

## Prayers in the Bleakness

Ah, the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday—“Silent Saturday”—also called Holy Saturday. It’s the day between the cross and the empty tomb. The day when Jesus lay dead in the tomb and his disciples experienced the absence of God.

What are we to make of this unusual day? The day after Jesus defeated death with his death. What are we to remember on the day after the victory of the cross, yet before the reality of his resurrection?

Ancient Christian sermons and creeds talked about how Jesus descended to the world of departed spirits who were awaiting him on this day. He went to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. And there, he woke them and raised them up to dwell with him forever. This is wonderful.

Yet for Jesus’ followers who were alive, this had to be a day of despair and utter bleakness. They weren’t expecting the resurrection of Jesus on the next day. The One whom they had followed was dead. All they knew was the One they thought was the Savior, King, Messiah, was gone. The disciples huddled in fear, overwhelmed with grief. Their whole world had come crashing down. They had lost hope.



On Holy Saturday, we should remember and pray for all those who are living in the wake of sin, the aftermath of evil, the loneliness of abandonment, and the despair of suffering. Holy Saturday begins in darkness, but there is light that is about to enter in.

On this day, let us lift up prayers for all who are seemingly living in the bleakness of the tomb. For those who are suffering and experiencing grief, we pray for resurrection hope to break in. And in silence and awe, we who desire to be Jesus’ disciples, let’s take up our own crosses and follow him.



2530 Cape Horn Rd., Red Lion, PA 17356  
717.755.0089 • LWCCyork.com



## Using This Devotional Guide

We have a different way for you to do the devotions for Holy Week. There will be longer passages for you to read. By the end of the week, you will have read and prayed through most of the stories of Christ that are the heart of Holy Week. You will find your heart well prepared for Good Friday.

You will want to have at least 15 minutes for these devotional times. Don’t rush through them. There is a particular experience we want you to have. It is the experience of being with Jesus. In Matthew’s account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus says: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38).

We want you to be with Jesus. Not only for your sake, but for his sake! Jesus wants you to be with him. Jesus wants you to share with him in his sorrow and suffering. As you go through each part of the Gospel Story of Holy Week, simply seek to be with Jesus.

Here is the pattern of preparation and engagement you will follow each day:

**PREPARE:** In your devotional place, close your eyes. Sit in silence. After a moment of becoming quiet, say the name *Jesus* softly, with reverence, with love. Repeat his name several times. Desire to be with Jesus as you say his name.

**INVITE:** Now you will focus on Jesus, using a few more words. Brief prayers like: Jesus I need you. Jesus I love you. Jesus I worship you. Jesus I . . . (and pray what is on your heart).

**OFFER:** Use this prayer before you read the passage: “Open the eyes of my heart, that I may see You more clearly, love You more dearly, and follow You more nearly. Amen.”

**READ AND REFLECT:** Read through the passage slowly. It is most important to notice Jesus and his experience. Seek to identify with Christ. What was he feeling as he embraced his mission of dying for the sins of the world, for your sins?

**DISCERN AND PRAY:** What have you experienced as you were with Jesus? How was God speaking to you? What is he asking of you?

**PRACTICE THE PRESENCE OF GOD:** Many times throughout the day, stop for a moment and simply say the name *Jesus*. Always with love and reverence. Christ is with you. May you be with him.

**GO DEEPER:** For Friday and Saturday, Pastor Aaron has prepared additional thoughts for your consideration.

## Passages for this Week

**Monday: The Last Supper**

*Read Luke 22:7-38.*

**Tuesday: The Garden and the Agony**

*Read Luke 22:39-46.*

**Wednesday: Betrayed and Denied**

*Read Luke 22:47-62.*

**Thursday: The Trial of God**

*Read Luke 22:63-23:25.*

**Friday: Crucified**

*Read Luke 23:26-43.*

**Saturday: Died, Buried, Gone**

*Read Luke 23:44-56.*

## A GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTION

# Boasting in the Cross

*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* (The Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:14)

On Good Friday, we remember the cross of Jesus. Why? And why would we ever boast in the cross?

This is what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians: *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified... My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.*

Where does your faith rest? What's the fulcrum in your heart? What do you lean on? The Apostle Paul didn't rest or boast in anything we might expect. But why the cross of Jesus?

Here's why: Because our **GUILT** is taken away by the cross.

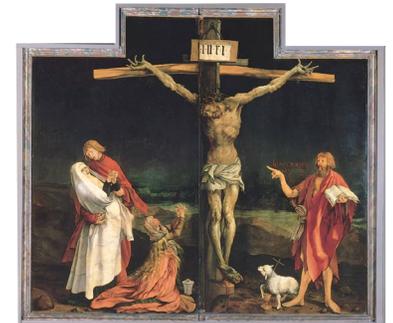
Read these words from Hebrews 10: ... *we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience.*

This is what the cross does. The blood of Jesus rushes through the fabric of our lives – the sins and the stains – and we are made new.

Here's the second thing that the cross does. The cross says that our **SHAME** is gone.

Part of the human condition is that we've hidden from God and tried to cover ourselves and our nakedness. We manage and curate our appearances to project the image that we are doing better than we are because we're scared that if people ever really *saw us* they'd never *want us*. Here's the beauty of the cross. It says, every sin you've ever committed, you've sinned in Jesus' presence and he loves you anyway.

What an amazing thing! You don't come to the cross with your pedigree or your skills—you come with shame that you want to hide, and Jesus with His grace takes care of it all. Jesus actually says: “I choose you.” Our shame is taken away. Romans 8:1 says “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” We boast in the cross, not because of what we can do, but because of what we cannot do.



Here's the last reason: because we get a new **IDENTITY**.

1 John 3:1 says, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”

This is the message that is so important for you and me to hear from God—and it's the message of the cross: “I loved you when you were my enemy; how much more now that you're on my team?” We get a new identity that is not based on our performance.

The work of the cross in our hearts means taking away our guilt, removing our shame, and giving us a new identity. In humility, let us boast (and rest) in one thing: the cross of Jesus Christ.