Stations of the Cross
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“Erewhile of musick, and ethereal mirth,
Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,
And joyous news of heavenly Infant’s birth,
My Muse with Angels did divide to sing;
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,
In wintry solstice like the shorten’d light,
Soon swallow’d up in dark and long out-living night.

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe,
Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so,
Which he for us did freely undergo:
Most perfect Hero, tried in heaviest plight
Of labours huge and hard, too hard for humanwight!”

- John Milton, *The Passion*
Jesus Is Tempted

STATION ONE

“Then he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.’” - Matthew 26:38

“We should keep in mind that temptation is accomplished in three stages: by suggestion, by delight, by consent. Since we are begotten through the sin of the flesh, we bear within us that by which we now suffer conflict. But God who became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin came into this world without sin, and had no source of conflict within Him. He therefore could be tempted by suggestion; but the delight of sin could take no hold on his mind. And so all this diabolic temptation was from without; not from within.” - Gregory I of Rome, Oremus: A Lutheran Breviary

Reflection:

Just like the first man, Adam, you are tempted both externally and internally. How do the temptations in your life move from “suggestion” to “delight” to “consent”?

For kids:

Most times when we’re tempted to do wrong things we let the bad thoughts stick around. What should we do about the bad thoughts?
Jesus Is Betrayed
“Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, do what you came to do.’ Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.” - Matthew 26:50

“Why, then, do we wonder if Christ’s bread was given to Judas, that thereby he should be made over to the devil; when we see, on the other hand, that Paul was visited by a messenger of the devil, that by such an instrumentality he might be perfected in Christ? In this way, both the good was injurious to the evil man, and the evil was beneficial to the good.” - St. Augustine, Tractate 62 (John 13:26-31)

Reflection:

How might God’s sovereignty over evil – and through evil – bring comfort to your soul?

For kids:

God hates sin like one friend betraying another. But God is also so powerful that he accomplishes good things even from bad actions. What kind of comfort does this give you in the middle of difficult situations.
Jesus Is Condemned
Jesus Is Condemned

STATION THREE

“When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” - Luke 22:53

“For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother’s sons. For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.” - Psalm 69:7-9

Reflection:

Jesus’s death was foreshadowed and prophesied in the Old Testament in places like Psalm 69. However, the Jewish leaders in Jesus’s day (who knew the Scriptures) did not recognize Jesus for who he is. Who do you recognize Jesus to be?

For kids:

The Old Testament foretold of Jesus dying on the cross, but the religious people in Jesus’s day completely missed this. Who does the Bible say Jesus is?
Peter Denies Jesus
Peter Denies Jesus

STATION FOUR

“But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know this man of whom you speak.’ And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.” - Mark 14:71-72

“[Peter] did not perpetrate a minor misdeed but a very great one. He denied the Lord. I say this, not accusing a just man, but offering to you the opportunity of repentance. Peter denied the Lord and governor of the world himself, the savior of all...” - John Chrysostom, De Eleemos

Reflection:

Judas betrayed Jesus; Peter denied Jesus; all the disciples abandoned Jesus in his moment of crisis. How are you tempted to keep your distance from Jesus today?

For kids:

Peter told people that he did not know Jesus because he was afraid of what they might do to him. Are you ever afraid to tell people that you believe in Jesus?
Jesus Is Mocked
Jesus Is Mocked

STATION FIVE

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.” - Matthew 27:27-31

“Here is brightly displayed the inconceivable mercy of God towards us, in bringing his only-begotten Son so low on our account. This was also a proof which Christ gave of his astonishing love towards us, that there was no ignominy to which he refused to submit for our salvation.” - John Calvin, The Harmony of the Gospels

Reflection:

Jesus, the giver of all life was mocked by men he created. They sneered at his claims with the breath he had provided them. In what ways does our sin lead us to also mock Jesus?

For kids:

Even as Jesus was led to the cross and died, some people made fun of him and said he was not really a king. Are there ways that we might still think that today?
Jesus Is Given His Cross
Jesus Is Given His Cross

STATION SIX

“And he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.” - John 19:17

“The first artistic depictions of the cross were by pagan critics. The earliest is scratched on plaster and is dated circa AD 200. It is found in the Paedagogium on the Palatine Hill and may have been scratched by a servant in the imperial household. A man with a donkey’s head is on a cross and is being worshiped by one Alexamenos. The graffito reads, ‘Alexamenos worships his God.’” - Graham Cole, God the Peacemaker

Reflection:

The cross was the foremost symbol of shame in the First Century world, but Jesus chose to endure the cross for the sake of our salvation. Jesus’s death transformed the symbolism of the cross. What does the cross mean to you today?

For kids:

The cross was a shameful symbol in the ancient world. It was used to put criminals to death, and yet Jesus humbled himself to die on a cross! He did this to save us. What does the cross symbolize to you?
“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” - Philippians 2:8

“The King of kings lay thus lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need, our weakness is no stranger.
Behold your King, Before him lowly bend.”
- Adolphe Adam, O Holy Night

Reflection:

The Gospel accounts suggest that Jesus was beaten so badly that he was too weak to carry the cross. Just as he was born in weakness he also died in weakness. How does weakness make him a wonderful savior?

For kids:

The Bible says that Jesus knows what it is like to feel weak. Do you feel weak sometimes? How does it make you feel to know that Jesus understands what that is like?
Simon Carries Jesus’ Cross
Simon Carries Jesus’s Cross

STATION EIGHT

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’” - Matthew 16:24

“The Cross of Jesus Christ destroys all pride. We cannot find the Cross of Jesus if we shrink from going to the place where it is to be found, namely, the public death of a sinner. And we refuse to bear the Cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession. In confession we break through to the true fellowship of the Cross of Jesus Christ, in confession we affirm and accept our cross.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together

Reflection:

When we confess our sin it means that we are acknowledging our guilt and shame – the guilt and shame that Jesus took upon himself. What is our hope in confession?

For kids:

Sin is when we rebel against God and his ways, and it deserves punishment. Confession is what we do when we acknowledge our sins to God. What is our hope in telling God the wrong things we have thought and done?
Jesus Is Stripped
Jesus Is Stripped

STATION NINE

“And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, ‘Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!’ The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, ‘Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!’"

“I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.”
- Psalm 22:17-18

Reflection:

When Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out of the Garden of Eden, God clothed them. Jesus, being stripped and his clothes divided among his executioners, is a shameful reversal. Mankind, covered by his Creator, now strips his Creator bare. Could there be greater shame? How does this treatment of Jesus change the way you think about sin and idolatry? In what ways might you participate in such a “shameful reversal”?

For kids:

In Adam and Eve’s moment of need, God gave them clothes. In Jesus’s moment of need, man robbed him of the only clothes he had. Why was Jesus treated so badly?
Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross
“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” - Matthew 27:46

“For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—” - Psalm 22:16

Reflection:

Betrayed by Judas. Denied by Peter. Abandoned by all his disciples. Now forsaken by the Father. Jesus was forsaken on the cross, but he was not ultimately forsaken, and he endured this forsakenness so that we never would. What comfort does this bring you in your affliction?

For kids:

Jesus was forsaken by God the Father on the cross, but it wasn’t ultimate or final. We know that even in his darkest valley, God the Father brought him through. What kind of comfort does this give you when you’re going through a hard time?
Jesus Dies
Jesus Dies

STATION ELEVEN

“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” - John 19:30

“It is finished,” O what pleasure
Do these charming words afford
Heavenly blessings, without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord
‘It is finished, it is finished,’ saints the dying words record
‘It is finished, it is finished,’ saints the dying words record”
- Jonathan Evans, “Hark, the Voice of Love and Mercy!”, 1784

Reflection:

The atoning death of Jesus is complete. The punishment we deserve for our sins has been paid. Why is that good news for you?

For kids:

Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross. That is why he said, “It is finished!” Why is that good news for you?
Jesus Is Buried

STATION TWELVE

“So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.” - John 19:40-42

“The worst isn’t the last thing about the world. It’s the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best. It’s the power from on high that comes down into the world, that wells up from the rock-bottom worst of the world like a hidden spring. Can you believe it? The last, best thing is the laughing deep in the hearts of the saints, sometimes our hearts even. Yes. You are terribly loved and forgiven. Yes. You are healed.”
- Frederick Buechner, The Final Beast

Reflection:

Was there ever a darker time in history than those moments between Good Friday and Sunday morning? The disciples were afraid and went into hiding. All seemed lost. But the resurrection means the worst thing is never the last thing. It wasn’t on Good Friday, and it isn’t now, whatever trial you could be suffering, however dark it feels. How does the hope of Sunday help you in the darkness?

For kids:

Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried. But we know he did not stay dead. Jesus conquered death! What kind of hope does this give you for the way you live your life?
“Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock
That was the casket of Heaven’s richest store,
And here through grief my feeble hands up lock,
Yet on the soften’d quarry would I score
My plaining verse as lively as before;
For sure so well instructed are my tears,
That they would fitly fall in order’d characters.”

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Acknowledgments

1
Illustrations: Seth Young

2
Guide book content: Pastor Jonathan Parnell and Ian Pitkanen

3
Guide book design: Ian Pitkanen

4
Decor: James and Lexi Nelson

5
Creative Direction: Pastor Nick Aufenkamp
Endnotes

1. Poetical Works, ed. H. J. Todd, 6 vols (1801, 1826)


11. Music played during Holy Week at Cities Church:
Grechaninov Passion Week
By:
Phoenix Bach Choir
Kansas City Chorale
Charles Bruffy