

Good Friday Labyrinth

Station 1 - The Passover Meal

(Bread and Wine)

This meal which Jesus shared with his disciples is known as the last supper and it is central to the story of what happened to Jesus on his journey to the cross. Matthew's gospel describes it like this, "while they were eating, Jesus took bread gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, 'take and eat, this is my body'. Then he took the cup gave thanks and offered it too them saying 'drink from it, all of you, this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'. Jesus knew the suffering he was about to face and instructed those who would follow him to remember him in this way.

Imagine yourself as one of the group who shared this last supper with Jesus, what significance does the bread and the wine have for you.

Station 2 - Washing Feet

(Basin filled with water and towel)

All of us have things in our lives that make us feel ashamed. Things that we have said and that have hurt someone. Decisions that we have made that we wish we hadn't. Images that we may have looked at and we can't shift them from our minds. Jesus understood this, that's why he got up from the meal he was sharing with his friends and started to wash their feet of all the dirt that was clinging to them. This dirt symbolised all the things they were ashamed of, the mistakes they had made, the regrets they had.

Are there things you would like to wash out of your life? Give them to God and let them go now as you wash your hands in the basin of water as a sign of you letting them go.

Station 3 - Betrayal

(Money)

Jesus shared food with his friends, he washed their feet and yet one of them would turn on him and betray him for money.

Have you ever let a friend down? Has someone you cared for betrayed you? Jesus knows what that feels like and he wants you to know he will never let you down. Pick up the money and hold it in your hand. Consider what is more important, having the things that you want no matter the cost, or having loyal friends who will stick by you when the going gets tough. What kind of friend are you?

Station 4 - Denial

(Mirror)

Everybody loves a winner. It's great to be part of the in crowd, but what about when things go wrong, when the crowd turn against you and the crowd start to distance themselves from you? The telephone goes quiet, the invitations dry up. The things Jesus said and did, did not make him popular with some and these were the ones that plotted against him, but it was one of his closest friends who would deny him.

We have 2 choices in life, we can either believe in Jesus and accept all that comes with making that choice, good or bad, or we can deny who he is and live forever with the possibility of wondering "what if it's true?" Which one are you?

Station 5 - Comfort Zone

(Chocolate, wine, crisps)

The disciples were anxious because of what Jesus has told them. He was going to suffer, he would be betrayed, one of them would deny him and worst of all he was leaving them. Sometimes in life we receive really bad news that can leave us anxious or afraid and like the disciples we do not know how we will cope. We look for comforters to help us. Think about where you receive your comfort when things are tough. Jesus told his disciples "do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you. I'm going back there to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am". But he also promised them that he would not leave them as orphans and would send the Holy Spirit to be with them to comfort them and guide them in all things.

Think about how you are comforted when you are troubled and think about this promise that Jesus gives to each one of us.

Station 6 - False Accusations

(Newspaper headlines)

The media today often hound celebrities or people in the public eye saying all sorts of things which often are just not true. How do you think you would feel if you were falsely accused of something? Have you ever accused or blamed someone for something only to find out later they didn't do it? Have you ever tried to clear your name of something you have not done? Did you feel that it just wasn't fair? Jesus was taken and arrested in the middle of the night and accused of all sorts of things. It was not a fair trial, it was carried out in secret with biased accusers and false witnesses paid for by those who wanted rid of him. Jesus refused to speak and was silent before his accusers.

How do we know what to believe and who to believe today? Do we believe the press, politicians, world leaders? Jesus said "I tell you the truth". His words can be trusted in a world where truth is hard to find.

Station 7 - The Mob Rules

(Image of angry mob)

Pilate the Roman Governor said to the hate filled mob, "I find no basis for a charge against this man", but despite this he handed Jesus over to the crowd and washed his hands of the whole thing trying to distance himself from what the crowd were demanding, the death of an innocent man.

Look at this picture of a mob demanding justice. Imagine yourself in their midst, what would you do? Do you think you would be able to stand against a crowd if you did not believe in the things they were asking for or is it just easier to go with the flow? To stand against consensus takes courage. Those who follow Jesus have to be prepared to stand up for him when the crowd ridicule them for believing in him. Many chose to go with the flow and deny him, but when we do that we are part of the mob who shouted "crucify him".

Station 8 - The Cross

(Cross, nails, hammer, crown of thorns)

Crucifixion was a dreadful way to die. It was designed to keep a person alive for as long as possible with the maximum amount of pain. Jesus was severely beaten to within an inch of his life, even before he was crucified. He had a crown of thorns embedded into his head but still it took 6 hours for him to die. Imagine these nails being hammered through the hands and feet of Jesus, shattering nerves and ripping through flesh. You may want to hammer a nail into the wood yourself. Pause for a moment to consider this whole scene. Why did this happen?

Station 9 - Suffering Alone

(St John of the Cross image)

How lonely must it have been for Jesus during these agonising hours. His closest friends had deserted him, his mother and some of the women who followed him, weeping at the sight of his suffering. Imagine how his mother Mary is feeling. God is unable to look at him, because of the sin of the world that has been laid upon him. Jesus paying the price for our sin. A heavy silence from heaven as for the first time he is separated from his heavenly father and cries out, "my God, my God why have you forsaken me?" But even in suffering Jesus' thoughts were for others. He asks God to forgive those who have crucified them. He asks a young disciple to look after his mother and he makes a promise to a sorry thief being crucified beside him that he will be with him in paradise.

There is no pain or anguish we suffer that Jesus does not understand. We can ask him to be with us in those moments. We do not have to face suffering alone. Take time to look upon this picture and meditate.

Station 10 - Perks Of The Job

(Dice, red material)

The crucifixion was just another day for the working soldiers who carried out this gruesome task, but there were some perks. The rough soldiers gambled to see who would win Jesus' clothes. Think of the different ways we are prepared to risk people's lives for the sake of a few perks. Benefits for ourselves. Children who are trafficked into slavery to provide cheap goods. What risks are you prepared to accept to get something you want? Is your life being built on the throw of a dice or is it built on solid ground, with values, integrity, honesty, truthfulness?

Station 11 - Is Anyone Thirsty?

(sponge, wine vinegar)

In the midst of all the suffering and brutality of the crucifixion there is one act of kindness that speaks to us of hope. The man who ran forward to give Jesus a drink, to moisten his dry parched lips with wine vinegar as he hung gasping his last breaths on the cross. How do you think Jesus felt at that moment, when finally an act of kindness was shown to him? Jesus wants us to be kind to one another, to serve one another, and in doing so we too like the man at the cross serve him and minister to him.

Station 12 - It Is Finished

The following text on paper "for God so loved that world that he gave his one and only son. That whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Is Jesus the son of God? We believe he is. Does God love you? So much that he gave his son to die on a cross for you. Absolutely, no matter who you are or what you have done. In making this difficult journey we hope you have begun to realise just how much God loves you. We can all have our mistakes nailed to that cross with Jesus and be free, be washed, be able to start again and be part of a family that are there for you always. John's gospel says "for God so loved that world that he gave his one and only son. That whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

You have come to the end of his Good Friday labyrinth but why not join us this Sunday morning to hear the next part of the story, because it did not end on the cross, it was only they beginning. The best is yet to come. Happy Easter.