

Good Friday Reflection: Scattered & Gathered

--From Alissa Bender, pastor of Hamilton Mennonite Church (Ontario)

Preparation

This time of reflection & worship was designed especially for a time of physical distancing. You may follow it in your home, in your backyard, or walking in another safe outdoor space where you (and your household) can be physically distanced from others. It can be used alone or in a family unit of varying ages, and may be adapted for your particular circumstances. If you are alone, you may write your reflections in a journal. If you are with others, talk together. Bring these pages with you wherever you are. You can read as you walk or stop along the way. You will be asked to look around you for items that represent 5 themes. You are encouraged to take a picture of each item.

Opening

Right now we are being asked to stay home a lot. It feels strange not to be together as a church on Good Friday, but as we stay near home, with many other events cancelled, we have the chance to stay close to Jesus and to spend time remembering the story of his life and death and what they show us about his love for us and our love for Jesus.

Sing this Taize song:

Stay with me, remain here with me,
watch and pray, watch and pray.

Pray

Jesus,
we want to stay with you today and every day.
Help us to stay with you even in the hardest parts of your story.
Thank you for staying with us in the hardest parts of our lives.
Teach us about your love for us.
We are watching and praying.
Amen

Read: Matthew 26:30-36 (Contemporary English Version)

Then [Jesus and his disciples] sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to his disciples, "During this very night, all of you will reject me, as the Scriptures say, 'I will strike down the shepherd, / and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised to life, I will go to Galilee ahead of you." Peter spoke up, "Even if all the others reject you, I never will!" Jesus replied, "I promise you that before a rooster crows tonight, you will say three times that you don't know me." But Peter said, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never say I don't know you." All the others said the same thing. Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. When they got there, he told them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

Look

What do you see around you that makes you think about being "alone"? Take your time. If it's something you can touch or hold, do that.

Wonder

Before Jesus was arrested in the garden, he prayed alone. His closest friends fell asleep even though he kept asking them to stay awake with him. After Jesus was arrested, those close friends were afraid and they all ran away.

- What do you think it felt like to be Jesus, praying alone in that garden that night?
- When have you felt alone?
- What does it feel like to pray this prayer with Jesus? “Abba God, if it is possible, don’t make me suffer by having me drink from this cup. But do what you want, and not what I want.”

Sing: Stay with me, remain here with me, / watch and pray, watch and pray.

Read: Matthew 26:57-60a (CEV)

After Jesus had been arrested, he was led off to the house of Caiaphas the high priest. The nation’s leaders and the teachers of the Law of Moses were meeting there. But Peter followed along at a distance and came to the courtyard of the high priest’s palace. He went in and sat down with the guards to see what was going to happen. The chief priests and the whole council wanted to put Jesus to death. So they tried to find some people who would tell lies about him in court. But they could not find any, even though many did come and tell lies.

Look

What do you see around you that makes you think about being “broken”? Take your time. If it’s something you can touch or hold, do that.

Wonder

A justice system is supposed to be fair and honest, but the court that sentenced Jesus to death was not those things. It was broken. Even Jesus’ good friend Peter broke his promise to Jesus when he denied three times that he knew Jesus.

- What do you see in our world that is broken and needs mending?
- What are the things that we might help mend?
- What are the things that we might need to trust God to mend?

Sing: Stay with me, remain here with me, / watch and pray, watch and pray.

Read: Matthew 27:27-31 (CEV)

The governor’s soldiers led Jesus into the fortress and brought together the rest of the troops. They stripped off Jesus’ clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. They made a crown out of thorn branches and placed it on his head, and they put a stick in his right hand. The soldiers knelt down and pretended to worship him. They made fun of him and shouted, “Hey, you king of the Jews!”

Then they spit on him. They took the stick from him and beat him on the head with it. When the soldiers had finished making fun of Jesus, they took off the robe. They put his own clothes back on him and led him off to be nailed to a cross.

Look

What do you see around you that makes you think about being “hurt”? Take your time. If it’s something you can touch or hold, do that.

Wonder

People hurt Jesus’ body and they also said and did cruel things to make fun of him. When we hear cruel things, it can hurt our feelings, or make our hearts hurt.

- When have you been hurt?
- When have you hurt someone else?
- What do you feel when Jesus prays this prayer? “Abba, forgive these people! They don’t know what they’re doing” (Luke 23:34).

Sing: Stay with me, remain here with me, / watch and pray, watch and pray.

Read: Matthew 27:45-51, 54 (CEV)

At noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until three o’clock. Then about that time Jesus shouted, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” Some of the people standing there heard Jesus and said, “He’s calling for Elijah.” One of them at once ran and grabbed a sponge. He soaked it in wine, then put it on a stick and held it up to Jesus. Others said, “Wait! Let’s see if Elijah will come and save him.” Once again Jesus shouted, and then he died. At once the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and rocks split apart. The officer and the soldiers guarding Jesus felt the earthquake and saw everything else that happened. They were frightened and said, “This man really was God’s Son!”

Look

What do you see around you that makes you think about being “afraid”? Take your time. If it’s something you can touch or hold, do that.

Wonder

In the story of Good Friday, we see that Jesus felt afraid, his friends felt afraid, and even the people who were guarding Jesus felt afraid about what they had done when they understood that Jesus was God’s son.

- When have you felt afraid?
- Who else do you know that might feel afraid right now?
- Imagine telling Jesus your fears. What does that feel like?

Sing: Stay with me, remain here with me, / watch and pray, watch and pray.

Read: Matthew 27:55-61 (CEV)

Many women had come with Jesus from Galilee to be of help to him, and they were there, looking on at a distance. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John were some of these women. That evening a rich disciple named Joseph from the town of Arimathea went and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate gave orders for it to be given to Joseph, who took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. Then Joseph put the body in his own tomb that had been cut into solid rock and had never been used. He rolled a big stone against the entrance to the tomb and went away. All this time Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb.

Look

What do you see around you that makes you think about being “cared for”? Take your time. If it’s something you can touch or hold, do that.

Wonder

Even though Jesus’ friends were very sad, and probably still afraid, some of them stayed close to him and cared for him after he had died. The women who were Jesus’ friends were coming to the tomb to care for his body when they discovered that he was alive (but that is Easter’s story!).

- Who is caring for you right now?
- How are you caring for others?
- How does God care for you?

Sing: Stay with me, remain here with me, / watch and pray, watch and pray.

Pray

Jesus,
We have stayed with you through your story,
and you have stayed with us.
You always stay with us.
Thank you for caring for us when we are afraid, hurt, broken, or alone.
Show us how to care for others when they are afraid, hurt, broken, or alone,
even when we have to be far apart from each other.
Thank you for your love.
Help us share your love.
Amen

Closing

Look back at the five items you photographed. If you are willing, text or email your photo of what makes you think about being cared for to Pastor Joanna. She will include these images in our worship service on Sunday.

Go in peace.

*If you wish today, read the whole passion story: Matthew 26:30-27:66 (or any of the other gospels)