

Five Footsteps to Faith

A Meditation for Good Friday, inspired by "The Way of the Cross" by David Konstant

Sentences: Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

Washing the hands

Reading: Matthew 27: 24 – 31

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be upon us and on our children!". So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Meditation:

Pilate washed his hands because he was afraid and weak. He had power, but not the right power. He had judgement, but he judged badly. His fear created more fear. He judged Jesus and made him carry his cross. To others, this was a sign of fear, but for Jesus it was a sign of victory. It has become the sign in which we can conquer life.

What is my cross? It is myself, with all my failings, imperfections, eccentricities. It is my fears.

the fear of facing up to my responsibilities

the fear of making the wrong judgement

the fear of not knowing the future

the fear of being found out

the fear of what other people think of me

the fear of loneliness, the fear of failure.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we are burdened with ourselves. Help us to take up your Yoke which is sweet, and your burden which is light, and follow in your footsteps for your name's sake.

Carrying the Cross

Reading: Matthew 27: 32

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.

Meditation:

What sort of person was Simon? Why was he in Jerusalem watching that sordid procession? He was probably just an ordinary person in town for the festival, eager to see the sights and ready for cheap entertainment. He was one of the crowd, until he was hauled out to carry the cross. How did he feel about that?

We would probably be angry and afraid, for that is our reaction when we feel exposed and discriminated against. Angry because somebody has disputed my word, doubted my authority; afraid that perhaps I'm not right after all.

Angry because somebody rocked the boat; afraid that I won't be able to keep it on the right course.

Angry with the foolishness of others who don't or won't hold the same view as me; afraid that I may be made to look more foolish than them.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we are burdened by our fears and anger, pride and self-love. Help us to receive the peace that only you can give, and follow in your footsteps for Your name's sake.

The Crucifixion

Reading: Mark 15: 22 - 25

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.

Meditation:

It is the sheer, unmitigated cruelty of it which disgusts us first of all. It seems unbelievable that humans, created in the image and likeness of God, should be able to sink to such depths. Cruelty survives today on a grand scale - the genocide in the Balkans, the bombings in the Holy land, the violence of crime, the muggings of old people, the savage cruelty of some towards children.

Where is our inhumanity and cruelty?

A barbed wit,

A lack of charity to motorists or pedestrians.

Ignoring those I don't want to like.

A willingness to gossip and say something hurtful

A condescension towards those more ignorant than myself.

An impatience with those younger, or older than myself.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we are cruel and inhuman, and cause wounds of hate. Help us to show the world the love that you have shown us and so follow in your footsteps for Your name's sake.

The Death

Reading: Luke 23: 44 - 47

It was about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain in the Temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the Centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."

Meditation:

Greater love has nobody than this, that a person should lay down their life for their friend. It seems untrue that God, our God, should do that for us. That God should use the cruelty, hatred, anger and fear of this race of people that he has created, to save us from ourselves. If we had seen it happen, surely all that we would have experienced was the darkness of despair, a darkness we experience all the time.

a darkness of loneliness
a darkness of depression
a darkness of defeat
a darkness of a hollow victory
a darkness of hunger. and thirst, and poverty .

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we live a life of darkness, hidden within ourselves, with our own ambitions, that lead only to death. Help us to turn to you and be saved, that your light may shine through us, and so we may follow in your footsteps, for Your name's sake.

The Burial

Reading: John 19: 38 - 42

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen clothes, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Meditation:

The dead body of Jesus, a lifeless thing, an empty shell. It is hard to take it in. It seems so unreal. The grave too is unreal, and something which it is easier not to

think about. We wouldn't be human if we were entirely unafraid of death. Yet, death is only like a time of sleep, and the grave only a passing resting place - for us, as for Christ. It is a sign of hope, a sign of faith, a sign of love. The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is the promise for us of eternal life.

We are one body with Christ
We are no longer alone in fear and anger
We no longer live in selfishness and darkness,
for we go with Christ.
We share each other's blessings and burdens
forgetful of self
filled with the same hope
fired by the same faith
united in the same love for each other and for God.

Prayer:

Lord, Jesus, we pray that in our lives we may mirror Christ; that we may truly die to sin; that we may make our daily lives our daily worship and prayer; that by love we may lead others to Christ; that in our God-given vocation we may be all things to all people, and so follow in your footsteps, for we know that our Redeemer lives, and through him, with him, and in him, we shall all find life.

Prayer for Good Friday

Almighty God, who for the sake of the human race sent our Lord Jesus Christ to the cross that you might redeem the world from evil, and enlighten the world in its darkness, bring us together today, with all your faithful people to that same cross, the cross of shame, the cross of holiness. Help us to look in repentance and faith upon that great sacrifice, so that being set free from all our sins and entering into your passion, we may be crucified to the vanity, idolatry, and powers of this passing world. Stir up our spirits and minds with the vision of your love; count us worthy to suffer with you and for you, finding our purpose in life in the cross alone, so that we may live with the light of your victory.

Lord Jesus Christ, who for the whole world endured the anguish, agony and pain of death and suffered the derision and hatred of the world, through your cross and passion draw all people to you, that this world may find the true peace that comes from you alone, and may share with all your people the joy of eternal life as we worship unceasingly the Lamb that was once slain, but now lives for ever.

Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God, we worship you tonight in the shadow of the cross.
As that shadow falls across the world, so we see things differently,
and we understand people in the light of your love displayed at Calvary. So we pray:
For persecutor and persecuted;
for exploiter and exploited
for criminal and victim.
As we pray, remove the fear
that makes the world strident and vengeful,
and take away the wooliness of thought
that brings only sentimentality.
We pray for children growing up with no sense of beauty,

no feeling for what is good or bad,
no knowledge of you and your love in Christ.
We pray for men and women who have lost faith and given up hope;
for governments who crush people's spirits,
and for authorities slow to act in the cause of justice, freedom and development.
We pray for nations and people at war,
fighting for their own freedom by denying life to others
for perpetrators of the arms trade
exploiting the fear in people and living off the death of others.

We pray tonight, especially for

We pray for the whole church and the world,
giving thanks for your grace given on the cross,
for your love made known in Christ,
for your truth confirmed in his death and resurrection,
and for your promises to all people keeping hope and love alive.

Give us clear eyes to see the world as it is and ourselves and all people as we are;
but give us hope to go on believing in what you intend us to be.

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