

good friday vigil
an experiential meditation





GOOD FRIDAY VIGIL

Good Friday evokes tension. *How can it be “good” when it memorializes the death of Christ?* Jesus, the Son of God, was despised, beaten, bloodied, mocked, abandoned, and executed on Friday. Does this sober us? Does it awaken images we want to avoid? We must pause to know the story—that we might *know* The Story. Good Friday does end. It is as Friday winds to an end that we find the greater good. All that Jesus experienced was for the recreation of all that was created. It was for the return of all of creation back to Him. It was for the return of humanity. *It was for the return of you.*

Herein lays the tension . . . GOOD for us, SACRIFICE by God.

As you enter, please light a candle.

Take off your shoes.

You are invited to pray . . .

God, lead me to find the depth of Good Friday.
Reveal the tension within me, both shattered and beautiful.
Illuminate the way back to you.
Give your mercy and grace that I might return.
May all that you do in me, bless others.
Lead me to love You.
Build in me a love for others.

But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, “Awake sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.” Ephesians 5:13-14

Please work through each station at your own pace.

Each station builds upon the other, so following the order of your pages will make the most sense.



SHATTERED

Beauty can be found throughout our world. Beauty is in the majesty of the sunrise and the depth of one moment we hope to never forget. Lives around us reflect the beauty and grace of God. It is hard to be without the sense that true goodness exists.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made . . . Romans 1:20

But yet again, life is complex. Life is not just one thing—it is both beautiful and tragic. We are no strangers to these tensions. We may likely be more convinced that God has abandoned this world (if He even ever existed).

Brokenness, tragedy, injustices, all runs rampant in our world. This brokenness affects everything. Is there any real doubt that our world is filled with pain, hurt, and uncertainty? Don't we each have this nagging sense that *things just aren't right*. Each of our experiences contain some amount of brokenness. Images of these injustices and tragedies, both personal and global, easily come to mind.

WAR – FAMINE – VIOLENCE - RACIAL TENSION – HOMELESSNESS – DESTRUCTION - SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – PRISONERS – PREJUDICE - SWEAT SHOPS – DRUGS - DOMESTIC ABUSE - EXPLOITATION OF WEALTH/POVERTY - ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSE – DEATH - SPIRITUAL DARKNESS – RAPE – DISEASE – DIVORCE – GREED – LIES – ADULTERY – ABANDONMENT – BETRAYAL . . .

What is the image/word that affects you tonight? (it may be another word, even something more specific)

Write this word somewhere in the area provided (poster board).

Take the hammer and one of the objects and smash the object.

Reflect upon the object shattered--broken into many pieces. Do our lives seem shattered?

The effect of these injustices has a shattering affect within our lives--each one of our lives. It takes on a ripple effect throughout all of humanity. While our world is not beyond transformation, it may be hard to see within our every day.

Peace with others. Peace with the world. This is what we long for. Dan Allender describes the Hebrew concept of shalom as this peace that is “a deep inner and external harmony when disparate parts flow together in a unity that is great than the sum of the parts. It is like an excellent choir.” This is our longing. He goes on to say, “Shalom is shattered by sin, by the intrusion of a lie, a distortion of the truth that mars the pleasure of being naked, transparent, trusting, and true.”

Things are not right AND WE KNOW IT.

GOOD FRIDAY REVEALS THE VIOLENCE OF INJUSTICE

(Pilate) went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no guilt in Him. But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?” Therefore they cried out again, saying “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” Now Barabbas was a robber . . . (the crowd) therefore cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” . . . And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.” John 18:38-40; John 19:15-16; Luke 23:33-34

If you are shattered . . . you are not alone.



ISOLATED

Observe the words before you.

Have you heard them before?

How in tune are you with these themes of individualism?

Where has the great “rugged individualism” of Western society defined you? . . . destroyed you?

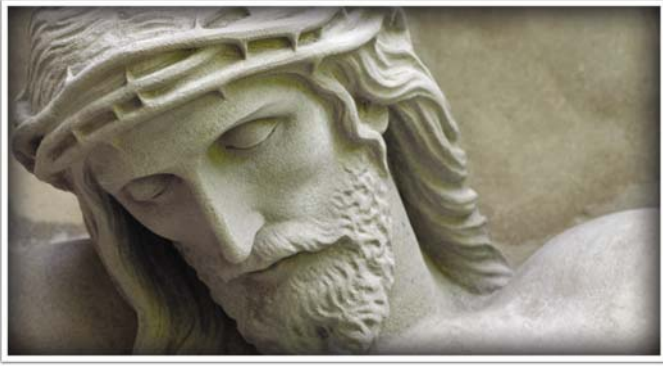
Individualism is a constant theme in our world. However, this focus and triumph of the individual cannot be sustained. In our isolation we find the depth of our malformation. Community is what we long for. In the depths of our life we desire a right (good) relationship with God. We desire a right (good) relationship with others. *And yet, we are alone . . .*

GOOD FRIDAY EXPOSES THE DARKNESS OF ISOLATION

The moments for Jesus upon the cross brought about an isolation that Jesus had never known. Jesus had always (this is before time itself) known intimacy with the Father. “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me . . . the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” The Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) knows an intimacy that surpasses our understanding. It is an intimacy of the truest community. As Christ bore all sin from all of time, He was denied this community with the Father. Sin shatters relationship.

And when the sixth hour had come, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Mark 15:33-34

Shattered. Alone. The depth of Good Friday is too much to bear . . .



FINISHED

Please place the earphones on and press play this song ('John Wayne Gacy Jr.' by Sufjan Stevens) . . . *(be warned: this song is seriously disturbing—it is not meant to shock . . .but to find the songwriters conclusion to be one that we might share. If the topic below offends you or brings about personal pain—we are truly apologetic. We do not take lightly the possible reactions—nor are we presenting this song without intention for healing.)*

*His father was a drinker and his mother cried in bed
Folding John Wayne's t-shirts when the swingset hit his head
The neighbors they adored him
For his humor and his conversation
Look underneath the house there
Find the few living things, rotting fast, in their sleep
Oh the dead
27 people
Even more, they were boys, with their cars, summer jobs
Oh my God
Are you one of them?
He dressed up like a clown for them
With his face paint white and red
And on his best behavior
In a dark room on the bed he kissed them all
He'd kill ten thousand people
With a slight of his hand, running far, running fast to the dead
He took off all their clothes for them
He put a cloth on their lips, quiet hands, quiet kiss on the mouth
**And in my best behavior
I am really just like him
Look beneath the floor boards
For the secrets I have hid***

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:10

Shattered world. Isolated lives. We have contributed to the brokenness. Within us all there is a rebellion that has no return without Good Friday. Without God's intervention/action, the good cannot be restored. It is here, within this Good Friday Story, where a turn toward hope emerges. We may not have seen it, but it was there all along. Before the beginning of time, God had prepared our way home, ". . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." Ephesians 1:4

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. Romans 5:6-10

GOOD FRIDAY BRINGS US HOME ONCE AND FOR ALL

He made the way home through the brutal sacrifice on Good Friday. In this once and for all act of love, all that needed to be done to restore creation was completed.

When Jesus received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit. John 19:30



PEACE

For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:10-11

Through Christ our lives can be found restored and returned to peace. Forgiveness by God covers the depth of our waywardness. The hope of forgiveness calls within us a call for God's mercy and grace. The hope of forgiveness leads us to depend upon One other than ourselves.

Press Play to watch the video of Psalms 51.

Reflect upon the depth of need the author portrays within the prayer.

Did you notice the responsibility the author took for his own shattering of life (sin)?

Do you find it difficult to own your waywardness?

Do you find it hard to even fathom forgiveness that is both complete and unearned?

Locate the sand in front of you. Write in the sand a word or phrase that describes your own burden or rebellion. If you have doubts about God or forgiveness—even be honest about that.

I, even, I am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Isaiah 43:25

Now wipe the sand until there is no trace of the word you had written.

Our wiping clean the sand is the image of God's faithfulness to forgive and His completeness in providing the sacrifice needed for our own waywardness through the sacrifice on Good Friday. The sand shows no memory of our confession—the surface has been made new. God's work is complete within us—leading us toward the new life found only in Him.



PARTICIPANTS

GOOD FRIDAY LEADS US TO PARTICIPATE WITH CHRIST

Body broken.

"This is My Body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Jesus

Blood poured out.

"This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." Jesus

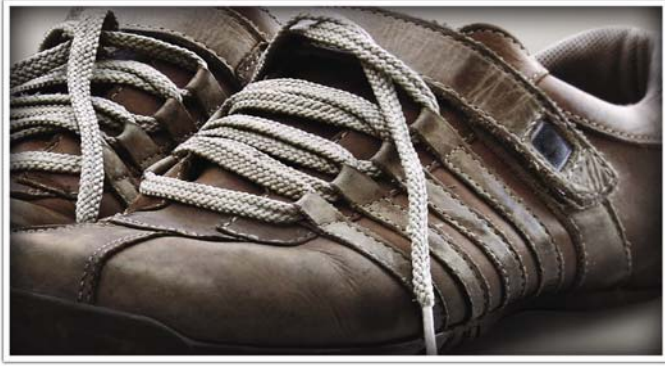
Take the bread and dip it in the cup.

Reflect upon this sacrifice made personal.

Think about all who are taking communion with you tonight. Good Friday is not just for you—but for the Church—an entire community of Christ followers, unbound by location or time.

Good Friday draws us back to God—and we find more than forgiveness in the cross. We find a calling. It is a calling to follow His lead, leaving our lives to take on the life He provides.

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. Matthew 16:24-25



WALK

GOOD FRIDAY CREATES A NEW WAY TO WALK

Good Friday leads us to the end of ourselves and yet doesn't leave us with nothing. God creates a "new way", within an ever transforming "new us". *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

Are you ready to walk in this new way?

Find your shoes and put them on.

Jesus taught, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

You cannot live out Love for God and Love for Others by trying hard. This life comes from God.

Jesus explained, *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

Before you leave, as a sign of your dependence, please consider enacting the sign of the cross.

SIGN/SIGNIFICANCE:

We are to put together the first three fingers of the right hand, which symbolizes the Unity of the Holy Inseparable Trinity. The other two fingers should be bent towards the palm signifying the descent of the Son of God to earth from Heaven (two fingers being the image of two natures of Christ).

Perform the mark of the cross over you FOREHEAD (mind)

"may we believe the Good News . . ."

Perform the mark of the cross over your LIPS

"may we spread the Good News by our mouths . . ."

Perform the mark of the cross over your CHEST (heart)

"may we treasure the Good News in our hearts . . ."

FINAL PRAYER:

"God come to my assistance. Lord make haste to help me. Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and forever. Amen."

Walk in this new way . . .