

## Week 20 – Good Friday

*This week, we continue to reflect on the way we spend Holy Week walking in Jesus' footsteps.*

### Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into this room that we might grow to understand how our life together binds us with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and that same Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Texts for Discussion

- Good Friday Liturgy (BCP 276-282)
- Isaiah 52:13-53:12
- Hebrews 10:1-25

### Primary Take Aways

- We can never just pray for ourselves. That's what happens at Jesus's death: God's plan to save all of creation is enacted. Humanity that fell offers itself to God in the person of Jesus. And when the Son of God dies, his death changes our relationship to God the Father because Jesus goes where we go but death cannot hold the one who creates all things and who gives life.

### Important Links to Previous Weeks ("Where We Are")

- Let's remember the whole arc of the biblical narrative.
- Let's draw our images of the Trinity. Emphasize Jesus' humanity and divinity.
- Let's remind ourselves where we are in the walking of Jesus' footsteps this week.

### Important Background

- See previous weeks.

### Structure

In this lesson, our goal is to try and get a grasp on what this service actually memorializes. What happened in Jesus' death? We need to remember that Jesus is fully God and fully human. Otherwise, none of this makes any sense!

#### *Discussion questions:*

- Okay, we've been talking an awful lot in the past weeks about walking in Jesus' footsteps. But what do you think Jesus' crucifixion and death actually mean?

Get a volunteer to read Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

*Discussion question:*

- What do you think this passage is about?

The person in this passage is often referred to as “The Suffering Servant.” It is a major reading for early Christians (including the Gospel writers). When Isaiah wrote, he was probably thinking of an Israelite from his time, not of Jesus, but very early in Christianity, Jewish readers of Isaiah saw correlations between this passage and Jesus. The idea is that Jesus underwent suffering that was not for himself but for others. In his death, the Jews and the Gentiles of the day could very easily assume that God was punishing him. That’s why it’s significant that Jesus was condemned for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin and for sedition by Pilate: he was justly condemned by the powers of the day. And yet the reality is deeper than that: “But we was wounded for our transgressions.” Something about Jesus’ death was for us. And if we say that, we can also say that it was the will of the Lord that Jesus die, even if it was not for the reasons that the governments thought. In his death, he who had committed no sin, God forgives the sins of all who did in fact deserve death. Because he went through these things for us, he can intercede for us.

Read Hebrews 10:1-25. Here we have a NT reading discussing what happened on the cross.

*Discussion question:*

- What is this passage saying about Jesus’ death?

This passage reads Jesus’ sacrifice as one like the OT sacrifices, where there is forgiveness offered as a priest makes sacrifices for people, but the writer recognizes that these sacrifices had to be perpetual because sin is perpetual and because the priests themselves had to offer a sacrifice for their own sins before they could offer one for the people. Jesus, in contrast, is his own sacrifice because he had no sin. Because of Jesus’ death, the way is opened for the Holy Spirit to write God’s law on our hearts. When that happens, our former sins are forgotten and we live with a clean conscience and can fulfill God’s law. Jesus is human, and he lives the life we should all live: fully in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is God: when he lives this human life perfectly, it renews us all.

These two passages point out that Jesus’ death is on our behalf and that it somehow covers over the sins that we have committed and, by doing that, writes God’s law on our hearts so that we can walk in the way of love and peace.

So with these things in mind, let’s see what we’re asking God to do in the Solemn Collects on Good Friday. Break into groups and assign each collect to a group with the goal of them summarizing that prayer in one sentence in their own words.

The Solemn Collects begin with a prayer that reminds us that God intends to save the whole world. So, we pray “for people everywhere according to their needs.” This prayer is outward looking.

We pray for the church. So we start with a small circle, Christians.

We pray for all the nations and peoples. So we go to a larger circle, all nations and people. We are not just praying for Christians.

We pray for all who suffer. Again, we aren’t just praying for Christians. We are looking outward, asking God to do something for everyone.

We pray for those who have not received the Gospel. Note how we don’t pray that God saves them from hell or anything like that. The prayers suggest God has already done this on the cross. What we’re praying is that there would be “one flock.” Which is a way of praying that all of humanity would be united in the love of God and the love of neighbor.

We finally pray for those who have died, so that we are drawing into our prayer people across time and space – once more pointing out how Christians think differently about these things than most people.

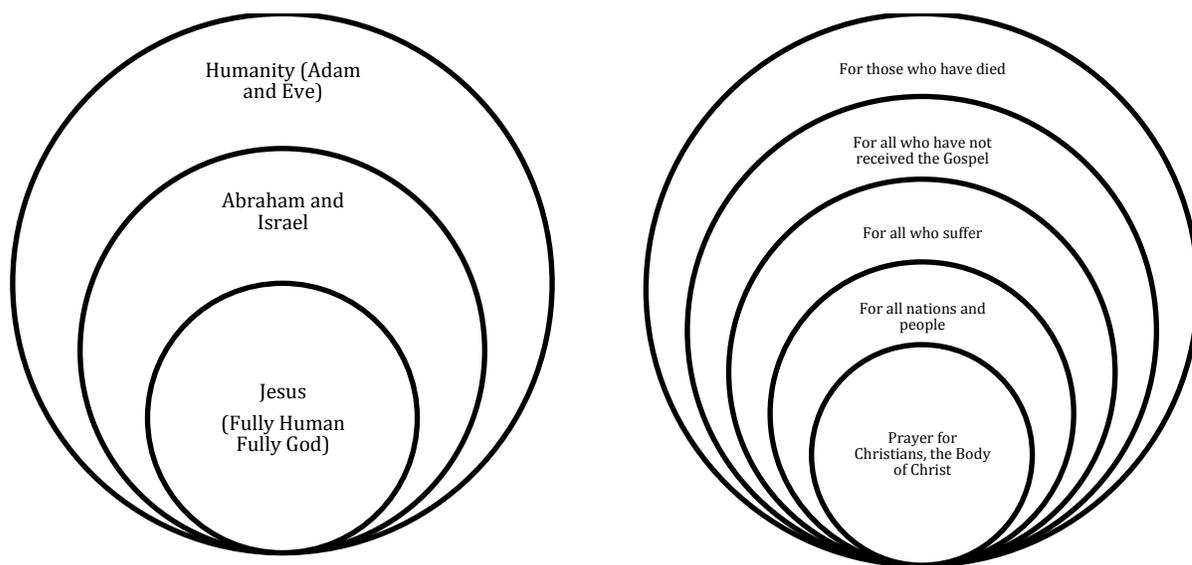
So, in essence, we want to point out that we believe that in Jesus’ death we are seeing God’s deep purposes for all of creation. We can start with how Jesus was willing to be betrayed for his disciples and, therefore, for the church, but the prayer ends in a universal direction emphasizing the way God wills that none should be lost. And the passage from Isaiah makes us think about how the person stands in for Israel but that person is then read to be Jesus, who extends the mission to the Gentiles (that is, beyond the Jews and to the whole world) and the church can no more assume God just cares about us than the disciples could that Jesus just cared about them. So we have to pray as Jesus prayed, that those who are not of him may become of him, and that we might all join in loving God with all our hearts and our neighbors just as we loved ourselves.

So when Jesus dies, he shows that God would rather suffer the consequences of creating a world where sin and death could enter – that is, he would rather die himself – than just let that world collapse fully into death and decay. So when Jesus dies, he dies as a human who did nothing to deserve it. As God, his death changes our relationship to God, his cross and death standing between us and God’s judgment. And if God has done that for us, who are we not to ask him to do it for everyone? And that’s just what we’re doing in the Solemn Collects.

Another way into talking about the atonement is to use a set of concentric circles when talking about the biblical narrative and one when talking about the solemn collects. God says to Adam and Eve: Humans, live in unity with me and bless all of creation; humans fail. God calls Abraham and Israel and says, Live in unity with me and in such a way as to bless everyone; Israel fails. So God the Son

comes into the world as a human and an Israelite; lives that human, Jewish life of unity with God and blessing for others even so far as to accept death on the cross rather than assert his power. Because death cannot hold God, the bonds of death are broken, and the fully human, fully divine Son of God walks from the grave and says to creation, “I love you anyway,” and in doing so restores the relationship between God and his creation. Baptized into Christ’s death, we are raised to new life in the Spirit, and made one body with Christ and now we are enabled to live and pray in a manner that follows the example of Christ’s life: not just for ourselves, but for all of creation, in union with God.

Here are images that sometimes help students make connections:



### Closing Prayer

Today’s prayer can be the final prayer of the Good Friday liturgy (BCP 282).

*The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.*

## Cheat Sheet

### 10 minutes: Welcome, Prayer, Candle Lighting, Where we are

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into this room that we might grow to understand how our life together binds us with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and that same Spirit, one God, now and forever.

*Discussion question:*

- Okay, we've been talking an awful lot in the past weeks about walking in Jesus' footsteps. But what do you think Jesus' crucifixion and death actually mean?

### 10 minutes: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

*Main point:* In Jesus' death, he who had committed no sin, God forgives the sins of all who did in fact deserve death. Because Jesus the human who is also God went through these things for us, he can intercede for us.

*Discussion questions:*

- What do you think this passage is about?

### 10 minutes: Hebrews 10:1-25

*Main point:* Jesus' death is on our behalf and it somehow covers over the sins that we have committed and, by doing that, writes God's law on our hearts so that we can walk in the way of love and peace.

*Discussion question:*

- What is this passage saying about Jesus' death?

### 10 minutes: Solemn Collects

*Main point:* We begin by praying for the church, and we end praying for the world. Jesus, as a human, died as we all do but he did nothing to deserve it. As God, his death can stand in for our death and keep us from judgment. If God is willing to do this for us, who are we not to ask him to do it for everyone?

### 10 minutes: Closing Prayer

The final prayer of the Good Friday liturgy (BCP 282).

*The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.*