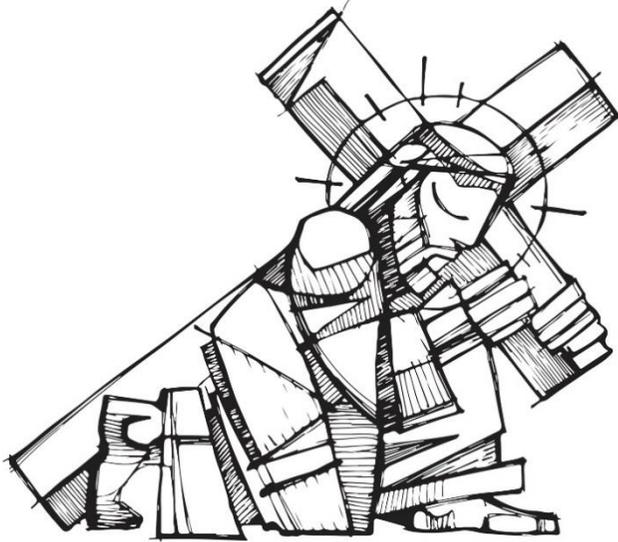


Stations of the Cross

(based on One Friday Resources)

Watercolour Posters by Jenny Hawke



At the start of each station say:

**We adore you, O Christ and we bless you
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

Read the Bible passage and reflection. Spend time in quiet prayer.

At the end of each station say:

Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

Fear

Matthew 26.36-41

This is the scene on Thursday, the night before Jesus died. Jesus and his disciples are in a small plantation of olive trees at Gethsemane, just outside Jerusalem. It's clear that Jesus knew what the next 24 hours would hold. He was terrified, as any of us would be if we were facing torture and death. He asked his disciples, his friends, to stay awake but they fell asleep. They were unaware of the anguish that he was experiencing. He was facing the future alone.

Not quite alone – he poured out his heart to God, pleading for a way of escape. But ultimately he committed himself to doing God's will.

There are times when we all face fear of the future.

There are times when we need to cry out to God and trust in him.

As you face your own future and the future of the world, what do you want to cry out to God?

Betrayal

Mark 14.43-46

While Jesus was speaking to his friends in the garden soldiers arrived armed with knives and sticks to arrest him. The religious leaders were there also. They wanted Jesus out of the way. They brought Judas with them, to betray Jesus with a kiss of friendship. Was this necessary?

Jesus was a public figure. Surely, he was easily recognisable?

There is always tension when someone is arrested but Jesus had done nothing to deserve arrest. He was unarmed, with no history of violence – quite the reverse. Why is betrayal so hurtful?

Judgement

Luke 22.66-71

Jesus was dragged in front of the Sanhedrin – the local Magistrates' Court. Their role was to decide whether he had a case to answer. If Jesus stated that he was the Messiah, it would be considered blasphemy. Jesus refused to give a straight answer; he wouldn't say that he was the Messiah, but he wouldn't deny it. Jesus was challenging them; they were confused.

They were facing a dilemma. They were supposed to make a decision about whether this man should live or die. We are often judged by other people – the consequences can be disturbing, upsetting, disastrous. Think of an occasion when you were judged – what was it like? Do we judge others too quickly, with inadequate information?

Disloyalty

Matthew 26. 69-75

Peter had been a follower and friend of Jesus since the beginning – he could be regarded as Jesus' best friend. Jesus was under arrest and facing the death penalty. But Peter did not stand by him. He pretended he didn't know him – not just once but three times. Peter must have hated himself, especially when he remembered that Jesus had predicated this. Jesus knew Peter better than he knew himself! Peter wept bitterly, in sorrow for the fate of Jesus and with a sense of shame in his own actions. Is there any way back after such a disloyalty? Would we have behaved any differently?

Powerlessness

Mark 15.1-5, 15

Jesus was handcuffed, physically powerless. He was brought before Pontius Pilate, the most powerful man in the country. Pilate had the authority to have Jesus released or executed. But Pilate couldn't get a straight answer from him. Jesus didn't even defend himself. In the end, it turned out that Pilate, such a powerful man, was more scared than Jesus. Pilate, under pressure from the crowd, released a convicted murderer and sentenced Jesus to death. What is it like to feel powerless? are we ever completely powerless?

Torture

John 19.1-3

Pilate handed Jesus over to the Palace guards. Jesus was stripped of his own clothes and dressed up like a pretend king. He was mocked and tortured. He was stripped of his dignity and humanity. He was naked and powerless. He was defenceless and vulnerable. Jesus shares the vulnerability of people in difficult situations throughout the world. He shares our humanity fully.

Why is torture so shocking? In what ways does torture impact upon our lives?

Burdens

John 19.6, 15-17

The cross is the central symbol of our Christian faith. Jesus already weakened by beatings and torture, is forced to carry his cross – a physical burden of heavy wood. It was probably the cross-piece of the cross; the upright section would have been fixed in the ground. There are other burdens, not just physical ones. Some burdens are not visible but can weigh us down just as much as a solid, physical one. Christians believe that Jesus carried the burden of the world's evil to the cross. What burdens do you carry? have you ever carried a heavy burden for someone else? Or has someone carried a burden for you?

Mercy

Mark 15.21

Jesus would have been surrounded by a hostile crowd as he travelled towards his crucifixion. He was weak and stumbling, so the soldiers pulled an innocent bystander from the crowd to carry the cross for a short time. All we know is that he was called Simon and he was a foreigner. Simon took the burden for a short time – was it a voluntary act of mercy or was he compelled to do it? Kindness, particularly from strangers, may touch our lives and have a tremendous impact. have you ever received an act of kindness or mercy from a stranger?

Tears

Luke 23.27-31

The women of Jerusalem were in the crowd by the side of the path. The group may have included Jesus' mother and some of his followers. They were distraught, weeping and horrified. But he said to them "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." He knew that there would be more suffering to come. Even in the midst of his own pain Jesus shows great compassion for others. How do you show compassion to your friends and family?

Forgiveness

Luke 22.33-34

Crucifixion is one of the most cruel and painful forms of execution. The victim was nailed to a cross-shaped piece of wood and left to dehydrate or bleed to death as others watched on. And yet at this point Jesus spoke to his Father, God, and prayed for forgiveness for those who crucified him. Forgiveness is a choice – we ask for forgiveness, we choose to forgive others. Note that Jesus asks God to forgive his executioners – as if it is God who is being wounded.

have you ever done something wrong and been forgiven? what was the effect of the forgiveness?

Hope

Luke 23.39-43

Jesus was crucified between two criminals; one taunted him, the other recognised that he didn't deserve to die. He asked Jesus for mercy even after his death. By promising the thief that he would be with him in Paradise on the same day, Jesus was indicating that there is hope after death.

What does hope look like? What do you hope for?

Family

John 19.25-27

Jesus' mother and his aunt were among the crowd watching him suffer. We can only imagine the horror of that scene for his mother, Mary – the loss of a child is every mother's worst nightmare.

The loss of a family member changes everything. In the middle of his darkest hour Jesus saw how his death was going to affect his mother and his friends – so he welded them together into a new family.

We can't avoid death and loss; it's part of family life. But we can open our hearts to those who have lost someone special and share our love and lives with them.

Do you have to be a blood relation to be part of a family?

Death

Luke 23.44-46

Jesus hung on the cross for about three hours, in terrible pain. At the end his last words were to trust himself into God's hands and then he died.

What phrases do people use to avoid talking about death? Why are we so reluctant to speak about death?

Tomorrow

Matthew 27.57-60

Joseph of Arimathea risked his own reputation to ensure that Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, shrouded and placed in the tomb.

Jewish law stated that the burial could not take place until after the Sabbath (Saturday). Jesus' family and friends were focusing on what had happened today – at this stage they couldn't cope with thinking of tomorrow.

We know that they would experience a miracle

When you think about tomorrow, how do you feel? What do you hope tomorrow will bring? How can we help each other to stay hopeful when times are dark?