

The Death and Burial of Jesus

Grace: Ask for the grace of “sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me”

Introduction:

You have helplessly watched Jesus carry His cross. The weight of it has borne down upon Jesus relentlessly. Perhaps there is a sense of relief that He has finally made it to the place of crucifixion. What is your response to Jesus making it to the Place of the Skull?

You know what awaits Jesus. How do you respond to Jesus in this moment as He gets closer and closer to death? What can be said? What can be done?

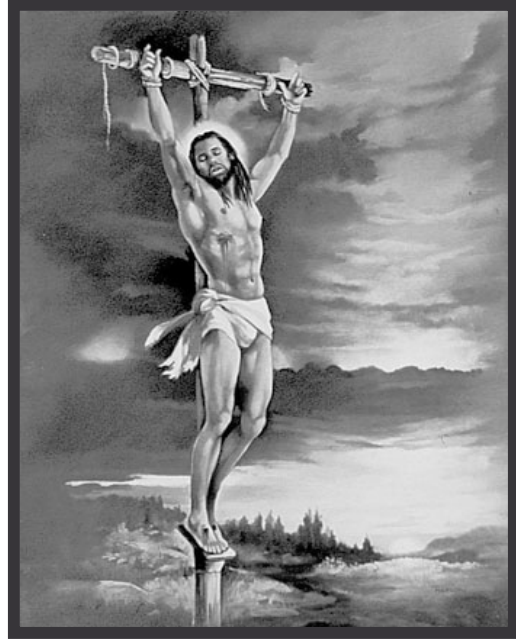
As you read the words on the sign that Pilate had attached to the cross, what meaning do they have for you? As you watch the guards gambling for Jesus' garments what emotions stir inside of you?

Even as Jesus is facing the inevitability of His own death, He speaks to his beloved disciple and to His beloved mother. His words unite them. Who does Jesus call you to love? For whom does he call you to care?

How do you respond to Jesus' request for something to drink? Are you able to sit with Jesus and watch Him die? Listen as Jesus breathes His last breath. Feel the impact that His death has on your life. Look at the dead body on the cross and confront the painful reality before you.


As you work to take Jesus' beaten, bloody and lifeless body off of the cross, how do you feel and how do you describe the myriad of thoughts going through your mind? Can you smell the spices as you help to prepare Jesus' body for burial? What is it like to help carry Jesus' lifeless body to the tomb and lay it in the darkness of the tomb?

How do you feel about leaving Jesus' body alone in the tomb? How do you respond to Mary's sorrow and grief? Where do you go now? Now that Jesus is dead, what are you to do?



Lord Jesus Christ,
Did I know how,
I would break my heart
with grief for You.
Of all the people in the world,
You should have suffered least.
I am ashamed of what we did to You
while You broke Your heart
with grief for me.

--joe tellow,sj

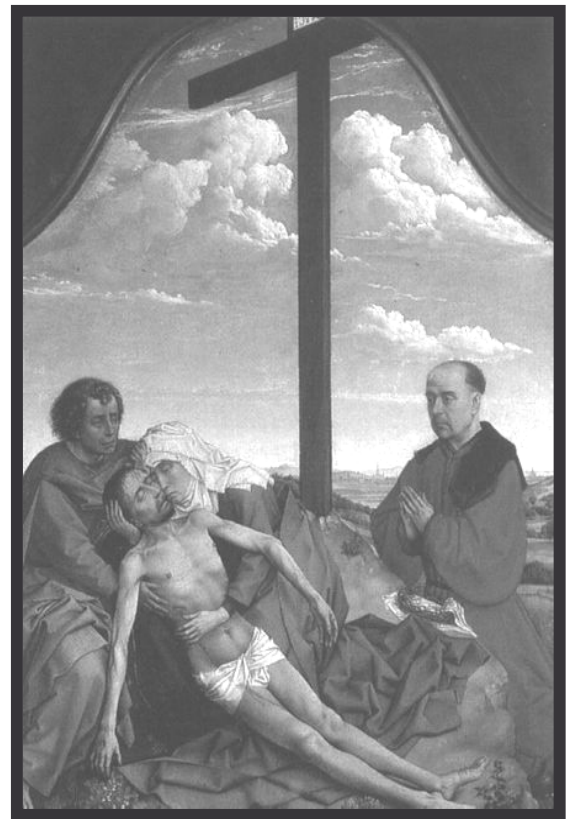


John 19:16-42 - Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced." Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Luke 23:33-56 The Death and Burial of Jesus - When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." There was a written notice above him, which read: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS". One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.



In these or similar words ... I imagine myself as John, at the top of the hill after watching Jesus being whipped, beaten, and forced to carry his cross. Cringing at the sight of the nails being driven into Jesus' hands, I turn away, not able to bear the sight of the blood. Finally, as I turn back to face him, the soldiers are raising the cross up to its fixed position. I feel a strange sense of relief at seeing Jesus on the cross now. Perhaps it was relief at the impending sense of finality and looming death that came with the cross settling into the ground. I knew that I was happy trusting in the hope that at least there would be no more scourging, beating, or mocking; rather, only waiting until he finally dies. Even though I have never had someone in my immediate family or that was extremely close to me die, the feeling reminded me of the stories of families and loved ones who would sit by the bed of their suffering family member and reluctantly hope for their suffering to end. I had this same sort of feeling in that I knew that Jesus' death was inevitable and that it would signal not only an end to his long suffering, but also an end to the long suffering of humanity under sin. I also feel a sort of helpless detachment from the scene; I know now that nothing I say or do can change the fact that he would die and I was numbed by that notion and all the suffering I had witnessed over the past hours. My attention was then diverted from Jesus to the soldiers at the foot of the cross. I saw all of them bending and crouched around something on the ground, and I stepped forward to see what it was. I then realized that they were gambling for the garments that they had torn off Jesus' bloody skin and were laughing carelessly about it. Tears stung my eyes as I became filled with a dull, numb rage at their disrespect for Jesus' suffering. I felt that as much as I wished they could understand Jesus' pain and burden, there was nothing I could do about it, and in that sense, I felt that I was hopeless and had failed Jesus. But then, as usual, Jesus seemed to answer my thoughts and worries when he beckoned for me and his mother to come forward. I looked over at her and gently wrapped my arm around her shoulder and walked toward the foot of his cross. Jesus was so weak that he could barely get the words out in between his gasps. He said, "Dear woman, here is your son, and here is your mother." I looked over at Mary and then back to Jesus, and gave her a tight embrace. I felt fulfilled knowing that Jesus trusted me enough to give me this responsibility of looking after his mother.



Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand the sadness experienced with the death of a loved one, go back and pray with the memory of attending the funeral of a family member or a close friend. If you do not have such an experience, consider researching those who have been victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing by visiting an area Holocaust museum or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website at: <http://www.ushmm.org/>.