

WALKING THE WAY OF SORROWS

***In Home Mid-Week Lenten Service
March 18, 2020***



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

85 E. Brandt Boulevard

Landisville, PA

***United in Christ,
We are called to love and serve.***

WALKING THE WAY OF SORROWS

The Cross is Laid on Simon of Cyrene

(a told by Simon to his sons)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Trusting in the promise of God's covenant with us, let us be bold to confess our sin.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most faithful God,

We confess that we have failed to be faithful in our promises to you and to walk in the way of Christ. We neglect to serve others; we turn from the good you created in us, and in so doing we allow evil to increase. We look to you for mercy and healing. Strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and guide us in the path of humble service. Amen.

All who turn to God in repentance find their sin forgiven for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Deny yourselves, then take up your cross and follow him.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you always.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The promise of God is clear. When we return to the Lord, God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. When we return to the Lord with weeping and fasting, God forgives our sin and blesses us with a renewed and deepened relationship with the almighty. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

AN EXCERPT FROM LUKE

Luke 10:25-37

“Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” [The lawyer] said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

LENTEN MONOLOGUE BY K. WHITLEY

The Cross is Laid on Simon of Cyrene
(as told by Simon to his sons)

I never want to see the place again, but you may go back, my sons, the brothers will need you. I hold the memory of it with pain, because of all that happened, even though that one day has proved the most important one in my life

I was coming back from tilling the field, you see, and heard the noise, a roar like that of the lions and other beasts I used to hear back home in Cyrene, deep and fearful, with sudden ugly yelps and screams a sound I hated and thought I had forgotten. The roar of predators after a victim. I came to the edge of the city center and looked up the narrow street, saw the Romans cursing and shoving the crowds back, saw the Jews of the city whispering, some rubbing their hands with glee, others standing aloof as if none of the dirt could touch them, some with their heads hanging down, ashamed, I thought. I was a big man back then and the crowd made way for me.

What's all the commotion? I thought I must have said it aloud, because one of the Romans loomed at me and nudged another. Here," he said, "look at this dark one. They are strong, these Africans. Let's make him do it." I felt my anger rising. You fools, I wanted to shout, can't you tell that I'm a man of Cyrene, but a Jew nonetheless? I had no idea what it was they had in mind for me, but they came from behind and pushed me forward. The crowd, seeing the Romans, again made way. I lifted my arms to strike, as I had always done in a tight spot – strike before they strike you was my motto – ready to push my hands in their faces but there, in front of me, I saw a man down on his knees, a heavy rough-hewn tree crushing his back. I stared at his bleeding back, they turned to the Romans to curse them. One of them pointed to the heavy tree. "You, dark one," he ordered, "pick up that cross. The prisoner is weak."

I was horrified. A cross? How could I, a Jew, pick up a cross? The shame of it would never leave me. Should I run? Should I fight? "No," I cried out, "no." But at that moment the man on the ground made an effort to stand up and, as he struggled, he turned his head to look at me and my tormentors. I saw a face covered with blood. "My son," he whispered, "give me a hand," and tried again to regain his footing. Instinctively I reached out my arm to steady him and, as I did, I felt his muscles and was surprised. "My Son?" I questioned, "but you're as young as I." "God's blessing on you," he said again, quietly, to me alone, as if there was not a whole crowd roaring nearby. I was angry enough to kill. "What have they done to you?" I asked and heard my voice breaking. "I'll kill the murderers, I will!" He closed his eyes for a moment as if withdrawing, saying "No" to my passion. "Never," he said to me alone, "never repay violence with violence."

Bewildered, I stared at him. “Why,” I asked, “why?” He looked at me, and it was just he and I there amidst the throng; everyone else had disappeared. I bent and grabbed the heavy cross. I wanted to swing with it and hit every in its path, hit them hard until they dropped. But he, too, was close by, and I couldn’t hurt him. I saw that he would never run to escape my fury. So I bent and lifted the cross on my back, and he reached his bleeding hand out and closed his fingers on my arm in gratitude, just for a moment. And through me ran his love.

I hear you questions, my son Rufus. I see your tears, my son Alexandros. But that’s what happened. I felt his love run through me, and I was changed. I trudged ahead, he at my side. “Who are you, friend?” I asked him. “What have you done to deserve this?” “He said to me as if talking to himself, “The Father is in me, and I am in the Father.” “They would have no power over me if it had not been given them from above.” I understood nothing, praying he’d go on talking to me, but his strength was ebbing. We trudged on in sorrow, oblivious to all the others.

We had stopped saying words, but we were still talking to each other. I asked, and he responded. So it was that my life changed. I couldn’t endure what came next. Like a coward I ran away and watched from afar. And as you heard from our brother Peter and the others, I was not the only coward. But that didn’t make it any better. I think I spent the following days crying to God, until I came upon another crowd and stood by the portico of the Temple to hear Peter’s voice ringing out, the Galilean accent unmistakable. “... this man,” he was saying, “handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up ...” and I felt my heart cracking inside me. I knew he was talking about the crucified man I helped and then abandoned. I waited that day to talk to Peter, and the rest you know. I have not moved away from that man of sorrows, and I vowed to return to my native land to tell others about him.

But you, my sons, you don’t have my painful memories. You may return to the land where he walked under the burden of the cross. You may walk again that Via Dolorosa, as I have come to think of it; but as you do, remember to thank God ... remember. Amen.



PRAYERS

Let us pray.

Lord, we are all saddened and terrified and angry when we see oppression and injustice. Have mercy on the oppressed and their oppressors. Forgive us our self-righteousness.

Forgive us our ease and comfort while others struggle in turmoil. Help us recognize those who are merciful even when the world despises them.

Help us to recognize kindness in those we consider unworthy. Forgive us the sin of pride.

Forgive our hardened hearts.

Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, and wisdom for life. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, and the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

In the quiet of our homes, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

ENDING PRAYER

Merciful God, accompany our journey throughout this Lenten season. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all, that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, † and Holy Spirit, be with each of us as we continue to live a world tormented by the coronavirus. Amen.



WALKING THE WAY OF SORROWS

March 25, 2020	Theme:	Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother (As told by Mary of Nazareth)
	Text:	Luke 2:33-35
April 1, 2020	Theme:	Jesus is Nailed to the Cross (As seen by the soldier on duty)
	Text:	Isaiah 6:10

The theme of this year's Mid-Week Lenten Services is *Walking the Way of Sorrows*. Each week we will enter into Christ's journey to the cross based on Katerina Katsarka Whitley's first-person monologues reflecting various stations of the cross.

May God have mercy on us all throughout this Lenten season as we experience stories that will cause us to feel pain, hope, love, and gratitude so that through the darkness of the crucifixion we may truly recognize the Light of Christ.