

GOOD FRIDAY

AN AT-HOME LITURGY FOR AN AWKWARD TIME

THE BIG IDEA:

Holy Week is a story of presence found only through absence, a story of harsh nails and painful wounds.

On Good Friday, we sit in a growing darkness, with all of the absence and loneliness this story brings, as the shadows grow longer in us.

Since the twelfth century, Christians have gathered this night to let the shadows grow long in our hearts and minds, revealing to us the darkest places in each of us. The shadows of betrayal and despair, the shadows of accusation and shame.

At the center of this night is a candle, a light that gets weaker and weaker with each mumbled word, each sorrowful whisper.

And as we hear the Passion and as the light grows dimmer, we see the power of silence and darkness in revealing to the heart of God.

What You Will Need:

1. A copy of this liturgy, either on a device or in printed form, for each person participating with you
2. 5 small candles, 1 large candle, and a lighter
3. A cross to place at the center of the table
4. The audio playlist hosted on the conference website (<https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>).

PART 1: DRAWING THE LIGHT

Light the candles and turn off as many other lights as you can, while still being able to see your order of worship.

Gather for a moment in the silence and the shadows.

Greeting

God is light, and in God's light, even our shadows cannot hide.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world,

and we loved darkness rather than light.

Blessed be the name of the Lord our God,

who redeems us from sin and death.

Song

Sing together:

What Wondrous Love Is This

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,

what wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss

to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,

to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,

what wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of life

to lay aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,

to lay aside his crown for my soul.

To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,

to God and to the Lamb, I will sing;

to God and to the Lamb who is the great I AM,

while millions join the theme I will sing, I will sing;

while millions join the theme I will sing.

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,

and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;

and when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,

and through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,

and through eternity I'll sing on.

PART 2: THE LENGTHENING SHADOWS

Prayer for Illumination

Pray together:

**On this solemn evening,
come, Holy Spirit,
that we might be comforted by your presence
and that our reading of this story
might be filled with wisdom, compassion, and understanding. Amen.**

1: The Shadow of Betrayal

Read Matthew 26:20-25

That evening he took his place at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating he said, "I assure you that one of you will betray me."

Deeply saddened, each one said to him, "I'm not the one, am I, Lord?"

He replied, "The one who will betray me is the one who dips his hand with me into this bowl. The Human One goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One! It would have been better for him if he had never been born."

Now Judas, who would betray him, replied, "It's not me, is it, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You said it."

Sing together:

**Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.**

*Extinguish one of the smaller candles, and as the shadows grow, reflect in the silence:
In this awkward season, how are you seeing the shadow of betrayal and abandonment
in your life more clearly?*

2: The Shadow of Spiritual Agony

Read Matthew 26:36-50

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to the disciples, "Stay here while I go and pray over there." When he took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, he began to feel sad and anxious. Then he said to them, "I'm very sad. It's as if I'm dying. Stay here and keep alert with me." Then he went a short

distance farther and fell on his face and prayed, “My Father, if it’s possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want.”

He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Couldn’t you stay alert one hour with me? Stay alert and pray so that you won’t give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.” A second time he went away and prayed, “My Father, if it’s not possible that this cup be taken away unless I drink it, then let it be what you want.”

Again he came and found them sleeping. Their eyes were heavy with sleep. But he left them and again went and prayed the same words for the third time. Then he came to his disciples and said to them, “Will you sleep and rest all night? Look, the time has come for the Human One to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up. Let’s go. Look, here comes my betrayer.”

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came. With him was a large crowd carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. His betrayer had given them a sign: “Arrest the man I kiss.” Just then he came to Jesus and said, “Hello, Rabbi.” Then he kissed him.

But Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

Sing together:

**Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.**

*Extinguish one of the smaller candles, and as the shadows grow, reflect in the silence:
In this awkward season, how are you seeing the shadow of spiritual anguish in your life more clearly?*

3: The Shadow of Denial

Read Matthew 26:69-75

Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant woman came and said to him, “You were also with Jesus the Galilean.”

But he denied it in front of all of them, saying, “I don’t know what you are talking about.”

When he went over to the gate, another woman saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.”

With a solemn pledge, he denied it again, saying, “I don’t know the man.”

A short time later those standing there came and said to Peter, “You must be one of them. The way you talk gives you away.”

Then he cursed and swore, “I don’t know the man!” At that very moment the rooster crowed. Peter remembered Jesus’ words, “Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times.” And Peter went out and cried uncontrollably.

Sing:

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

*Extinguish one of the smaller candles, and as the shadows grow, reflect in the silence:
In this awkward season, how are you seeing the shadow of denial in your life more clearly?*

4: The Shadow of Accusation

Read Matthew 27:11-14, 20-29

Jesus was brought before the governor. The governor said, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus replied, “That’s what you say.” But he didn’t answer when the chief priests and elders accused him.

Then Pilate said, “Don’t you hear the testimony they bring against you?” But he didn’t answer, not even a single word. So the governor was greatly amazed.

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and kill Jesus. The governor said, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?”

“Barabbas,” they replied.

Pilate said, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

They all said, “Crucify him!”

But he said, "Why? What wrong has he done?"

They shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"

Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was starting. So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I'm innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It's your problem."

All the people replied, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's house, and they gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a red military coat on him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand. Then they bowed down in front of him and mocked him, saying, "Hey! King of the Jews!"

Sing:

**Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.**

*Extinguish one of the smaller candles, and as the shadows grow, reflect in the silence:
In this awkward season, how are you seeing the shadow of blame in your life more clearly?*

5: The Shadow of Humiliation

Read Matthew 27:31-43

When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the military coat and put his own clothes back on him. They led him away to crucify him.

As they were going out, they found Simon, a man from Cyrene. They forced him to carry his cross. When they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place, they gave Jesus wine mixed with vinegar to drink. But after tasting it, he didn't want to drink it. After they crucified him, they divided up his clothes among them by drawing lots. They sat there, guarding him. They placed above his head the charge against him. It read, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." They crucified with him two outlaws, one on his right side and one on his left.

Those who were walking by insulted Jesus, shaking their heads and saying, “So you were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, were you? Save yourself! If you are God’s Son, come down from the cross.”

In the same way, the chief priests, along with the legal experts and the elders, were making fun of him, saying, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself. He’s the king of Israel, so let him come down from the cross now. Then we’ll believe in him. He trusts in God, so let God deliver him now if he wants to. He said, ‘I’m God’s Son.’”

Sing:

**Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom;
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.**

*Extinguish one of the smaller candles, and as the shadows grow, reflect in the silence:
In this awkward season, how are you seeing the shadow of shame in your life more clearly?*

6: The Shadow of Death

Read Matthew 27:45-54

From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. At about three Jesus cried out with a loud shout, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,” which means, “My God, my God, why have you left me?”

After hearing him, some standing there said, “He’s calling Elijah.” One of them ran over, took a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink.

But the rest of them said, “Let’s see if Elijah will come and save him.”

Again Jesus cried out with a loud shout. Then he died.

Look, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised. After Jesus’ resurrection they came out of their graves and went into the holy city where they appeared to many people. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and what had just happened, they were filled with awe and said, “This was certainly God’s Son.”

Sing:

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (verses 1-3)

**When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ, my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.**

**See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

The Christ Candle is removed: take the large candle out of the space and into another room; place it on a shelf or another table and return back to your original place.

*As the shadows grow deepest, reflect in the silence:
In this awkward season, how are you seeing the shadow of death in your life more clearly?*

7: The Shadow of Burial

Read Matthew 27:57-60

That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus. He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate gave him permission to take it. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away.

Sing:

Were You There?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (were you there)

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (were you there)

Oh! sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (were you there)

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? (were you there)

Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree? (were you there)
Oh! sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? (were you there)

Were you there when they pierced him in the side? (were you there)
Were you there when they pierced him in the side? (were you there)
Oh! sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side? (were you there)

Were you there when the sun refused to shine? (were you there)
Were you there when the sun refused to shine? ((were you there)
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine? (were you there)

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? (were you there)
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? (were you there)
Oh! sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? (were you there)

In the darkness, reflect in the silence:

In this awkward season, what needs to be buried in your life this season, so that you might experience what God is doing more fully?

PART 3: THE LONGING FOR THE LIGHT

Silent Meditation

The Christ Candle is restored: bring the large candle back into the space, placing it back at the center of the table.

Sing together:

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (verse 4 only)

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small,
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace.

May Jesus Christ,

who for our sake became obedient unto death, even death on a cross,
keep you and strengthen you this night and forever. **Amen.**

*Linger at the empty table, in a silence filled only by the light of the candle.
As you leave the table, blow the candle out.*

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