

The Way of Suffering: Revisiting the Stations of the Cross

by Robert E. Webber

The sermon explores the Stations of the Cross, a devotional practice that follows the path Jesus walked during his last days of suffering, and encourages listeners to reflect on his suffering and death.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-54, Matthew 11:28, Luke 1:46, Luke 23:26, Luke 23:32, Luke 23:44, Luke 23:50, John 19:1, Philippians 2:5

Topics: "The Cross", "Lenten Devotion"

Description

Robert E. Webber preaches on the traditional devotional practice of the Stations of the Cross, where believers meditate on the final events of Jesus' earthly life from Pilate's house to Calvary. This practice involves moving from one station to another, each station marked by Scripture readings, prayers, and hymns, symbolizing the journey of Jesus to the cross. The service offers a contemporary liturgical way to engage in this devotional tradition, either as a Good Friday service or throughout Lent, connecting each station to a preaching series.

Transcript

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

In the ancient church, pilgrims came to Jerusalem during Holy Week to follow the path that Jesus walked during his last days of suffering and to meditate on the final events of his earthly life. Gradually a tradition developed around the course of events from Pilate's house to Calvary. Scripture readings and prayers were said at each of these "stations" along the path Jesus walked.

At first the number of stations or stopping points varied widely. But by the sixteenth century, fourteen stations became the fixed number of devotional stops. Of these fourteen, eight are based directly on events recorded in the gospels, while six (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 13) are rooted in inferences from the gospels or from legend.

In modern times this devotional practice, which moves the worshiper from the condemnation of Jesus to the entombment, can be seen in almost all Roman Catholic churches throughout the world. Artistic renditions of these stations are placed on the walls of the church, or perhaps are brought out for use during Lent and Holy Week. Sometimes the stations are found in a church garden or courtyard. (The art of

Johannes Veenstra [p. 12] is rooted in that tradition as well.)

The following service offers a way of bringing this devotional tradition into contemporary liturgical use, either as a Good Friday service, or perhaps divided throughout the weeks of Lent, with one or two stations each week connected to a preaching series.

THE SERVICE

[The people gather in silence, in a semi-dark sanctuary. A set of prayers introduces the service, followed by movements from station to station. Each station includes a Scripture reading, a prayer, and a hymn.

Three persons dressed in black could represent the congregation, perhaps with the person in the middle carrying a large cross. The congregation remains seated and sings to symbolize the journey from one station to the other. The three representatives may stand in an obvious place as people enter and then take their place at the first station, moving to the next station during the singing of each hymn. Pace out the journey down the isles of your worship space, marking out fourteen stations.

On Station 12 the cross-bearer and attendants may kneel-on Station 13 kneel again with hands outstretched; and on Station 14 lie face down on the floor, remaining in this position until after the closing prayer. The congregation may also kneel on Station 12 and remain in that position until the close of the service. The service should proceed slowly, with periods of silence between each station.]

I JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Scripture Reading: John 19:1-3, 5 ("Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged...")

Prayer

Let us pray, [silence]

Holy Father, you gave your only begotten Son to become one of us, to stand in our place and be condemned for us: grant that we who are in him may now journey by faith into his glorious death; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: "Go to Dark Gethsemane" PsH 381, PH 97

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

II JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

Scripture Reading: John 19:15-17 ("But they shouted, 'Take him away!...'")

Prayer

Let us pray.[silence]

Most merciful God, whose Son came to be the light to shine in the darkness: shine forth in our hearts and dispel the darkness within us so that we might not join those who turn their hearts from the light of truth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: "Ah, Holy Jesus" PsH 386, PH 93, RL 285, TH 248

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

III JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:5-11 ("Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God ...")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Almighty God, you have exalted the name of your Son above every name in heaven and on earth: grant that we, in the hour of his death, might bow our knee and humbly confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: "Christ, Who Is in the Form of God" PsH 227

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

IV JESUS MEETS HIS AFFLICTED MOTHER

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:46-55 ("And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord....'")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Heavenly Father, you who chose Mary to be your bondservant and bring forth the Savior of the world: grant that we, like Mary, might share in his passion so that we might rejoice with her in his glorious resurrection; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: "Beneath the Cross of Jesus" PH 92, RL 310, 311, TH 251

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

V THE CROSS IS LAID ON SIMON OF CYRENE

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:26; Matthew 11:28-30 ("As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene,....")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Lord Jesus Christ, you who came not to be served but to serve, you gladly gave your life over to suffering and death for us: give us the grace to follow in your way, to live lives of self-sacrifice for those who suffer and are in need; grant this through the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Hymn: "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" PsH 383, PH 98, RL 300, TH 247

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

VI A WOMAN WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-3 ("Who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ... ")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Loving God, you who gave us the most costly gift of your Son to endure the penalty of our sin in his own body: turn our eyes upon your Son that we, beholding your mercy in him, may by faith take up his cross and enter into his suffering; we offer this prayer in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Hymn: "What Wondrous Love Is This" PsH 379, PH 85, SFL 169 TH 261

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

VII JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:4-6 ("Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.... ")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

O blessed Jesus, you who are the lover of souls, the innocent one, upon whom the iniquity of all peoples of every generation has been laid: grant that we, having been healed by your wounds, may be set free to love and serve you with singleness of mind; who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" PsH 262, PH 383, RL 446, TH 528

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

VIII JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:27-28 ("A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.... ")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Holy Spirit of life everlasting, you who bring us the benefits of salvation purchased by Jesus, the Christ; turn our mourning into rejoicing that we, having suffered with Christ, may be raised in newness of life with him; through Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" PsH 384, PH 100,101, RL 292, 293, SFL 166, TH 252

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

IX JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:7-9 ("He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;...")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Lord Jesus Christ, you who humbled yourself on earth for our sake and are now seated at the right hand of the Father: grant that we be so moved by your compassion for us that we might not only believe in you, but that we might emulate your humility and participate in your suffering; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: "Calvary" PH 96

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

X JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENT

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:32-38 ("Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to executed.... ")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Most blessed Jesus, you who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made righteous: give us the grace of your salvation, that being made one in you we might rejoice in your suffering and await with hope your glorious resurrection; who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: "Jesus, Remember Me" PsH 217, PH 599, SFL 168

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

XI JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:10-12 ("Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer,... ")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

Almighty and everlasting God, because of your love and mercy you choose to lay upon your only Son the iniquity of us all: turn us, dear one, from the iniquity of our ways, from our oppression of others, and from the love of evil; that we may die to sin through Jesus, your Son. Amen.

Hymn: "Were You There" PsH 377, PH 102, SFL 167, TH 260

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

XII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:44-46 ("It was now about the sixth hour, and the darkness came over the whole land.... ")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

O Jesus, you who are one of us, you who participated in the joys and sorrows of human existence, you who went to death for us: take our hate and greed, our self-centeredness and rebellion to the cross with you, and by the power of the Holy Spirit release us from the death that grips our lives; we pray this for the sake of your glorious name. Amen.

Hymn: "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed" PsH 385, PH 78, TH 254

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

XIII THE BODY OF JESUS IS PLACED IN THE ARMS OF HIS MOTHER

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 54:4-6 ("Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame....")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

O peaceful Jesus, you who were enveloped in the loving arms of your mother, you who rested your head against the heart broken with grief: touch us in the hour of your death and bring us to everlasting peace; through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn: "Worthy Is Christ/Digno Es Jesus" PsH 629, SFL 170

[The symbolic figures move to the next station.]

XIV JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:50-56 ("Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man ...")

Prayer

Let us pray. [silence]

O loving Jesus, you who were stretched forth on the bed of death and entered the gates of hell to proclaim your victory over the power of the evil one: enter the gates of my heart and trample to death the evil that lurks within, that I might rejoice in your resurrection; for your sake. Amen.

Hymn- "Just as I Am" PsH 263, PH 370, RL 467,468, TH 501,502

[The people leave in silence.]

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-e-webber/the-way-of-suffering-revisiting-the-stations-of-the-cross/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net