

Prayer Vigil 2012

We are pleased that you have accepted the invitation to pray during these hours. In the early hours of that first Good Friday, Jesus was taken from the Garden of Gethsemane, to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest. By early morning, probably around six o'clock, they brought him before Pilate, where he stood trial. By nine o'clock, Jesus had been taken away to be crucified. At noon, darkness fell over the whole area, until three o'clock. Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. His body had been taken by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and placed in the tomb by sundown.

It was very early on Sunday morning when the women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. When they got there, they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. They did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" the angel asked. He is not here. He has risen!

It is our prayer that the time you spend in prayer and meditation during these hours will be a blessing to you and that your daily prayer life will continue to grow.

This year's devotion guide will take us through the Passion Story from the Gospel of Mark. Interspersed with it will be some devotional thoughts, some confessional thoughts, and some prayer suggestions.

Mark 14:1-11

Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot." While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, in the upper room You gathered with Your apostles to eat Your last meal with them before Your suffering, death, and resurrection. We thank You for gathering with us sinners now, being with us throughout our lives, and bringing us into Your resurrection. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**
- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, in the upper room You washed the apostles' feet thus teaching us to love one another as You have loved us. By Your Spirit work in us true service and humility toward one another. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**
- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, in the upper room You taught Your comforting and strengthening truth to Your apostles. Support our partner churches around the world and defend our persecuted brothers and sisters. Cause the saving Gospel to be proclaimed here and in all places. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**

Mark 14:12-21

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, in the upper room You gave bread to Judas showing Your obedience to Your Father's will to save us through Your betrayal and crucifixion. Turn our hearts to follow Your holy will no matter the cost. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**
- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, in the upper room You gave the Sacrament of Your Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins and as a gift for all ages. Make us ever hunger and thirst for this most precious communion with You in Your Body and Blood. Cause us to receive You in repentance and steadfast trust in Your saving mercy. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**
- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, in the upper room You gave the soul-healing medicine of Your Body and Blood. Grant peace and comfort to all who are sick, recovering, depressed, and burdened. According to Your gracious will heal them or give them grace to accept their afflictions. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**
- ❖ **Lord Jesus Christ, You left the upper room to go to Your arrest, crucifixion, and death to conquer death for us by Your resurrection. Comfort (*names* and) all who mourn the death of loved ones with Your victory over the grave and the gathering of all saints in heaven and on earth with You. Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.**

Mark 14:22-26

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- ❖ **Heavenly Father, your Son instituted his holy supper as our passover feast, and gave his life for us. Unite us all by faith in him, so that we who eat his body and drink his blood may pass with him from death to life, and serve one another. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

A Hymn of Meditation (LSB #618)

**I come, O Saviour, to Thy table, For weak and weary is my soul;
Thou, Bread of Life, alone art able To satisfy and make me whole:
Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood Be for my soul the highest good!**

**Thy heart is filled with fervent yearning That sinners may salvation see
Who, Lord, to Thee in faith are turning; So I, a sinner, come to Thee.
Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood Be for my soul the highest good!**

**Unworthy though I am O Saviour, Because I have a sinful heart,
Yet Thou Thy lamb wilt banish never, For Thou my faithful shepherd art:
Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood Be for my soul the highest good!**

**Weary am I and heavy laden; With sin my soul is sore oppressed;
Receive me graciously and gladden My heart, for I am now Thy guest.
Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood Be for my soul the highest good!**

**What higher gift can we inherit? It is faith's bond and solid base;
It is the strength of heart and spirit, The covenant of hope and grace.
Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood Be for my soul the highest good!**

Mark 14: 27-31

"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today-- yes, tonight-- before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

Mark 14:32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

A Hymn of Meditation (LSB #436)

**Go to dark Gethsemane, ye that feel the tempter's pow'r;
Your Redeemer's conflict see, watch with Him one bitter hour,
Turn not from His griefs away; learn from Jesus Christ to pray.**

**Follow to the judgment hall, view the Lord of Life arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall! O the pangs His soul sustained!
Shun not suff'ring, shame, or loss; learn from Christ to bear the cross.**

Mark 14:43-52

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Friday Mourning

Today my daughter and I share my porch swing. She hands me the book she's chosen and snuggles next to me. I suppress a sigh. Not this one again, I think as I stare at the story we've read together so many times that she can recite it to me from memory. Although I'd like to ask her to make another choice, I open the cover and begin reading the familiar words. From the transfixed expression on my daughter's face, I'd have thought she was hearing this for the first time.

When the story is finished, she hops down and announces that she's going to play in the yard. I put her book aside and pick up the Bible I carried outside with me. As I turn to the marker that holds my place, I am struck by the fact that, like my daughter, I, too, am turning to an old, familiar story. It is the story of a sinless Man who wore a crown of thorns so I might one day wear the crown of eternal life. It is a story that starts with betrayal, includes political intrigue and rigged trials, moves to a hill with a wooden cross, pauses with a dying gasp, and ends in splendour, the splendour of a risen King.

Good Friday, is full of the memory of the suffering Christ endured: the mocking, the thorns, the lashes, the nails, the cross. There is always the cross. A feeling of sadness washes over me as I read the events surrounding this day. I read of Judas' betrayal, Jesus' arrest, and of His trial before Pontius Pilate. Finally, with tears in my eyes, I read of His crucifixion.

I close my Bible and hug it to my chest. I know there is more to this story, but today I want to remember the suffering Christ endured for me. I want to remember a love so strong that it led my Saviour to willingly give His life for me. I want to remember the sacrifice so the victory affirmed by the resurrection will be even sweeter. On Good Friday, the day may feel dark and the sadness may feel overwhelming, but I will wait in hope. I know this story isn't finished.

❖ **Lord Jesus, fix my eyes on You, the Author and Perfecter of my faith. Thank You for this story of sacrifice, redemption, and love. Amen.**

Reflection: How does a day that focuses on Christ's sacrifice help you appreciate God's tremendous love for you?

Mark 14:53-65

They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" Yet even then their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

A Hymn of Meditation

**Jesus! and shall it ever be A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise, Whose glories shine through endless days?**

**Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far Let evening blush to own a star.
He sheds the beams of light divine O'er this benighted soul of mine.**

**Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon Let midnight be ashamed of noon.
'Tis midnight with my soul till He, Bright Morning Star, bids darkness flee.**

**Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend On whom my hopes of heaven depend?
No; when I blush, be this my shame, That I no more revere His name.**

**Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no joy to crave, No fears to quell, no soul to save.**

**Till then--nor is the boasting vain-- Till then I boast a Savior slain.
And oh, may this my portion be, That Christ is not ashamed of me!**

Mark 14:66-72

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter

remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

- ❖ Praise God that we have a high priest who is able to sympathize with our weakness.
- ❖ Pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.
- ❖ Pray that when you are tempted and when you do fall, that Jesus will lift you up, forgive you and restore you, just as he did Simon Peter, after Peter denied him three times.
- ❖ Pray for the love and wisdom to help and restore others who have fallen into temptation
- ❖ Praise God that the Holy Spirit prays for us in our weakness.
- ❖ Thank God for his promise that "greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

Mark 15:1-15

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. "Crucify him!" they shouted. "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.



A Hymn of Meditation (LSB # 421)

**Jesus, grant that balm and healing In Thy holy wounds I find,
Every hour that I am feeling Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought within Tempt my treacherous heart to sin,
Show the peril, and from sinning Keep me ere its first beginning.**

**Should some lust or sharp temptation Prove too strong for flesh and blood,
Let me think upon Thy Passion, And the breach is soon made good.
Or should Satan press me hard, Let me then be on my guard,
Saying, "Christ for me was wounded," That the Tempter flee confounded.**

**If the world my heart entices With the broad and easy road
With it mirth and luring voices, Let me think upon the load
Thou didst carry and endure That I flee all thoughts impure,
Banishing each wild emotion, Calm and blest in my devotion.**

Every wound that pains or grieves me, By Thy stripes, Lord is made whole;
When I'm faint, Thy Cross revives me, Granting new life to my soul.
Yea, Thy comfort renders sweet Every bitter cup I meet;
For Thy all-atoning Passion Has procured my soul's salvation.

O my God, my Rock and Tower, Grant that in Thy death I trust,
Knowing Death has lost his power Since Thou trod'st him in the dust.
Savior, let Thine agony Ever help and comfort me;
When I die, be my Protection, Light and Life and Resurrection.

Mark 15:16-26

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.



- ❖ Pray for the planting and growth of the seed in our children and grandchildren.
- ❖ Pray for those in whom the seed has been planted, but where Satan keeps taking it away by means of wrong home and family priorities.
- ❖ Pray for those who have strayed from the faith, for those whose faith is challenged by the economic times, by illness, or by family circumstances.
- ❖ Pray for those in whom the seed had been planted, but where the worries and cares of this life keep choking it out.
- ❖ Pray for those whose faith suffers because of the deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for more and more things.
- ❖ Pray that God would lead you to see opportunities to sow the seed in the hearts and lives of people around you.
- ❖ Pray that God would give you the grace and strength to use those opportunities.
- ❖ Pray for our Sunday School teachers, that they would not grow weary of sowing the seed, and for parents that they would make regular Sunday School and church attendance a priority for their family.
- ❖ Pray for our Nursery School and Kindergarten that our Lord would use this ministry to plant the seed of the Gospel in our community.
- ❖ Pray for this summer's Vacation Bible School, that we may plant the seed among the children who attend, as well as their families.
- ❖ Pray for our sister congregations in our District and Synod.

Mark 15:27-35

They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

A Hymn of Meditation (LSB # 450)

**O sacred Head, now wounded, With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory, What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.**

**Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee, Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee And flee before Thy glance.
How art thou pale with anguish, With sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy visage languish That once was bright as morn!**

**Now from Thy cheeks has vanished Their color, once so fair;
From Thy red lips is banished The splendor that was there.
Grim Death, with cruel rigor, Hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou has lost Thy vigor, Thy strength, in this sad strife.**

**My burden in Thy Passion, Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression Which brought this woe on thee.
I cast me down before Thee, Wrath were my rightful lot;
Have mercy, I implore Thee; Redeemer, spurn me not!**

**My Shepherd, now receive me; My Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings Thou didst give me, O Source of gifts divine!
Thy lips have often fed me With words of truth and love,
Thy Spirit oft hath led me To heavenly joys above.**

**Here I will stand beside Thee, From Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me! When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish In death's cold, cruel grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish, Thee in mine arms I'll clasp.**

**The joy can ne'er be spoken, Above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken I thus with safety hide.
O Lord of life, desiring Thy glory now to see,
Beside Thy cross expiring, I'd breathe my soul to Thee.**

**What language shall I borrow To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this, Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
Oh, make me Thine forever! And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never, Outlive my love for Thee.**

**My Savior, be Thou near me When death is at my door;
Then let Thy presence cheer me, Forsake me nevermore!
When soul and body languish, Oh, leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish By virtue of Thine own!**

**Be Thou my Consolation, My Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion When my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee. Who dieth thus dies well!**

Mark 15:36-39

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

- ❖ **Almighty God, look graciously on this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with the you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Mark 15:40-47

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

Waiting

Holy Saturday is a day of waiting. These 24 hours between Good Friday and Easter Sunday contain all the sadness of the day before but none of the joy of the day ahead. Today is a time of quiet reflection and stillness.

As I sit quietly, I feel a sense of anticipation, an impatience to move on. I want to leave behind this time of expectancy. Like a child eagerly awaiting a special event, I want to see what tomorrow holds, to go forward into the celebration day. Later today I'll set the table for Easter dinner and arrange the flowers in preparation for the celebration to come. My sorrow at Christ's crucifixion is tempered by the fact that "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25).

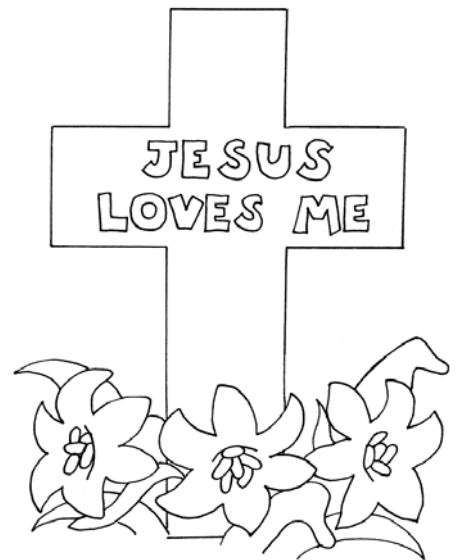
Jesus' disciples didn't have that assurance. Although Christ had promised that after three days He would rise from the dead (John 2:19,21), the disciples weren't expecting a miracle. Instead they waited in secret and in sorrow as they worried for their own safety and grieved the loss of the One to whom they had dedicated their lives. I can imagine their fear and their questions. Today seems to carry those whispered worries, "What shall we do? Where shall we go? How did it all go wrong?" For Jesus' disciples there was no solace in the knowledge that their grief would be short-lived. On this day the rock still covered the opening to the tomb.

What if I didn't know the end to this story, I wonder. Would my faith have been strong enough to go on? That's a difficult question to answer.

There have been times when even a small bump in the road caused me to stumble in my walk with God. There have been other, more difficult times when the Lord helped me to navigate a path full of pitfalls and hazards. My own faith-walk is as inconsistent as Jesus' disciples, seemingly rock solid one day and full of doubt and denial the next.

On this day before Easter, I rejoice in the privilege to wait in joy and not fear and to have the assurance of Christ's resurrection. I know how the story continues.

- ❖ **Jesus, You took all my sins to the cross and endured suffering and death for me so I might have forgiveness and eternal life. I am overwhelmed to think one day I will live with You in heaven because the cross led to an empty tomb. Amen.**



A Hymn of Meditation (LSB #436)

**Calv'ry's mournful mountain climb; there, adoring at His feet,
Mark that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete.
"It is finished!" hear Him cry; learn from Jesus Christ to die.**

**Early hasten to the tomb where they laid His breathless clay;
All is solitude and gloom. Who has taken Him away?
Christ is ris'n! He meets our eyes; Savior, teach us so to rise.**

- ❖ **Almighty and merciful God, we thank you for bringing life and peace for us through the shame, suffering, and death of your Son. Teach us to boast about nothing but the cross of Christ, and be willing to suffer gladly for his sake. For he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**