

Images of the Cross



Tabor Mennonite Church
Holy Week ~ April, 2020

IMAGES OF THE CROSS

HOLY WEEK

Though we are saddened that we cannot meet together for worship and fellowship during this Holy Week leading up to Easter, we pastors have put together a booklet to provide an opportunity for Bible study, reflection, prayer, and creativity to aid in your faith journey. You and your family are encouraged to read and reflect on one Scripture passage each day during Holy Week for your personal or family devotions. Our hope is that this will be a meaningful opportunity to reflect on Jesus' saving work on the cross in the midst of our current fears and sufferings due to the pandemic, even as we anticipate and hope for the promise of Easter.

For each passage: Brandy Ashley created beautiful cross images based on each passage to enhance our worship (pictures of her creations are included with their respective passages). You and your family are welcome to do the same. After reading each passage, you are welcome to create something ("Word Art" (see below), draw a picture, take a photograph, create with play dough, write a psalm or song lyrics, etc.) based on what each passage evokes for you.

"Word Art" can be created by writing down the words, phrases, or images that stand out to you from each passage. You can then enhance these words, phrases, and images by adding embellishments, patterns, specific colors, doodles, etc. as you prayerfully reflect on the passage. (Perhaps you could draw the outline of a cross and write the words or phrases within it, or even write down the words or phrases in the image of a cross, and then add embellishments, colors, etc.)

Self-emptying Servant



Scripture Passage:

Philippians 2:1-11

Reflection Questions:

- ◆ What strikes you as you read this passage? What words or phrases stand out for you? What questions are raised for you?
- ◆ What do you think it means for us to have the same mind as Christ Jesus? What might this look like? In our daily lives? In our interactions with others? During the coronavirus pandemic?
- ◆ Where have you seen or heard about people “looking to the interests of others” during these past few weeks?
- ◆ How do you see God working for good, even in the midst of suffering?
- ◆ Even in this time of great fear and anxiety, are there ways that you can still join with creation in “highly exalting” and praising God?
- ◆ How does this passage enhance your understanding of the cross and Jesus’ saving work?

Prayer:

God, transform and renew my mind and heart so that my thoughts, words, and actions can be more like Jesus’. During this time of much fear and anxiety, help me to serve and care for others. Amen.

Reconciliation



Reconciliation

Scripture Passage:

Ephesians 2:11-22

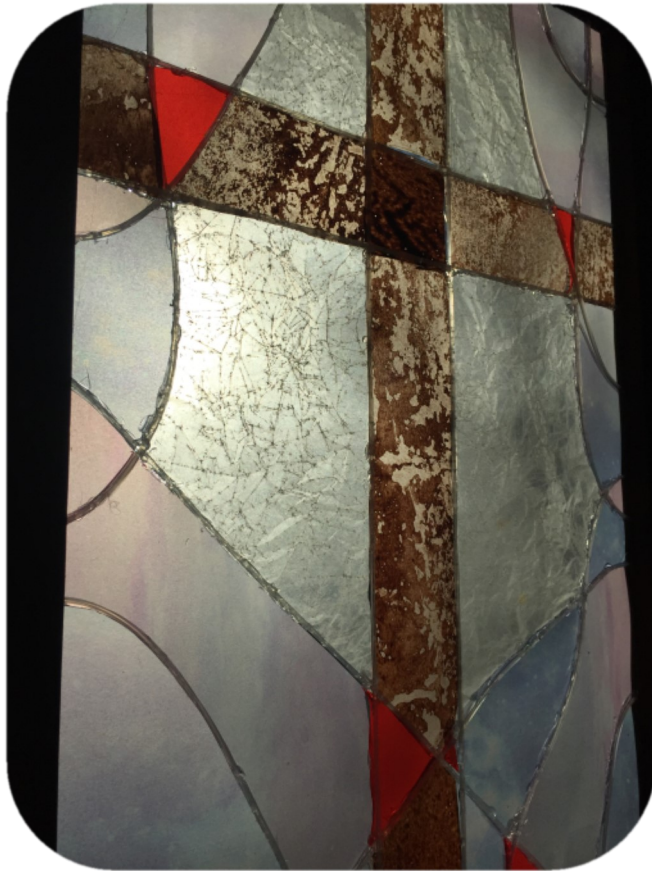
Reflection Questions:

- ♦ What strikes you as you read this passage? What words or phrases stand out for you? What questions are raised for you?
- ♦ What are the “walls” that are dividing us? Where are “walls” being erected? Where are “walls” being torn down?
- ♦ Are there places or situations where there seems to be little hope or where God feels absent? (question based on the end of verse 12)
- ♦ How is Jesus still proclaiming peace to those who are “far off and peace to those who are near?”
- ♦ How does this passage enhance your understanding of the cross and Jesus’ saving work?

Prayer:

God, even in places where walls divide us or where there seems to be little hope, continue to proclaim your words of peace. Amen.

Sacrifice



Scripture Passage:

John 19:13-18, 28-37

Reflection Questions:

- ♦ What strikes you as you read this passage? What words or phrases stand out for you? What questions are raised for you?
- ♦ What do you think Jesus was referring to when he said, “It is finished”?
- ♦ Jesus is in complete control throughout John’s Gospel, even in one of the darkest moments of human history – his crucifixion. Even in the midst of this pandemic, we trust that God is still in control. Where have you seen evidence of this? Where would you like to see more assurance of this?
- ♦ How does this passage enhance your understanding of the cross and Jesus’ saving work?

Prayer:

God, these are dark days. Please remind us that you are in control and that you continue to work for good in our lives and in the world, even in the midst of suffering and fear. Amen.

Ransom



Ransom

Scripture Passage:

Matthew 20:17-28

Reflection Questions:

- ♦ What strikes you as you read this passage? What words or phrases stand out for you? What questions are raised for you?
- ♦ Why do you think the mother of the sons of Zebedee acted the way that she did? Consider your answer(s). How might these same drives that prompted her to speak up for her sons also be influencing our own actions today?
- ♦ Where have you seen or heard stories of people serving others?
Say a prayer for all who are seeking to help and serve others during this time of crisis.
- ♦ How does this passage enhance your understanding of the cross and Jesus' saving work?

Prayer:

Jesus, we thank you for giving your life for our sake. Please be with all of the people who are seeking to help and serve others during this time of crisis. Amen.

Forgiveness



Forgiveness

Scripture Passage:

Luke 23:32-43

Reflection Questions:

- ◆ What strikes you as you read this passage? What words or phrases stand out for you? What questions are raised for you?
- ◆ What stories or experiences come to mind for you when you consider the topic of forgiveness?
- ◆ Where do you see forgiveness being practiced today? What are situations or places where forgiveness could be practiced more during these tense and anxious times?
- ◆ Imagine yourself as one of Jesus' disciples witnessing Jesus' crucifixion. What emotions or responses might it evoke for you to hear Jesus asking God to forgive those who were crucifying him?
- ◆ How does this passage enhance your understanding of the cross and Jesus' saving work?

Prayer:

God, thank you for your grace and forgiveness. Please help us to practice your forgiveness and mercy, even during this tense and anxious time. Amen.

Upside~Down King



Upside-Down King

Scripture Passage:
Mark 15:25-39¹

Reflection Questions:

- ♦ What strikes you as you read this passage? What words or phrases stand out for you? What questions are raised for you?
- ♦ How does this passage enhance your understanding of the cross and Jesus' saving work?
- ♦ What are times or situations when you too have questioned whether God has abandoned you, those you love, or others? *Say a prayer for people who might be feeling abandoned by God during this pandemic.*
- ♦ Read Psalm 22. Some biblical scholars believe that Jesus was referring to this psalm as he hung on the cross. Just like saying, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound" would remind us of the rest of the hymn, Jesus quoting the first line of Psalm 22 would have called this entire psalm to mind for the Jewish people who witnessed his crucifixion. This psalm (like many others) intertwines both lament and trust.
 - How does your understanding of Jesus' words from the cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") change if he was in fact referencing this entire psalm?
 - In the midst of a pandemic, how can we practice both lament and praise?
 - Write your own psalm that speaks to your own emotions during the coronavirus pandemic. Include words of lament (fears, anxieties, frustrations, petitions, etc.) as well as praise (assurance, trust, hope, gratitude, etc.).
 - Pray through the psalm itself (using some or all of the verses). Read a couple of verses at a time and then pause to include your own prayers, emotions, frustrations, praise, and petitions. Here are some possible examples (although you are invited to focus on the verses that resonate with you and to pray in such a way that is meaningful for you):
 - Verses 1-2: What is it you need to cry out to God?
 - Verses 3-5: Praise God for ways that God has been faithful in the past.
 - Verse 11: Pray this verse a number of times. Put it into your own words to express how deeply you long for assurance of God's presence.
 - Verse 19: How do you hope God will help you? What are you needing to be delivered from?
 - Verses 22-24: Give thanks for ways that God has been present with you and for ways that God has heard and responded to your prayers.
 - Verses 29-31: Praise God, for no matter what happens, God's love and faithfulness endure forever. We place our trust in God knowing that God, who has been faithful in the past, also holds the future.

¹The Scripture passage for the final Sunday in our Lenten series (Palm Sunday) was Mark 11:1-11. However, this passage seems more fitting for Holy Week (especially for Good Friday or Holy Saturday). It also portrays Jesus as an "upside-down king" whose reign was fully inaugurated through his crucifixion.

