

On Thursday, Jesus sent his disciples ahead to Jerusalem to make preparations for the sharing of the Passover meal. Like children gathered around the table, the disciples began to argue about who was greatest, first, the favorite of their Lord. In one of the most touching and intimate stories between Jesus and his disciples, Jesus bent down, washed and dried the feet of his students. The lesson: love and serve one another as I have loved and served you. This was too much for Judas to hear; he flees. Jesus and the disciples then share a meal together, Jesus' last meal on earth. With the words of Jesus to remember him when they eat bread and drink wine, the meal is ended.

Today, as we move one day closer toward the resurrection of our Lord, we are given this opportunity to imagine the sights, sounds, feels, tastes, and smells as Jesus walked this road to everlasting life for us. It was a hard walk, hard week; but in faith, Jesus kept moving forward for us. This week let's keep walking with him!

FRIDAY: SCRIPTURE: John 18:1 — 19:42 (selected verses)

Friday morning, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to the Mount of Olives. Jesus asked the disciples to pray. Then he went a short distance from them, knelt down, and prayed. "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done." When Jesus returned to the disciples, he found them sleeping. "Why do you sleep? Rise, and pray!" While he was speaking, Judas came, bringing the authorities to arrest Jesus. Simon Peter drew a sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant. Then Jesus said to Peter, "Put up your sword; the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" Then they led Jesus away and the disciples fled. The religious authorities accused Jesus of blasphemy because he claimed to be the Son of God. In the crowd during the trial, a young woman saw Peter and asked if he were a follower of Jesus. Peter denied ever having seen Jesus. Others asked Peter if he was a follower, but each time he denied knowing Jesus. Next, Jesus stood trial before the civil authorities, Pilate and Herod. Although Pilate found no fault in Jesus, he was pressured by the crowd's cries of "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They placed a crown of thorns upon his head, a purple robe around him, then forced him to carry the cross up the hill of Calvary. It was a day of shame. A day of pain. A day of intense suffering. It was an awful and terrifying day when evil and horror seemingly caused even God to forsake the world.

God of life, God of beginnings and endings, I pause to remember the power of death. Today I hear the story of what happens when someone angers those in power. Today I hear a story of betrayal by a friend, trial by empire, execution as a way of silencing the one who names injustice. Today I hear a story that

happened long ago in a land far away. Today I hear a story that continues to happen today in places close at hand. As I remember the story today help me to see its truth. As I hear of Jesus' trial and execution, remind me of those who are found legally guilty for doing and saying the right things. As I hear of the friends who are conspicuously absent from the cross, remind me how easily I slip away when the struggle for justice becomes dangerous or challenging. As I look at the cross, remind me of the power of empire in any age, and remind me of my duty as person of faith to proclaim a different empire, a different kingdom, a new way of living together.

God of endings, today I hear the agonized words "It is finished." Today I think of all those things that are stopped before they come to fruition--of hopes crushed beneath reality's heavy foot, of promises left unfulfilled, of possibilities that leave us wondering.

God of life and death, beginnings and endings, today I pause to remember the power of those in charge to run the world. Today I remember the many people near and far who are broken by that power: those who live in places where peace is just a word, not a reality, not even a dream; those who are pushed to the margins by all the ways we find to set people apart. We remember those who live with nothing so that others may live with abundance, those who choose to challenge the injustices in their world and are crushed beneath the feet of those in charge. But even as I remember that power, I remember that day follows night, hope replaces despair, and life will conquer death. Lord, speak to me; I am ready to listen. Amen

May the love of God enfold us. The peace of Christ surround us. The presence and comfort of the Spirit be in and among us. Amen

Pastor Sherry