith.

for the group

as you gather...

“There are countless ways from man to God, and therefore there are also countless ethics, but there is only one way from God to man, and that is the way of love in Christ, the way of the cross.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

- One criminal heaps insults on Jesus, the other turns to him in faith (v39-41). Even in death, Jesus divides opinions – challenging perceptions whilst offering hope. How does Jesus still divide opinion today?
- We often say, ‘It’s not fair’ as the innocent suffer. Jesus suffers for doing no wrong (v41). What does this tell us about Jesus relationship with the victims of life? How can we ensure that we are on the side of all victims?
- Where would you place yourself in the landscape of the events of the crucifixion? Mocking like the rulers? Quietly hiding in the crowd? Distracted like the soldiers? Sharing the load like Simon? Overcome with emotion, like the mourning women? Fearful and standing at a distance, like those who had shared his journey (the disciples)? Reaching out in faith, like the criminal?

prayer for the group

To your cross, O Lord, we come for healing

For you alone can make us whole

We come with the broken-hearted and broken-spirited,

For you alone can make us whole

We come with those with broken relationships,

For you alone can make us whole

We come with the broken in body or in mind,

For you alone can make us whole

We come with the weak and handicapped,

For you alone can make us whole

We come with the sinners and the guilty,

For you alone can make us whole.

Christ, who was crucified, and now is risen, may we find in you a sure ground for our faith a firm support for our hopes, the knowledge of sins forgiven and the assurance that life is eternal.

Amen.

David Adam



continue the conversation
[here](#)

death and burial

Luke 23:44-56

thought for the week

Crucifixion was a form of execution reserved for enemies of Rome, therefore the process was designed to linger on, publicly demonstrating the agonising cost of rebellion to all those who passed by. Jesus was already weakened by the trials and punishment of the previous evening, so his life draws to an early end. The details about darkness descending (verse 44) illustrate that this is both a historical and physical event as well as an eternal one imbued with spiritual significance. The tearing of the Temple curtain (verse 45) that marked the boundary between God's divine presence in the Holy of Holies and external space occupied by humankind, shows that his death occupied the interface of love of God with the experience and suffering of humanity. Jesus freely offers up his life (verse 46). His death marks the final and supreme surrendering of his life into the hands of his heavenly Father.

verse for the week

*Jesus called out in a loud voice, 'Father,
into your hands I commit my spirit.
Luke 23 verse 46*

image for the week



prayer for the week

Unstop our ears
that we may receive the
gospel of the cross
Lighten our eyes
that we may see your glory
in the face of your Son
Penetrate our minds
that your truth may make us
whole.
Irradiate our hearts with your love
that we may love one
another for Christ's sake.
Amen.

Common Worship

reflection for each day



day one

darkness came over the whole land

This darkness was both physical and spiritual - it seems to echo the bleakness of the events – God has come among us, in the form of Jesus of Nazareth and he has been rejected and killed. The Old Testament had a tradition of ‘lament’, when the bleakness of a situation is fully entered into. Sometimes we have to dwell in the darkness before encountering the light.



day two

*the curtain of the temple
was torn in two*

The barrier between God and man is destroyed. God has fully entered into the human condition, including death. There is nothing in life or even death beyond His love.



day five

*But all those who knew
him... stood at a distance*

When the chips were down, Jesus’s friends either stood at a distance or abandoned him. Do we sometimes fail to answer Jesus’ call to share his life and ministry?



day three

*Father into your hands,
I commit my spirit*

Jesus surrenders his life. His trust and obedience is total. Our life is a gift from God, He invites us to trust in His loving provision. How can I likewise entrust my life into God’s care, no matter what the cost?



day six

*a man names Joseph, a member of
the Council... asked for Jesus’ body*

Joseph, a secret believer, provides a tomb for Jesus’ body. Small acts of faithfulness, even offered from a place of secrecy, can still serve the ministry of Jesus and the purposes of God.



day four

Surely this was a righteous man

Jesus is acknowledged as righteous, even by a hostile, outsider. How can Jesus break into the lives of those who appear far away from his reach? Pray for someone you know whose situation might appear hopeless or beyond the reach of God’s love.



day seven

*The women who had come with
Jesus from Galilee..*

The women, so often in the background of Jesus’ ministry, now come to the fore. What small, faithful act can you undertake to serve Jesus?

for the group

as you gather...

- Consider the darkness that descended around the scene of Jesus' crucifixion. How do you understand the idea of spiritual darkness today? Do you see it as a sign of God's departure or rather the cloaking of his presence?
- How do you understand the idea of Jesus surrendering his life (verse 46)?
- How is it possible to have a good death? How can we help others to face their death in a positive and faithful manner?
- Jesus has to borrow a tomb from a stranger (verse 52). What does this tell about how the actions of strangers can help to serve God's purposes?
- The women aren't able to prepare the body of Jesus, as it was the sabbath and such work was prohibited (verse 54), yet later they become witnesses of his resurrection. What does this tell us about waiting for God's timing?

prayer for the group

*Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross
so that he might draw the whole world to himself.
Grant that we, who glory in this death for our salvation,
may also glory in his call to take up our cross and follow him;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

*Merciful and ever living God,
Creator of heaven and earth,
the crucified body of your Son was laid in the tomb
and rested on this holy day.
Grant that we may await with him the dawning of the third day
and rise in newness of life,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.
Amen.*



continue the conversation
[here](#)