



MINISTRY
RESOURCE
CENTER

A Personal Retreat for Good Friday

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If you can, go outside. Take your cell phone. You can bring a Bible too. Go for a walk. Sit under a tree. Pause. Breathe in the cool air and breathe out the names of those who are suffering. Add your own name. And finally, breathe out *Jesus Christ, have mercy on us*. Breathe in grace; exhale grace.

Let's prepare to read **Luke 23** together.

Luke's account moves from the last supper to the garden of Gethsemane, where we pick up the trail of those final momentous events of Jesus's final day, Jesus's ultimate sacrifice. We can't help but to consider these terrible events of the arrest, mock trial, and execution of our Lord Jesus in cosmic terms. We rightly say that Jesus's death defeated death. His sacrifice freed the whole human race.

But today I ask you to consider as well the personal stories that scripture illuminates. For Jesus didn't die only for humanity *en toto*. Jesus didn't lay down his life only to achieve cosmic consequences. Jesus also ministered specifically to the people right in front of him on that cruel day. He touched the lives of friend and enemy right up to the end. He suffered and died for individuals—people with names and faces and jobs and families. For God so loved the world, but not nebulous “humanity,” but real people. People like you and me. He died for us: those of use who were there and those of us who gather here to commemorate his death until his coming again. Individuals, with our own histories, peculiarities, and burdens. When he loved the world, it was you, and you, and you.

As Luke tells the story of that dark day, he pays special attention to Jesus's commitment to peace and healing. Jesus wasn't simply a salvation machine, dispensing wisdom and grace. He was a compassionate healer and friend. He took time with people. He was moved by human need, and felt deeply for those who were grieving, or sick, hungry, troubled, or lost. This compassionate

side of Jesus is magnified on this, the last day of his life. Wherever Jesus passes, forgiveness, comfort, and healing seem to follow, even on this chaotic and deadly pathway of suffering.

Read through [Luke 23](#). Look at the lives of the individuals Jesus touched on his way to the cross:

Jesus revealed himself to a government official.

He withheld a word from another.

He traded places with a rebel.

He touched forever the man who was forced to carry his cross.

He spoke to the women who wept about the things to come.

He forgave the soldiers who beat him and mocked him and hung him to the cross.

He comforted the criminal who died beside him and gave him a promise of a different kind of kingdom.

Jesus loved, forgave, and shared peace, grace, and hope from the first step toward the cross until he breathed his last breath.

When he chooses the cross, Christ decides to be with prisoners, with enemies, with friends, with his disciples, and with those he deeply loves. He joins with them—in solidarity with their suffering, their confusion, their conflicted hopes and desires, in the fullness of their individuality and particular humanity. As with his birth, here in death, he is still God with us.

Think about three people who have been with you in your times of trial and tribulation: a friend, an enemy, and a passerby. Ask God to bless each of them. Think of three people you are with, right now in your heart, in solidarity with their particular circumstances. Give each name to God.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy



In the name of Christ and Christ
crucified. Amen.

Click [here](#) to listen to the Good Friday
hymn list on Spotify. Pick a song to
listen to or sing along with.

Black Cross by Georgia O'keeffe