

Introduction

I first devised these readings for S*N*A*C [Sunday Night After Church] our alternate worship/prayer/contemplative gathering in Bellshill. Timings didn't work and I was unable to get an appropriate evening to hold the event. Thankfully, we were able to "recycle" them for a prayer event on Easter Sunday (2008) at Bellshill Salvation Army.

The readings follow loosely the concept of Lectio Divinia or divine reading... and also follow the 14 Scriptural Stations of the Cross - you will have a passage of Scripture relating to the journey our Lord took to Golgotha to read followed by some points to consider (think) and then pray / act on.

3 songs are required... although not everyone will share my diverse taste in music.

These thoughts are to be shared... developed... passed on and evolved. Please let me know if you have used them and any tweaks you made.

Blessings and joy for He has risen!

Love

Thomas aka **Headphonaught**

Read

First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Then Jesus went with them to a garden called Gethsemane and told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he plunged into an agonizing sorrow. Then he said, "This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me."

Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. You, what do you want?"

When he came back to his disciples, he found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, "Can't you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert; be in prayer so you don't wander into temptation without even knowing you're in danger. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire."

Matthew 26:36-41 (The Message)

Think

We are at the beginning of this Passion journey. Please keep vigil together. Please stay alert and be in prayer. This morning is about contemplation. This morning's journey is about our thoughts, our feelings and our prayers in the context of what the Lord did for us. At each station on this journey there will be a reading from the "Scriptural Stations of the Cross"... please take time to consider the reading... take time to consider the points raised and speak to God... bring to Him your thoughts... your feelings... your prayers.

Pray

The following song will bring us into the correct mindset for tonight's journey. Please use the words and the passion of the singer to help create the right atmosphere both within this hall... and within yourself. Take time to ask for help from God as you begin this journey.

Play "Help Me" by Johnny Cash

Read

Second Station: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas Iscariot, is Arrested

No sooner were the words out of his mouth when Judas, the one out of the Twelve, showed up, and with him a gang of ruffians, sent by the high priests, religion scholars, and leaders, brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a signal with them: "The one I kiss, that's the one—seize him. Make sure he doesn't get away." He went straight to Jesus and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The others then grabbed him and roughed him up. One of the men standing there unsheathed his sword, swung, and came down on the Chief Priest's servant, lopping off the man's ear.

Mark 14: 43-46 (The Message)

Think

Jesus was betrayed by a friend. He was betrayed with such irony... Betrayed with a kiss - the ultimate symbol of friendship.

Tonight, as we consider what the Lord suffered... please take time to consider the times we have felt betrayed. Consider how we felt. Consider what it meant to us. Consider the pain it caused. Consider the pain it still continues to cause.

Shift your focus. Dig deep within yourself and acknowledge times when you have betrayed someone. Where you have let them down... let someone go... broken their heart with your actions. Acknowledge their pain. See their suffering.

Pray

Take time to call out to the Lord the times when you have been betrayed... Take time to call out to the Lord the times you have betrayed someone.

Act

Seek reconciliation. Seek forgiveness. Be proactive and ask. Reach out. Make the first move. Don't destroy yourself with hatred or guilt.

Read

Third Station: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

When it was morning, the religious leaders of the people and the high priests and scholars all got together and brought him before their High Council. They said, "Are you the Messiah?"

He answered, "If I said yes, you wouldn't believe me. If I asked what you meant by your question, you wouldn't answer me. So here's what I have to say: From here on the Son of Man takes his place at God's right hand, the place of power."

They all said, "So you admit your claim to be the Son of God?"

"You're the ones who keep saying it," he said.

But they had made up their minds, "Why do we need any more evidence? We've all heard him as good as say it himself."

Luke 22: 66-71 (The Message)

Think

The evidence is all around us. Best selling books denouncing Jesus. The world we live in has rejected Jesus... but that doesn't mean He has rejected the world we live in. It doesn't mean we should reject the world we live in.

Pray

This morning... let us pray for those who do not need any more evidence... who have condemn Jesus... rejected Him.

Consider those who have consciously... deliberately... said "no". Consider those who have no thought of Jesus... people who live lives in complete contrast to Jesus and unconsciously reject Him with their behaviour.

Just as Jesus did... let us love those who reject Him... either consciously or unconsciously – consider one person you know who has rejected Jesus and pray specifically for them. Say aloud their name.

Pray that we can love them more. Pray that we can be Jesus to them... show them a new way... something worthwhile reconsidering.

Read

Fourth Station: Jesus is Denied by St. Peter

All this time, Peter was sitting out in the courtyard. One servant girl came up to him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean."

In front of everybody there, he denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about."

As he moved over toward the gate, someone else said to the people there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene."

Again he denied it, salting his denial with an oath: "I swear, I never laid eyes on the man." Shortly after that, some bystanders approached Peter. "You've got to be one of them. Your accent gives you away."

Then he got really nervous and swore. "I don't know the man!"

Just then a rooster crowed. Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." He went out and cried and cried and cried.

Matthew 26: 69-75 (The Message)

Think

Consider when we have denied our Lord... in word... in deed...

Anyone here this morning who claims to have never denied their Lord is a liar. We all deny our Lord. We take the easy path... the selfish path... the path of sin... instead of the way of Jesus.

Pray

Seek forgiveness for our selfishness... for our convenience... for when we have let Him down... Take the time to consider our behaviour and say sorry to God.

Read

Fifth Station: Jesus is Judged by Pontius Pilate

At dawn's first light, the high priests, with the religious leaders and scholars, arranged a conference with the entire Jewish Council. After tying Jesus securely, they took him out and presented him to Pilate.

Pilate asked him, "Are you the 'King of the Jews'?"

He answered, "If you say so." The high priests let loose a barrage of accusations.

Pilate asked again, "Aren't you going to answer anything? That's quite a list of accusations." Still, he said nothing. Pilate was impressed, really impressed.

It was a custom at the Feast to release a prisoner, anyone the people asked for. There was one prisoner called Barabbas, locked up with the insurrectionists who had committed murder during the uprising against Rome. As the crowd came up and began to present its petition for him to release a prisoner, Pilate anticipated them: "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews to you?" Pilate knew by this time that it was through sheer spite that the high priests had turned Jesus over to him.

But the high priests by then had worked up the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas.

Pilate came back, "So what do I do with this man you call King of the Jews?"

They yelled, "Nail him to a cross!"

Pilate objected, "But for what crime?"

But they yelled all the louder, "Nail him to a cross!"

Pilate gave the crowd what it wanted, set Barabbas free and turned Jesus over for whipping and crucifixion.

Mark 15: 1- 15 (The Message)

Think / Pray

In a similar attitude of humility... Take time to pray for when we give in... when the pressure builds... when we wash our hands... when we walk away... instead of staying true. When we are more concerned with what is easier and more convenient for us. When we hide behind tradition and comfort... to satisfy the majority... the popular view... instead of what is right and what is truthful.

Read

Sixth Station: Jesus is Scourging at the Pilar and Crowned with Thorns

So Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. The soldiers, having braided a crown from thorns, set it on his head, threw a purple robe over him, and approached him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they greeted him with slaps in the face.

John 19: 1-3 (The Message)

Think / Pray

Consider the pain and suffering of our Lord. Consider the blood dripping from His back... from His head... from His mouth. Consider the stinging, stabbing pain from the punches and slaps.

Consider the wounds to His heart... the humiliation... the embarrassment... the shame... This was for you. This was for me.

Take time to say "thank you".

Read

Seventh Station: Jesus Bears the Cross

When the high priests and police saw him, they shouted in a frenzy, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilate told them, "You take him. You crucify him. I find nothing wrong with him."

The Jews answered, "We have a law, and by that law he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he became even more scared. He went back into the palace and said to Jesus, "Where did you come from?"

Jesus gave no answer.

Pilate said, "You won't talk? Don't you know that I have the authority to pardon you, and the authority to—crucify you?"

Jesus said, "You haven't a shred of authority over me except what has been given you from heaven. That's why the one who betrayed me to you has committed a far greater fault."

At this, Pilate tried his best to pardon him, but the Jews shouted him down: "If you pardon this man, you're no friend of Caesar's. Anyone setting himself up as 'king' defies Caesar."

When Pilate heard those words, he led Jesus outside. He sat down at the judgment seat in the area designated Stone Court (in Hebrew, Gabbatha). It was the preparation day for Passover. The hour was noon. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king."

They shouted back, "Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!"

Pilate said, "I am to crucify your king?"

The high priests answered, "We have no king except Caesar."

Pilate caved in to their demand. He turned him over to be crucified.

They took Jesus away. Carrying his cross...

John 19: 6-17 (The Message)

Think

Who is your King? What is your King? Who do you serve and give your allegiance to?

Who is your Caesar? Who is your Lord?

Is Jesus your Lord... or is it material "stuff"?

Is Jesus your Lord... or is it your status?

Is Jesus your Lord... or is it tradition?

Is Jesus your Lord... or is it your family?

Is Jesus your Lord... or is it national pride?

Is Jesus your Lord?

Pray

Seek to reaffirm Jesus as the one and only Lord in your life. Give Him His place in your life... and remove anything that would compete for the Throne of your heart.

Read

Eighth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross

There was a man walking by, coming from work, Simon from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They made him carry Jesus' cross.

Mark 15: 21 (The Message)

Think

Consider people who put others before themselves. People who seek to help the last... the lost... and the least. People who see social action as being an expression of their faith.

Consider where you can offer to help carry someone's cross... where you can assist them in whatever way they need.

Pray

Pray for everyone who works to put others before themselves. Ask for strength, courage, guidance and protection in whatever it is they do.

Pray too for guidance from God – Ask Him to show you an opportunity for service and ask for the courage to make it happen.

Read

Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

A huge crowd of people followed, along with women weeping and carrying on. At one point Jesus turned to the women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children. The time is coming when they'll say, 'Lucky the women who never conceived! Lucky the wombs that never gave birth! Lucky the breasts that never gave milk!' Then they'll start calling to the mountains, 'Fall down on us!' calling to the hills, 'Cover us up!' If people do these things to a live, green tree, can you imagine what they'll do with deadwood?"

Luke 23: 27-31 (The Message)

Think

Consider our community... our locality... our people... Consider the people we come into contact... either regularly or one-off. Visualise their sorrow... their pain... their oppression and addiction. Understand their situation.

Pray

Pray for opportunities to be "in" you community... in your locality... with your people. Pray for guidance so that you can comfort those who sorrow and bring justice to those who are oppressed.

Read

Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified

When they got to the place called Skull Hill, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left.

Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing."

Dividing up his clothes, they threw dice for them. The people stood there staring at Jesus, and the ringleaders made faces, taunting, "He saved others. Let's see him save himself! The Messiah of God—ha! The Chosen—ha!"

Luke 23: 33-34 (The Message)

Think / Pray

Listen to the song on the CD player. Soak in the familiar words. Read them in the song book and spend time in the moment. Visualise what crucifixion actually means... the agony... the humiliation... the defeat. Spend time thanking God.

PLAY > "When I survey" by IONA

Read

Eleventh Station: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him: "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!"

But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same as him. We deserve this, but not him—he did nothing to deserve this."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom."

He said, "Don't worry, I will. Today you will join me in paradise."

Luke 23: 39-43 (The Message)

Think / Pray

Doesn't make sense does it? A thief and mocker given a second chance.

Consider what we deserve... consider the second chance we have been offered.

Acknowledge what we have received through grace.

Read

Twelfth Station: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Beloved Disciple

While the soldiers were looking after themselves, Jesus' mother, his aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her. He said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother.

John 19: 25-27 (The Message)

Think / Pray

Pray again for our community... for our locality... for our people... Consider our definitions of family... of relationships. Acknowledge the power of connection and living in fellowship together so we can bring to earth the Kingdom of God.

Consider what it means to be a child of God... and think of those who are not part of God's family. Pray for them. Seek ways in which you can demonstrate God's love for them in practical and compassionate ways.

Read

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

By now it was noon. The whole earth became dark, the darkness lasting three hours—a total blackout. The Temple curtain split right down the middle. Jesus called loudly, "Father, I place my life in your hands!" Then he breathed his last.

Luke 23: 44-46 (The Message)

Think / Pray

Listen to the CD and place your life in the Father's hands... take time to commit or recommit yourself to Him.

Play - "Agnus Dei" by All Angels

Read

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Late in the afternoon a wealthy man from Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, arrived. His name was Joseph. He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate granted his request. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linens, put it in his own tomb, a new tomb only recently cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the entrance. Then he went off. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stayed, sitting in plain view of the tomb.

Matthew 27: 57-60 (The Message)

Think / Pray

Think of all you have experienced this morning and consider all Jesus experienced for you. His suffering... His pain... His humiliation and anguish.

Is this the end? Thank God that it isn't! Celebrate the fact that death could not hold our Lord... that death is defeated. Rejoice in His rising from the dead.