



# JOURNEY

OF THE

# CROSS

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A Contemplative  
Prayer Experience

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by Chris Greer

# Come to Quiet

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sought God in the silence and asked, *“My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”* (Matthew 26:39)

Ultimately, we want the same thing. We want to meet with God in a quiet space and allow his will for us to be done.

So, before you begin this Journey of the Cross, consider your surroundings. Choose a time and place where you will be undistracted for at least 30 minutes.

Once there, begin with five to ten minutes of quiet to focus your thoughts on God.

*Breathe deeply.*

*Recognize his presence here.*

*Invite him to lead you and speak to you.*

When ready, ask God to reveal more of himself – and more of yourself – to you as you pray through the Journey of the Cross.

# Steps for the Journey

This prayer guide includes eight images that depict different moments along Jesus' journey of the cross.

Prayerfully look at and ponder each painting, then slowly Read, Reflect, and Pray as prompted in the guide below.

As you pay attention to God,  
record his words to you - or your words to him - in a journal.

*Don't rush.*

*Linger with the Holy Spirit.*

*Walk slowly with Jesus, and let him walk with you.*

*"I love those who love me,  
and those who seek me find me."*

**- Proverbs 8:17**

# Jesus Condemned to Death



## READING

Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could put him to death. But they couldn't find any...

Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" 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!" Then some of them began to spit at him, and they blindfolded him and beat him with their fists. "Prophecy to us," they jeered. And the guards slapped him as they took him away.

– Mark 14:55, 60-65

*He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word.*

*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.  
And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,  
he did not open his mouth.*

*Unjustly condemned, he was led away.*

– Isaiah 53:7-8

## REFLECTION

Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced profound solidarity with so many on this earth by being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to completely entering our lives begins its final steps.



He has said “yes” to God and placed his life in the Father's hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and we will contemplate with reverence each place along the way as he is broken and given for us.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

As I view the scene, I become moved by both outrage and gratitude. I look at Jesus. His face. The crown of thorns. The blood. His clothes stuck to the wounds on his back. Pilate washes his hands of the whole affair. Jesus’ hands are bound.

This is for me. That I might be free. That I might have eternal life.

As the journey begins, I ask to be with Jesus. To follow his journey. I express my love and thanks.

## PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, I recognize your perfection and innocence, and my imperfection and sinfulness.*

# Jesus Carries His Cross



## READING

Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter.

Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

– Matthew 27:27-31

So they took Jesus away. Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha).

– John 19:17

*He was beaten so we could be whole.  
He was whipped so we could be healed.  
All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.  
We have left God's paths to follow our own.  
Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.*

– Isaiah 53:5-6



## REFLECTION

Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die.  
What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders!  
With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience.  
He walks in the path of human misery and suffering and  
experiences its crushing weight.



*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

I contemplate the wood of that cross. I imagine how heavy it is. I reflect upon all it means that Jesus is carrying it. I look into his eyes. It's all there.

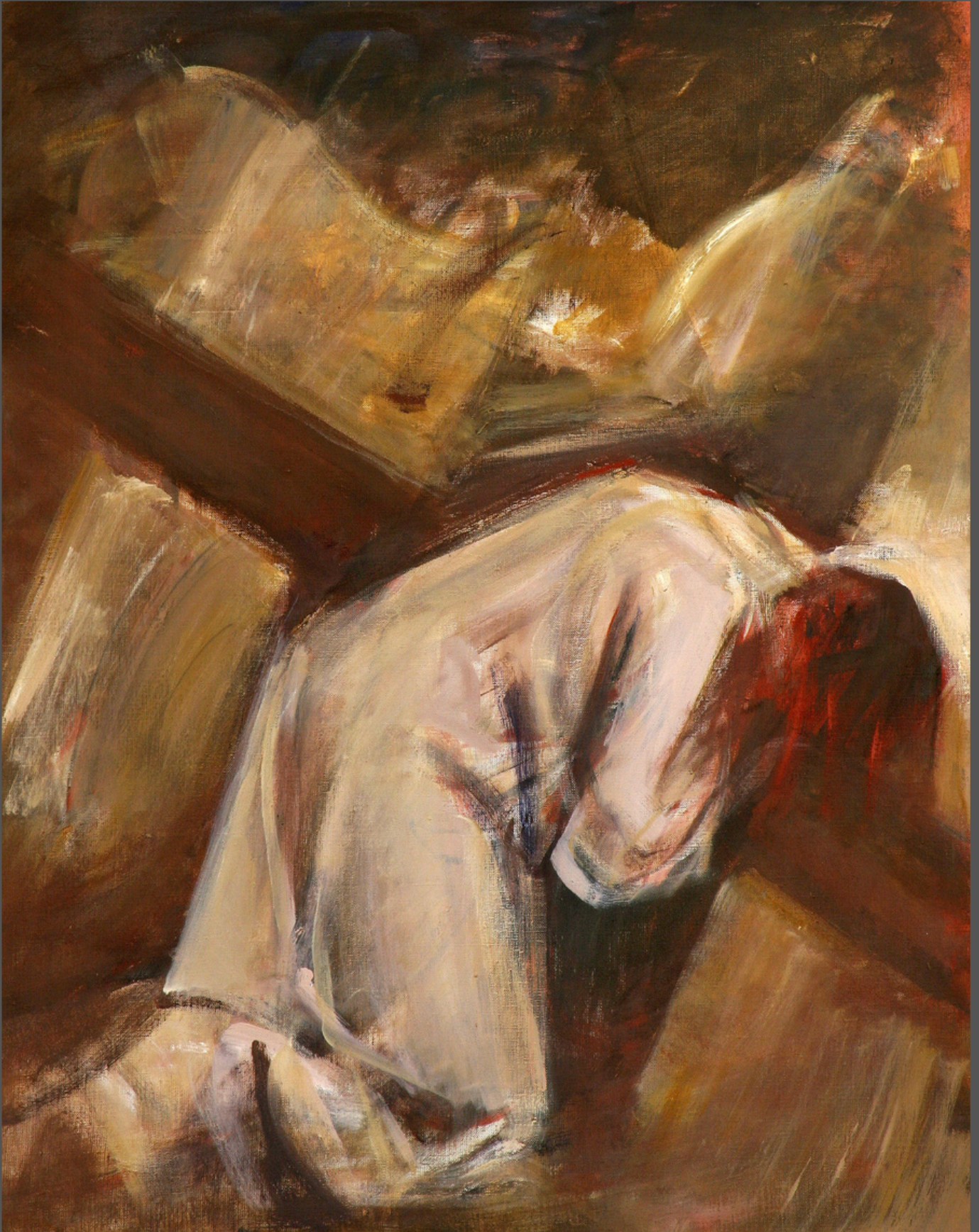
This is for me. So I place myself with him in this journey. In its anguish. In his freedom and surrender. In the love that must fill his heart.

With sorrow and gratitude, I continue the journey. Moved by the power of his love, I am drawn to him and express my love in the words that come to me.

## PRAYER

*God, sometimes I too am crushed by the weight of my sin and the sorrows of life.  
Thank you, Jesus for bearing the cross for me, so I would not have to.*

# Jesus Falls



## READING

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave.

– Philipians 2:6-7

This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

– Hebrews 4:15

In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.

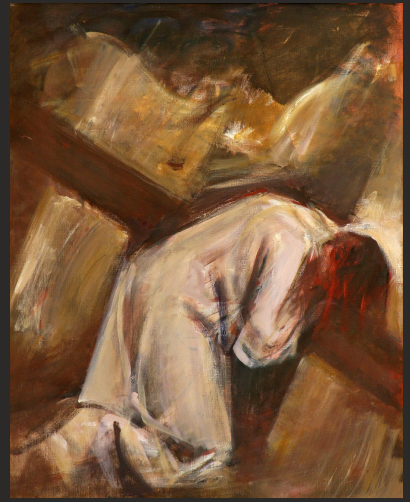
– Isaiah 63:9

*We turned our backs on him and looked  
the other way. He was despised,  
and we did not care.  
Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;  
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.*

– Isaiah 53:3-4

## REFLECTION

The weight is unbearable. How could he enter our lives completely without surrendering to the crushing weight of the life so many on this earth live?



He knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering if he will ever be able to continue. There on his knees—under the weight of his cross and all our sin—he feels the profound weakness of disability, disease, and age.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

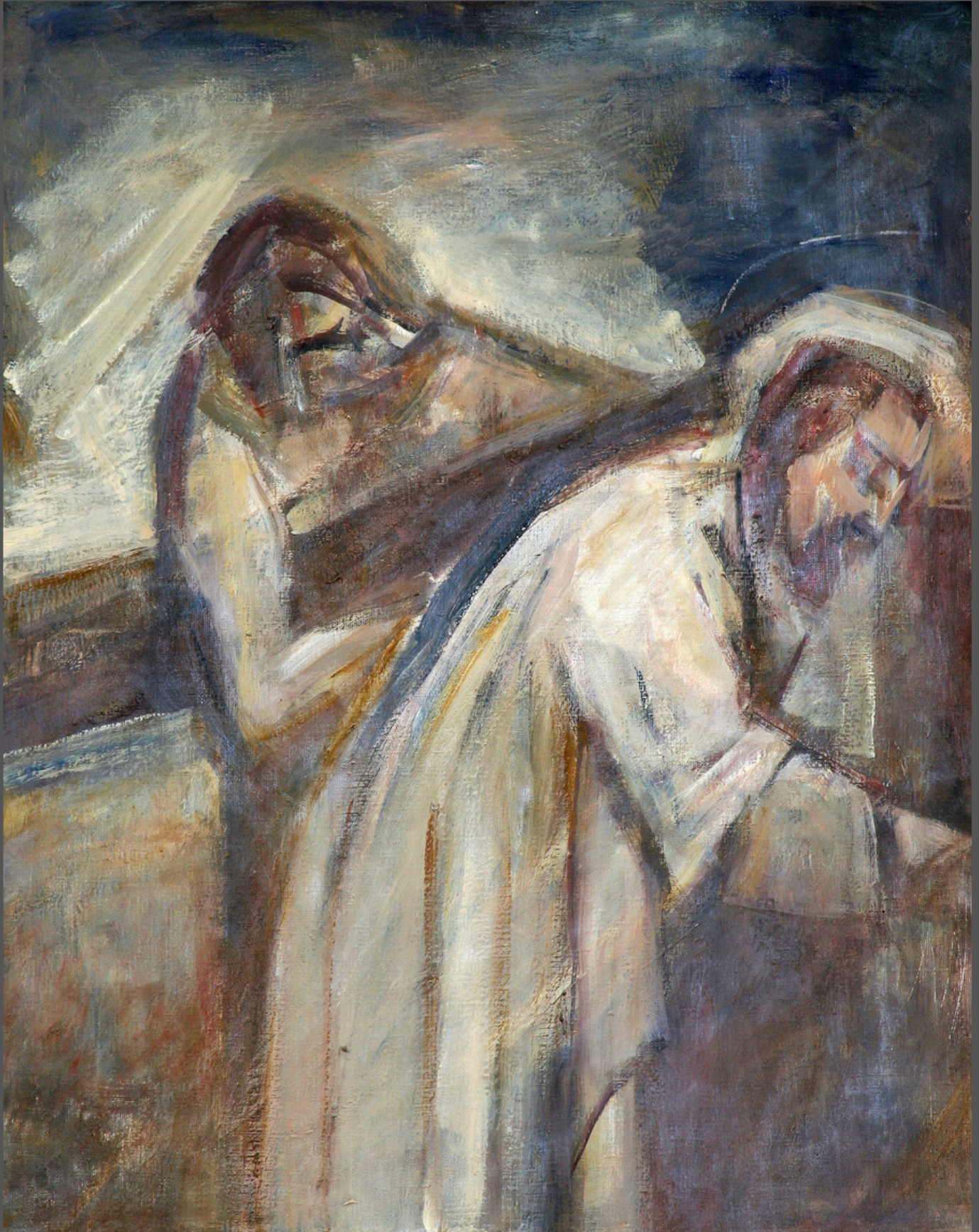
I can look at his whole body and see the exhaustion. As I behold him there on the ground, I know forever how profoundly he understands my fatigue and my defeats. I see the agony taking its toll on him, and I let my heart go out to him.

This is for me. I know I will never feel alone in my suffering or in any diminishment. Jesus knows. As I watch him stand again I accept his love, expressing my thanks.

## PRAYER

*Lord, what pain and loneliness you experienced for me. Oh God, what relief I feel knowing you have been where I am. Thank you.*

# Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry His Cross



## READING

A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

– Mark 15:21

"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering?"

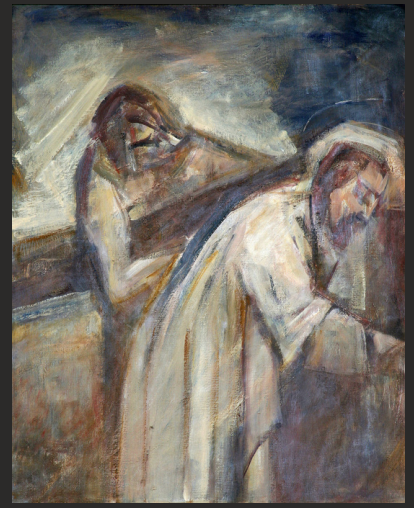
– Lamentations 1:12

*And because of his experience,  
my righteous servant will make it possible for  
many to be counted righteous,  
for he will bear all their sins.*

– Isaiah 53:11

## REFLECTION

Jesus enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He is deprived of the satisfaction of carrying this burden on his own.



*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

I look into his face and contemplate his struggle. His weariness and fragility. His impotence. I see humble gratitude for Simon.

This is for me. I feel anguish and gratitude. I express my thanks that he can continue this journey. That he knows my inability to carry my burden alone. I say what is in my heart, with deep feeling.

## PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, help me see how I can help carry others' burdens, point them to your cross, and participate in your mission. Thank you for those who help me on this journey of faith.*

# Jesus is Nailed to the Cross





## READING

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. The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed. “He saved others,” they said, “let him save himself if he is really God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers mocked him, too, by offering him a drink of sour wine. They called out to him, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” A sign was fastened above him with these words: “This is the King of the Jews.”

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.”

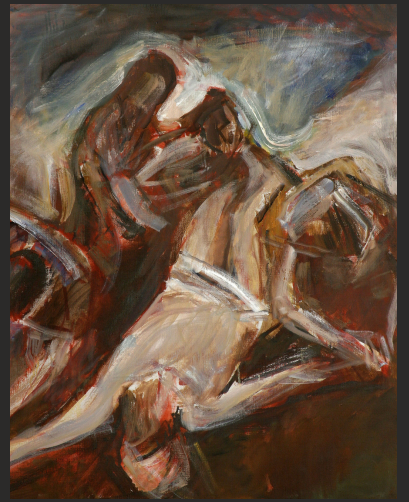
– Luke 23:33-43

*And we thought his troubles were a punishment  
from God, a punishment for his own sins!  
But he was pierced for our rebellion,  
crushed for our sins.*

– Isaiah 53:4-5

## REFLECTION

Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. He is bleeding much more seriously now. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails.



Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

I make myself watch the nails being driven through his flesh. And I watch his face. I contemplate the completeness of his entry into our lives. Can there be any pain or agony he would not understand?

This is for me. Nailed to a cross to forever proclaim liberty to captives. What sorrow and gratitude fill my heart!

## PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I cannot fathom your pain, and I can hardly believe you did all of this for me—for all of us. Oh, how I thank you. Oh, how we need you.*

# Jesus Dies on the Cross



## READING

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. (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe.) These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken," and "They will look on the one they pierced."

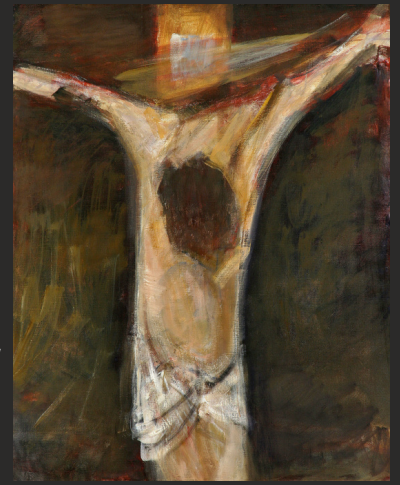
– John 19:28- 37

*No one cared that he died without descendants,  
that his life was cut short in midstream.*

– Isaiah 53:8

## REFLECTION

Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to support him, Jesus surrenders his last breath: "Into your hands I commend my spirit."



*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

I stand there, at the foot of the cross, side by side with all of humanity, and behold our salvation. I carefully watch and listen to all that is said.

And then, I see the one who gives life pass from life to death, for me. I console Mary and John and Mary. And let them console me. This is the hour to express the deepest feelings within me.

## PRAYER

*Lord my God, my heart is broken...over your death and over my sin for which you so lovingly chose to die. Be with me, Lord Jesus, in this moment of sadness. Hear my confession, oh God.*

# Jesus' Body is Taken Down from the Cross



## READING

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.

– John 19:38-39

*I will give him the honors  
of a victorious soldier,  
because he exposed himself to death.  
He was counted among the rebels.  
He bore the sins of many  
and interceded for rebels.*

– Isaiah 53:12

## REFLECTION

He has truly died.

A profound sacrifice, complete.



*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

I behold this scene at the foot of the cross. I contemplate the men carefully holding Jesus' lifeless body. I remember all his hands touched, all who were blessed by his warm embrace.

I pause to let it soak in. He knows the mystery of death. He has fallen into God's hands.

This is for me. That I might love as I have been loved. I pour out my heart to the God of all mercies.

## PRAYER

*Father, there is such darkness in the world. Help me always remember that you stepped into that darkness. And you still do.*



# Jesus' Body is Laid in a Tomb



## READING

Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus' body was laid.

– Mark 15:46-47

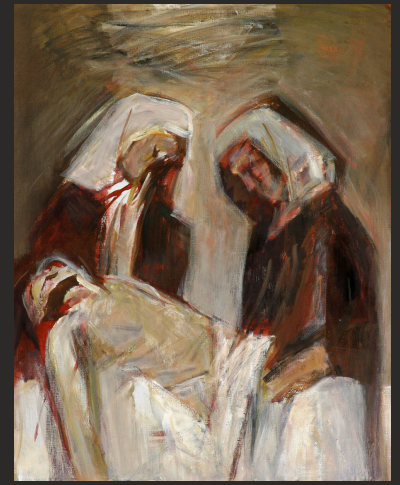
*But he was buried like a criminal;  
he was put in a rich man's grave.*

– Isaiah 53:9

## REFLECTION

They take the body of Jesus to its resting place.

The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death.



*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

I pause to contemplate this act of closure on his life. In solidarity with all humanity, his body is taken to its grave.

I stand for a moment outside this tomb. This final journey of his life has shown me the meaning of his gift of himself for me. This tomb represents every tomb I stand before with fear, in defeat, struggling to believe it could ever be empty again.

In the fullness of faith in the Risen One, given by his own Holy Spirit, I express my gratitude for this way of the cross. I ask Jesus, whose hands, feet and side still bear the signs of this journey, to grant me the graces I need to take up my cross to be a servant of his own mission.

## PRAYER

*Thank you, my God and King, for going to the cross and into the grave for me. For all of us. Thank you.*

## FINAL READING

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

- Romans 6:6-11

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- Galatians 2:20

*But it was the Lord's good plan  
to crush him and cause him grief.  
Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,  
he will have many descendants.  
He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good  
plan will prosper in his hands.  
When he sees all that is accomplished by his  
anguish, he will be satisfied.*

- Isaiah 53:10-11

## FINAL REFLECTION

In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognize him in the breaking of bread?

Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into his glory, for us.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

## PRAYER

*Come Lord Jesus, come. Grant me that hope and endurance to trust you for Easter, and to trust you are coming again.*

*Maranatha, Lord Jesus, maranatha.*

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Which scenes on this Journey to the Cross meant the most to you?

Which were most difficult?

Where and how did God meet you on this journey?

How is God leading you to respond?

Did you bring your sin before God in confession today? Why or why not?

In whom do you place your trust in the face of certain death?

Who is Jesus to you?

**Was this prayer guide helpful?**

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