



Called to More: Good Friday Service | Saving Grace in the Darkest of Moments

Begin the service by lighting a candle. Put the candle in view of the camera.

While you will need to have lights on to be seen on camera, at the end of the fourth reading intentionally blow out the candle.

As you start, welcome all to the service, share that this will be a time of readings and prayer. Encourage online worshippers to create an atmosphere of solemnity for themselves as they participate in Good Friday worship. This could include putting Easter decorations away for the day or at least during the service, keeping the lighting dim, and turning off distractions like phones and TV. Invite people to write about the sins they are bringing to the cross and possibly place them at the foot of a decorative cross they have in their homes. For the sake of simplicity, consider using recorded music rather than switching to musicians. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/piano-accompaniment-recordings> Share that at the end you will read a prayer and then mute. Invite people to stay in the silence to pray.

Call to Worship:

We come together this day at the foot of an old rugged cross.

We come in reverence and awe of the ultimate sacrifice made for us.

We join in solemn worship remembering that Christ bore such an agonizing pain and death, to stand in the gap for us.

There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for a friend.

As we pray and read the holy scriptures, may we be drawn closer to Christ as we stand at the foot of this cross.

We honor and worship you today, oh Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, remembering the price you have paid for all of us.

Opening Unison Prayer:

God of our salvation, who are we that you are mindful of us? That you would save us? You know our sins, our shortcomings, our downfalls and our mistakes, and yet you still love us. We bow in reverence and humility at such overwhelming love and mercy. Thank you for grace that abounds, for love that supersedes and mercy that looks beyond faults and see our needs.

Suggested Hymn: The Old Rugged Cross

First Reading | Matthew 26:36-56

Take a moment of silence.

Prayer:

Jesus, you begged us to pray with you,
But our eyes are heavy and spirits weary.
Lord we come tonight and weep.
Help us to pray.

Give us the perseverance needed to lift the prayers of those in need on this night.

Second Reading | Mark 15:1-15

Prayer:



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Jesus, we confess that we too are often drawn in by the crowd.
We are fearful and fail to speak the truth.
Forgive us, we pray.
Remove the things that separate us from you.

And now let us take a moment to offer our silent confessions to God, remembering that God is faithful to forgive.

Third Reading | *Luke 23:26-43*

(This can be in place of a short sermon. If you are not preaching, read the scripture, pray and move to the next reading.)

Prayer:

Jesus, even in the moments between life and death you offer us words of hope.
Thank you for a love that extends beyond this life into paradise.
We trust that your grace is sufficient.
Give us courage to face the future. Amen.

Fourth Reading | *Matthew 27:45-54*

Read or sing the words of Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)

Extinguish the candle.

Sending:

As we go into the dark, we know and trust that the light is never extinguished.
We hold on to the hope and promise that God will never leave us.
Until we join together again, we will hold fast to this promise. Amen.

Mute everyone including yourself, inviting people to stay in the silence to pray.

Music Suggestions:

W&S #3100, AAHH #357 – Jesus Paid It All
Casting Crowns – Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me) North Point – Death Was Arrested
AAHH #235 – One Day (Living He Loved Me)
AAHH #256 – The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power Redeemed – Big Daddy Weave CCLI #6219086
Kurt Carr – They Didn't Know



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CALLED TO MORE
A Lenten Series on Wrestling with Sin

Sermon

**Scripture
Passage**

Luke 23:26-49

**Focus
Statement**

In the darkest and most painful of moments, nailed to a cross, paying the price for sins he did not commit, Christ shows us love and forgiveness in a manner that humanity had never experienced. A redeeming sacrifice that opened the door for all who would come.

ME/WE

One fact of life is that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Many of us today are still wrestling with things, dealing with personal struggles, things we need to let go of, to be delivered from, or to simply put down and walk away from. (Personalize this section, but share with them that you, yourself have things you struggle with and have struggled with in the past. You don't have to necessarily be specific but be real.)

Yet, in the midst of our sin, shortcomings and struggles, we are given the opportunity to recognize it is time to let go, that Jesus has been with us all along, and he offers us forgiveness and true abundant life. Today we find Jesus is on the cross atoning for our sins. It is there that we receive salvation. Jesus, the spotless Lamb who is without sin, and is declared the Messiah, the Son of God, is nailed to a cross between two men who, like us, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And just like the two men on the cross today, we too have been offered the choice to turn to the Savior who is before us.

GOD

Three people are nailed to crosses that day: one innocent, mocked and ridiculed, labelled the King of the Jews with a crown of thorns placed on his head, and two deeply guilty with a list of sins to their credit. Hanging there on these crosses, both criminals realize there is something different about this Jesus, who hangs between them.

One criminal chooses to act the way he's lived his entire life – scoffing and rebelling, he cries out, antagonizing Jesus, saying, “If you really are the Christ, save yourself and us!” The other criminal cries for grace saying, “Oh Lord, remember me.” Enduring the agony of crucifixion himself, Jesus hears that man and responds, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” In these words and actions, the man's eternal future is sealed in one moment.

YOU

The Good news is that still today, Jesus hears our cries, and responds to us with grace and forgiveness with the beautiful words, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” What sin are you holding so tightly that you are afraid to bring to the Lord? (Pause) Imagine offering it to the Lord, and him responding, “I offer you paradise.” Write down your sin on that piece of paper. Spend time in prayer reaching out, maybe just with the simple prayer, “Remember me.” And then come and nail your sin to the cross – knowing and trusting that you will be forgiven.

WE

We are given life, forgiveness and grace, all of which we do not deserve. Tonight, our action is to witness to the miraculous grace of God, just like the criminal, and then reach out like he did those many years ago. “Jesus, remember us when you come into your kingdom.”



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