

We adore You, O Christ,
and we praise You. †
Because by Your holy
Cross You have redeemed the world

*Meditations for the traditional
Stations of the Cross*

Peter A. Schiebel

✠ *Jesu, Juva!* ✠

Dedication

To the loving and blessed memory of my sainted grandparents,
The Rev. Dr William A. & Clara B. Schiebel
and my sainted parents,
David W. & Phyllis R. Schiebel

whose purchase of their home provided the Stations of the Cross plaques
which first hung in the basement chapel in their house
and have been restored and now placed into use at
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mount Rainier, Maryland,
for whom these meditations have been prepared.

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Prepared for and First Used on
Good Friday, April 2, 2021
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Mount Rainier, Maryland

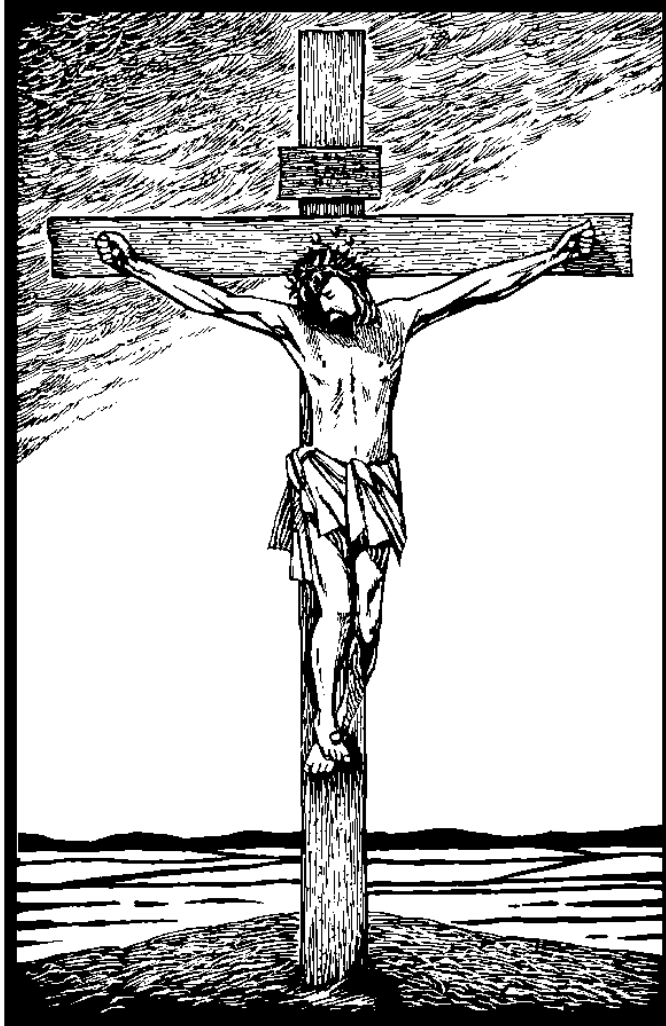
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Acknowledgments

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Inspiration for these meditations were drawn from *Stations of the Cross* by Raymond Chapman.



Meditation for the First Station
Jesus is condemned to death

Already here as we begin walking the Way of the Cross we are met by the strangest of sights. The Son of God, the Lord of the universe, stands before a human court, condemned and sentenced to die. We see Him rejected by the very people who had for centuries looked and waited in hope for the arrival of the Messiah. Not thinking Him to be the savior they were looking forward to find, they turn Him over to die at the hands of the very rulers that they wished to be freed from.

Yet it is interesting that it was an outsider to the people of Israel, this Roman governor, who saw Jesus' innocence. He knew that the Jewish leaders said that Jesus "deserved to die", and yet Pilate could not comprehend why. As he looked at Jesus, Pilate perhaps saw no threat to Rome from this dreaming preacher of truth. Roman justice could be satisfied just as well with forty lashes of the whip than by the cross. But the voices of the people still prevailed that Jesus be crucified.

We still look at this sight and we ask with others down through the ages, "O dearest Jesus, what law have You broken, that such sharp sentence should on You be spoken? Of what great crime have You to make confession, what dark transgression?" (LSB 439:1). And just as soon as the question passes our lips, we know that we know the answer. He is here in this place, unjustly charged, tried, and condemned for each one of us and our sin. In what should have been a place of justice, we only see injustice.

But for this injustice that Jesus suffered we praise, thank, and bless Him for it, because we know that by His death, we receive from God forgiveness and life. For this precious gift we owe our Blessed Redeemer nothing less than our very selves, which we give to Him through our love, our faith, and our service.

As we behold anew what our Lord Jesus has undergone for us and our salvation, may we give Him our never ending thanks and praise, not only by our lips, but in our lives as we learn from Him to forgive one another as we have been forgiven, living in love with one another without judgment or prejudice or a lack of mercy, all for the sake of Him who took the judgment we deserved so that we, in Him, might be free.

Meditation for the Second Station
Jesus takes up His cross

What might have been on Jesus' mind as the wood of His cross was brought to Him? Perhaps He might have thought of happier times spent in those "silent years" working beside His foster father, Joseph, in the carpenter's shop of Nazareth. What useful things might this wood now being brought to Him have been made into?

But here Jesus is given this cross, whose only use was suffering, torture, and death. It was there to prolong Jesus' agony, first begun in Gethsemane, continued through a sleepless night of trials and mocking, followed by a savage scourging and more mockery including wearing a crown of thorns. This wood of the cross seems to serve no good purpose, or at least not a purpose we would like for ourselves, let alone for our Lord Jesus.

As we stand in spirit near our Savior in this moment, what might we see in His face as He looks upon that cross which He is being given to carry? Certainly, we will see suffering and pain, all from everything which His body has suffered to this point. Certainly, we might see fear, the same fear which made Him cry out in Gethsemane to His Father, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Mt. 26:39). But, only if we look even more closely, right into the Savior's eyes, we will see the most important thing—love.

In love, Jesus takes up this cross with all of its shame, with all of its suffering, and He goes to walk the Way which will lead to His death. And He does it all out of love—for you, for me, for the whole world, so that in His sacrificial death we who believe and live by faith in Him may have God's forgiveness and life.

Taking up His cross, Jesus is here as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who goes uncomplaining forth to Calvary, there His spotless life to offer. He takes up this cross, a cross which by all rights belongs to you and to me. And if we look into His eyes as He carries this cross and as He looks back at us with such a deep, inexpressible love, we can hear Him say to us, "All this I gladly suffer"—for you. (cf. *LSB* 438)

*Meditation for the Third Station
Jesus falls the first time*

As we make this journey through the narrow streets of Jerusalem on the Way of Sorrows with our Lord Jesus, we are asked at some of these Stations to consider events which *could have* happened. Though the Gospels do not tell us that Jesus fell on the way to Calvary, it is certainly possible.

As Jesus carries the heavy load of the wood of His cross, being weighed down by it, and weakened as He was from a sleepless night of mockery, the torment of the flogging at the hands of the soldiers, and the sheer exhaustion which He must have felt, what mere mortal would not have buckled under the weight of it all?

But knowing this story as we do, we know that the One carrying this cross is no mere mortal. This is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. How can it be that the One who called all of creation into being only by His all-powerful word, not have the strength to bear this cross to Calvary?

While here we do see the Son of God, we see Him as He hides Himself in our weak, human flesh, humbling Himself so that He might serve us through the offering up of His life. In loving humility, He willingly suffers and dies in our shared flesh, feeling the pain and the agony which we by our sins have deserved. Looking then upon our Savior in this moment, what more can we say than this:

*I caused Your grief and sighing
By evils multiplying
As countless as the sands.
I caused the woes unnumbered
With which Your soul is cumbered,
Your sorrows raised by wicked hands.*

*Your soul in griefs unbounded,
Your head with thorns surrounded,
You died to ransom me.
The cross for me enduring,
The crown for me securing,
You healed my wounds and set me free.*

Meditation for the Fourth Station
Jesus meets His sorrowful Mother

“But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk. 2:19). With these words, Luke tells us about how Mary responded to all that had happened after she gave birth to Jesus, her Firstborn Son.

How many of those memories must have come flooding back as Mary heard of her Son taken captive, tried and condemned, and was being led away to be crucified? Wouldn't these “happier memories” of that childhood or even of the successes of His public ministry be better than running to Calvary to stand beneath the Cross of her dying Son?

But perhaps Mary, as she mourned for Jesus on the cross, comprehended the words that the aged Simeon said to her as they presented Jesus in the Temple: “And a sword will pierce through your own soul” (Lk. 2:34). Just like a sword, Mary's sorrow cut her deeply, knowing that there was nothing she could do to take away her Son's pain, nor could anyone soothe the pain which she felt.

Yet, could it have also been that as she pondered the scene of her dying Son, that her thoughts turned to the angel's words which started this journey for her and for her Son. “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you! ... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His Name, Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Lk. 1:28-33).

Could it be that here at the cross finally brought the understanding of what it meant to name her Son Jesus—the Lord saves? Could it be that this is the moment when her Son was now reigning on David's throne as “the King of the Jews”? Could it really be that now, even in her Son's death, the Most High God was indeed showing His mighty hand and His outstretched arm to save His people?

In this moment of sorrow, there was more for Mary to treasure and ponder in her heart. And with her, we do the same, waiting for all to be finally revealed in the resurrection of Mary's Son that is yet to come.

Meditation for the Fifth Station
The cross is laid on Simon of Cyrene

Like several other persons found in the Scriptures, Simon of Cyrene comes out of what seems to be the “mists of time”, plays his role, and disappears again. What little we know of him comes from the part he plays in the Passion of Jesus. We are told that he came to Jerusalem from Cyrene in North Africa. Most likely, he was a Jew, either from the Diaspora, or having been converted to Judaism. And he came to be in Jerusalem at this moment, like many other observant Jews, to celebrate the Passover in its fulness as it was only in the Temple that the Passover Lamb could be sacrificed.

Imagine then the surprise of Simon as he was coming into the city and finding himself pressed into service to help a condemned Man carry His cross to the place of execution. Simon had no choice in the matter. The Roman soldiers knew nothing about him, or cared anything for him, other than for the fact that he was perhaps the closest able-bodied man that they could grab for the job they needed to be done—to make sure they got Jesus to Calvary alive so that they could crucify Him.

Perhaps Simon was incensed at being made to do this work by these hated Romans. Perhaps he was a little angry and upset about having to do a work which may have rendered him ritually unclean so close to celebrating Passover. Yet perhaps also something changed in Simon as he helped to carry this Man’s cross, discovering beyond his own anger and inconvenience a sense of compassion for this Man and His suffering.

And perhaps Simon may have discovered something else in following after this Jesus. Mark tells us that Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. It is thought that Mark named these two men because they would have been known by the Christians to whom his Gospel would be read. Could it be that carrying the cross was the moment of conversion for Simon, which led to his sons then coming also to share in the faith of Jesus?

As Christ’s followers today, we too hear our Lord’s call to “take up our cross and follow Him”. Such a call requires a conversion of our hearts, opening ourselves through the working of the Spirit to bear the load of service—service to our Lord and service to others as to the Lord Himself. Let us take up the cross following the Savior, loving one another as we have first been loved by Him.

Meditation for the Sixth Station
A woman wipes the face of Jesus

This legendary event which is said to have taken place on the *Via Dolorosa* between a woman and Jesus is quite striking to ponder. As Jesus makes His way to Calvary on Jerusalem's narrow streets, He is pushed forward by the soldiers who just want to get Him crucified. He is surrounded by those on the street—some weeping after Him, others mocking and taunting Him, while others were just “going about their business”, simply drawn into this execution procession that happened to pass by their way. A crowd of the pious, the impious, and the indifferent surrounded Jesus on this way to the cross.

Yet it was out of this crowd that one woman pushed her way forward, all to show a brief act of compassion for Jesus. His face was covered with blood from His crowning with thorns, with the spittle of those who taunted and mocked Him, and with the sweat of His exertions under the cross. All of which ran into His eyes, making it hard to see how to walk forward. So this woman, in concern and care, uses a cloth she had, perhaps the veil from her head, to wipe and clean Jesus' face, before she is pushed away and Jesus is pushed forward to Calvary.

For this act of love for Jesus, this woman has been immortalized in this devotion, and tradition has even named her for us: Veronica. This Latin name is most likely not hers, but rather derived from another legend which came from this event. It is said that after this woman wiped the face of Jesus, the image of His face appeared on the cloth. For this reason, she was given her name which comes from the Latin for “true image”.

While legendary, this event still has much to teach us. In Baptism, our God caused us to share in the death and resurrection of His Son, restoring in us that image of God which the sin of our first parents lost to us. As His baptized children, we are called to bear that image in our lives, reflecting God and His life as we live for Him daily. And this life is seen most especially when we, like this woman, show love, care, and compassion to those who stand in need. When we serve in love in the Lord's Name, that true image of God is seen in and through us, and as the Lord Jesus has said, all who see us will come to see works which will cause them to give glory to God our Father in heaven (*cf.* Mt. 5:16).

As we stand here with this woman, all the people of God faithfully pray:

On my heart imprint Your image, Blessed Jesus, King of grace, that life's riches, cares, and pleasures never may Your work erase; Let the clear inscription be: Jesus, crucified for me, is my Life, my hope's Foundation, and my Glory and Salvation! (LSB 422)

*Meditation for the Seventh Station
Jesus falls a second time*

In this traditional station, we hear that for a second time Jesus falls down under His cross on the way to Calvary. Here we see Jesus, the One we lovingly call the “Refuge of the weary”, now Himself weary from His sufferings. Although the weight of carrying the cross was now shared with Simon of Cyrene, we can understand that everything which Jesus has endured up to this moment in His passion has pushed His body to exhaustion.

The Scripture we hear at this station reminds us that while Jesus did indeed suffer greatly in His flesh which was broken and worn down by all that He underwent, this was not the only burden of suffering that He bore as He went to Calvary. On Jesus was also “our griefs”, “our sorrows”, and “the iniquity of us all”. All of our sin and guilt was laid upon this spotless Lamb of God so that by His sacrifice He might remove it all from us.

Each of us are a part of this burden He bears with His cross. We are the cause of His oppression and His affliction, and yet “He opens not His mouth”. He does not complain or lash out against anyone for this suffering He now carries. He bears it all—not for Himself, but for us and for our salvation.

As we see our Lord Jesus here in this moment, all for us, may our hearts be moved to love Him more because He loved us with His all. And in that love, may we always be moved to thank and praise Him ever and always:

*Then, for all that wrought my pardon,
For Thy sorrows deep and sore,
For thine anguish in the Garden,
I will thank Thee evermore,
Thank Thee for Thy groaning, sighing,
For Thy bleeding and Thy dying,
For that last triumphant cry,
And shall praise Thee, Lord on high.*

LSB 420:7

Meditation for the Eighth Station
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Luke tells us that as Jesus walks the way to the cross, He is followed by a large crowd, something which He was not unused to throughout the days of His ministry. And it was a crowd not unlike the ones who came to listen to His teaching, filled with those who believed, with those who disbelieved, and even with those who were just curious to know more about who this Man might be.

Stopping to look at this crowd, Jesus takes even this time of His suffering as a moment to teach. He turns towards the women whom He sees “mourning and lamenting for Him”. Some of these women may have been part of His followers from Galilee, whose tears were for the Teacher they loved who was being taken from them. Other women may have been “just there”, sorrowing in compassion for this “Dead Man Walking”. Yet, Jesus speaks to them all, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” But why does Jesus say this?

As Jesus came to Jerusalem for this week that would bring Him to this moment, He wept over it, knowing the destruction that it was destined for (Lk. 19:41-44). His sorrow was that Jerusalem’s people did not realize that His arrival was to gather for God a forgiven people who would be His people forever. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” (Lk. 13:34)

Jesus was not looking for tears of sympathy from those who followed Him to Calvary. He was calling those who weep to sorrow for themselves and for their sins. Their tears were to be tears of repentance, calling on God to turn them from their disobedient ways and back to the Lord so that God’s rightful wrath and judgment might be removed from them.

Following Jesus, we see Him going to that cross which will bring life and salvation to our believing hearts. Our tears flow even now, knowing that He must die for us. Yet, our tears call us to renewed repentance and faith, believing in this Suffering Servant who by His death brings us the forgiveness of sins, and by His rising gives us eternal salvation and life. Let the cross and the Crucified dwell in our hearts, that repentance, love, and thanksgiving may always be part of our life which is joined forever to Christ, our Savior. (cf. LSB 423)

Meditation for the Ninth Station
Jesus falls a third time

John begins his account of the Lord's passion as Jesus gathers with the disciples in the Upper Room. He takes note of the "mood" surrounding this moment with these words: "Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (Jn. 13:1).

Now here, at the foot of the hill of Calvary, Jesus has come to that end. His body—tired, torn, exhausted, and spent—gives way once more, virtually crying out, "No more!", collapsing again onto the hard earth below Him. So close to where they were to carry out their orders, the soldiers harshly and without mercy or pity, haul Jesus again to His feet, pushing Him onward to the place of execution.

Jesus must have known that His sufferings were not yet ended, that the bitter dregs of the appointed cup of woe had yet to be drunk. Only by reaching that full end—His death—would release Him from all of this dreadful pain. And yet, it would be by this death that Jesus also knew life would be restored to a sinful world.

As we look on our Savior in this moment of His great weakness, let us consider our own moments of weakness which brought Him to this hour. All of the moments of our sin and sinfulness—committed in thought, word, and deed; by things done and left undone. Our failure to love our God with all our heart, mind, and strength, especially seen in our willingness to all too easily return to the temptations that so easily snare us, and our yielding to them. The times that we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves, failing in our call to serve them as Christ has served us. These sins, this disobedience, is the weight that presses hard on Jesus as He bears upon Himself the present and eternal punishment for them all.

Yet, in love—such perfect, eternal, and great love—Jesus bears all of this so that in Him we might have forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and everlasting salvation. We see our Savior in this moment, and our response should be that we view this His passion "with repentant grieving" (*LSB* 440:4), praying to the One who has borne all of our sins in His body that He may indeed "forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in [His] will and walk in [His] ways to the glory of [His] holy Name" (*LSB* 151).

Meditation for the Tenth Station
Jesus is stripped of His garments

Long ago, on that fateful day in the Garden of Eden, having listened to the tempting voice of the serpent, our first parents ran and hid themselves from the Lord God and His loving voice which called to them so He might once more converse with them, just like in days before. But having eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they realized how they could not come before God now, because they knew that they were naked. And they felt that even the garments of fig leaves which they had made for themselves were not enough to cover them—either of their nakedness or of the guilt and shame they felt.

Though condemned and judged for their sin and sentenced to be banished from paradise for their disobedience, God was not beyond showing mercy to Adam and Eve. We are told that God “made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Gn. 3:21). God covered their nakedness, but not without cost. Some animal or animals had to die in order to provide this clothing to cover the shame which Adam and Eve felt because of their sinful disobedience and the “knowledge” it brought to them.

Later, when God gave His Law to His people through Moses, the Lord would establish yet more sacrifices—more offerings of animals and their blood—all to atone for those sins of Adam and Eve and of their children who would continue to live in the sinfulness which we have learned and followed down through the ages. Yes, these sacrifices forgave the sins of those who offered them. But the sin at its root remained, requiring more and more sacrifices to beg God to take away this sin from us.

Here on Calvary, God sends the final Sacrifice—a perfect Offering to atone once and for all for the sin of the world. Our Lord Jesus stands here on Calvary being prepared for His crucifixion. The last of the things of this world which He has is taken away from Him. His clothing is “given” as the payment to His executioners. Now here He stands, just as naked as Adam did that day in Eden. But this Jesus, this Second Adam, comes to this time and place to stand naked so that we, the children of Adam, might be covered with the robe of the righteousness which He gives to us through the offering of Himself to the death of the cross. Here, His nakedness covers our sin, our guilt, and our shame, so that in His humiliation we are raised to glory.

Lord, when Your glory I shall see and taste Your kingdom's pleasure, Your blood my royal robe shall be, my joy beyond all measure! When I appear before Your throne, Your righteousness shall be my crown; with these I need not hide me. And there, in garments richly wrought, as Your own bride shall we be brought to stand in joy beside You.

(LSB 438:4)

Meditation for the Eleventh Station
Jesus is nailed to the cross

Why Jesus is nailed to His cross is unknown. Perhaps it was felt that yet more agony and suffering should be heaped onto this so-called “King of the Jews”. With these nails affixing Him to the cross, His limbs are stretched so that every movement, every breath carries with it excruciating pain. And having refused to drink of the drugged sour wine that the executioners offered perhaps as one small act of compassion for the condemned, Jesus felt every pain of this final moment of His passion.

Yet, we know that Jesus is nailed to the cross, all “so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled”. With David in his psalm, we see the Promised One surrounded by His enemies with His hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16). And we live out the words of the Lord through Zechariah: “When they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps for a firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

Even beyond the words of the prophets are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in which He prophesied His death. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself” (Jn. 12:32). Those limbs of Jesus, now outstretched on the cross, are fulfilling the work which they once did when they were not bound. Those feet, which once walked to find and to meet sinners, are now wounded to forgive them completely. Those hands and arms, which once reached out to heal and to bless, are now wide open to invite the whole world to come to Him and find perfect healing and life through the salvation that He is here to win for them. This Savior on His cross is the One who draws us back into the loving embrace of God our Father, the One who created us in love, and who in even greater love redeems us back for Himself through the sacrifice of His Son.

As we gaze upon Jesus, wounded and pierced for our sins and transgressions, let us raise thankful hearts to our God who by these wounds has given us true life, both now and forever.

Meditation for the Twelfth Station
Jesus dies on the cross

For three torturous hours, Jesus has hung on His cross. He has borne under the pains from His mocking and scourging, His flesh from head to foot torn and wounded. He has endured the torments of crucifixion, struggling for every breath as His body affixed to the cross and the weakness of His body work against Him. He has listened to the cries and taunts of those who came to see His death, seemingly reveling in His demise. He has also heard the anguished sobs of the few friends who stand at the foot of His cross—especially Mary, his mother; John, the beloved disciple; and Mary Magdalene.

Yet even here on this cross of suffering and sorrow, Jesus still continues His ministry of love and compassion towards sinners. He prays for those who have brought Him to this place, asking the Father to forgive them. He promises paradise to a penitent thief, who in this moment of certain death, looks to Jesus with faith for promised forgiveness, salvation, and life. He even provides for the needs of His sorrowing mother, placing her into the care of His disciple, John.

As the final moment draws near, we see Jesus, suspended on His cross, hanging between heaven and earth, the clouds blotting out the rays of the sun, feeling here what sin had wrought for humanity—that separation between them and their Creator. Yet for Jesus, this suffering is unimaginable, for how could God abandon His own Son? He cries out in His anguish, praying both for and with sinners who often ask the same question of God: “Why have You forsaken me?” But He knows that He is not alone, for His Father is here, receiving and accepting this sacrifice for all the sins of mankind. Knowing what He is here accomplishing, to fulfill the Scriptures to this last moment, Jesus asks for a drink, and having received it, He cries: “It is finished”, commending His soul back to the Father, whose will for us is now consummated.

Looking upon this sight, there are really no words left for us to speak. Along with the crowds who departed from Calvary, having seen what they saw, we too might well beat our breasts in sorrow for this One who has so sorely suffered for us. Yet as we sorrow, there is still a silent praise that we offer to our loving God—praise that here, in this Jesus, we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life and salvation.

*Jesus, Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us and grant us Your peace.*

Meditation for the Thirteenth Station
Jesus is taken down from the cross

For One who was shown very little to no compassion during the last day of His life, it is in the waning hours of this Friday where we see such great love and compassion that is rendered to the lifeless body of Jesus. His body does not face the same fate as those who were crucified with Him—their legs being broken to hasten their death, and, unless there was family to collect them, their bodies unceremoniously interred. Instead, Jesus' side is pierced to make certain of His death, and His body released on Pilate's order to those who would give Him a proper and decent burial.

Tradition says that Jesus' mother was present at this moment, and His body was first placed into her arms. Perhaps we might imagine that Mary now cradled Jesus in her arms, just like she did when He was wrapped in swaddling clothes at His birth. Now, she holds her Son again, but this time wrapped up in the linen shroud of a dead man. Seeing this sight of grief and pity, who would not mourn and weep with this mother in her sorrow? Who would not feel her anguish at the death of her Son?

While we look on this moment, might we also see ourselves here in it? This same body of Jesus, resting in the arms of His sorrowful mother, is the body that has been given for us and our life and salvation. His vast work accomplished, His life that He has spent is now given to each of us who in faith believe and receive Him as our Savior. And as a pledge of that life, that body broken and blood shed is not just placed into our arms like Mary, but instead at the Altar are put into our mouths as sacred Food and Drink so that Christ may be alive and at work in our very bodies.

As His body comes down from the cross, Jesus is now seen as the fruit of the Tree of Life. This tree, once barred from our first parents as they were cast out of Paradise, is now free for us to access, to come and to eat of its fruit, and to receive from it our perfect healing and life. This body of Jesus, taken from the cross, is now here for you and for me to receive and take hold of so we may know and have life forever with God.

*O Virgin's Son, what Thou has won
Is far beyond all telling:
How our God, detested, died,
Hell and devil felling.*

*O Jesus Christ, who sacrificed
Thy life for lifeless mortals:
Be my life in death and bring
Me to heaven's portals.*

(LSB 448:7-8)

*Meditation for the Fourteenth Station
Jesus is laid in the tomb*

The sun is setting quickly, announcing that the Sabbath was about to begin. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take up Jesus' body and carry it to a nearby garden where Joseph had a tomb for him and his family, built out of the rocky hills around Calvary. He brings Jesus to be its first resident, but because of the Sabbath's arrival, he can only do the bare minimum for Jesus' burial according to custom. He makes sure that Jesus is wrapped and covered in clean linen, and uses the spices that Nicodemus has brought to mask the odor of death. Having done what could be done, Joseph closes the door of the tomb with a large stone and departs, while the women who followed along to see Jesus buried take note of the place, go to their homes to prepare oils and spices, determined to return after the Sabbath to complete the work of properly caring for the body of Jesus.

And what of Jesus? Here in the tomb, He spends this Sabbath just as His Father did so long before: "And He rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done" (Gn. 2:2). In six days, God created the heavens and the earth, and rested from His labors on the seventh. On the sixth day, Jesus brought about the salvation of the world by His death. On this Sabbath, Jesus takes His rest from all that His body endured. Yet, after this would be a new day—the Eighth Day—a day where a new creation rises out of the old; a day where all that sin had lost us is restored; a day where God and man are reunited once more, ready to live again together in paradise.

We stand near this tomb on this Sabbath when we draw near to the Font of Baptism. In that Font, we shared in a watery grave with Jesus, dying with Him and becoming dead to our sins. And out of those waters, just like Jesus coming out of His tomb, we rise with Him to a new and glorious life given to us through the salvation He won.

Seeing Jesus taking this Sabbath rest, we find in Him our true Sabbath rest—the rest that belongs to us who believe in Him: the rest that is found in the forgiveness of our sins; the rest which is lived out in our lives lived now at peace with God; the rest that comes from the hope of that eternal rest which we will share with the Father, Son, and Spirit in that kingdom which will have no end.

*Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*

(LSB 878:6)



Christ Jesus, Victor!

Christ Jesus, Ruler!

Christ Jesus, Lord and Redeemer!



Soli Deo Gloria!



