

Way of the Cross

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Jesus speaks to us...from the inside of his own experience of the passion.
He says to us what he has said before, but he says it differently...

There is a 'cast' of significant people... Mary his Mother, Simon, Veronica, the Women of Jerusalem, the young man at tomb, the women at tomb, the martyrs down the centuries....

We use introductory texts, mainly from *Mark's gospel*, and we listen to what he says to us.

"If you truly love, one day, you will be crucified. If you do not love, you are dead already"
- Herbert McCabe, OP

1. Jesus is condemned to death

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

"What am I to do with the man you call king of the Jews?...they shouted back: Crucify him. Why? What harm has he done? ...They shouted all the louder: Crucify him. So, to placate the crowd, Pilate ordered Jesus to be scourged, and handed him over to be crucified." Mark 15:12-15

Jesus speaks:

"I am a *prisoner*... Prison is a place for gangsters, for violent people, for angry people, for people off the streets who do drugs and sex and murder. I am with them. Locked down among them! Alone, harassed, contained....I begin to weep..."

Pause:

2. Jesus carries his cross

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

"They led him out to crucify him". Mark. 15:21

Jesus speaks:

“I speak from the inside of me... My heart pounds. My stomach sinks. My hands get moist. *Reality* hits. I told them I would have to suffer and be rejected and be killed, and that it was God’s way. They found that difficult. Do you? I do. I never knew it would be like this. My God, my God, why? I do not take this cross with my own hands to carry it. They put it on me. Heavily. I don’t know if I can bear it.”

Pause:

3. Jesus falls the first time

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“If you enter a house anywhere, stay there till you leave the district. If any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away, shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them”. Mark 6:10-11

Jesus speaks:

“I see *a rich (young) man* there in the crowd... I know his riches get in the way of his freedom, of his entry into the kingdom. He asked me once, what must I do to inherit eternal life? I looked at him then, as I do now, and I loved him. I still do. I told him, go sell up everything – get rid of it – give it to the poor or something – and follow me. He liked the idea of being free from cares and desires. But he was too comfortable. His comfort levels choked him. He’s still curious, as he looks at me now. But he’s going away...he can’t take this. His face is fallen. He is a sad case. How hard will it be for those who have riches to follow me...Yes, it is impossible humanly. God alone can make it possible for a few...as God alone makes it possible for me.”

Pause:

4. Jesus meets his mother

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“This is the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset, and Jude and Simon....and his sisters too... And they would not accept him.” Mark: 6:3-4

Jesus speaks:

“I am alone now, I am abandoned by all. All. *I am a man alone*. Loneliness is the first thing God named – *in the Bible* - as not good. I am always alone. I have always been alone. In my inner life I have always been alone. *I am an abandoned man*. Abandoned by family, by Peter, by the twelve, by Judas, by the followers, by the crowds. Isolated in my baptism, by myself (or at least without human company) in the wilderness. Isolated by the message I gave. Last night at the supper I gave myself

(my body) as a commitment to free everyone from tyrants, and my blood as a covenant with those who are prepared to stand on their own. They didn't understand. Now I am abandoned by all of them with whom I made covenant. Abandoned by God too. *'My God, my God, why have you also abandoned m'?'*

Pause:

5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

"They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross." Mark 15:21

Jesus speaks:

"I don't know this man. I heard them call him Simon. That was Peter's name, too. I see them forcing this Simon to carry my cross. I tried to persuade Peter to do that, but I didn't force him. He didn't. This Simon seems to be from the country. He doesn't know what's going on. He doesn't have to now. His job is to *carry the cross I can't carry*. He'll do it. Later he will understand."

Pause:

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

"Who touched my clothes? ...You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, who touched me?...But he continued to look all round to see who had done it...Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling..." Mark 5:30b-33

Jesus speaks:

"May God bless you, Veronica. She says it back to me, she says, May God bless you too, Jesus. She will always be different because she came close to me. And I will always be different because she touched me. God bless her. She blessed me."

Pause:

7. Jesus falls the second time

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.
All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“Some of the seed fell on the edge of the roadway, and the birds came and ate it up...Those who are on the side of the road are people who have no sooner heard the word than Satan comes and carries away the word that was sown in them.” Mark 4:5,15

Jesus speaks:

“I see you there ... *I see you by the side of the road.* You feel sorry for me, but you’ll forget it by evening. You have no idea of what denying yourself and taking up your cross really means. It’s like labor pain. No birth without it. No life without the cross. The vertical beam links me with God and earth at the same time. The horizontal beam links me with people, to the right and the left of me. I’m in between the vertical and the horizontal, I am between the right and the left, where they cross. On the cross. I’m the nobody there. Unless you become a nobody like that, the birds will come and eat you up. If you do become a nobody, dead on the cross, the carrion birds will be waiting for you.”

Pause:

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.
All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. ‘Why all this commotion and crying?’” Mark 5:38b-40

Jesus speaks:

“I see these women, they are *professionals*, they are paid to weep and wail. They go to funerals, and executions. They do it as a job. They remind me of the man who once asked me what he ought to do to inherit eternal life. He said he’d done the commandments. I told him to do something that came out of his own heart, not what someone – even Moses - told him to do. I wish these women would give up this theatrical performance and live their own lives and their own feelings for their own loved ones...if they have any. I hope they do.”

Pause:

9. Jesus falls the third time

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.
All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“Have you no reply at all? (See how many times you fall down....) But, to their amazement, Jesus made no further reply.” Mark 15:4-5

Jesus speaks:

“The ground is rocky here. There are *patches of rock* on the road. There is little soil. Any growth has no roots. It is withered. I remember saying that people were like that. When they faced the music, some trial or persecution, they fell away. And now I have fallen, fallen many times. My crown of thorns is choking my brain. I remember talking about people who were *choked* by what is in their heads – worries, desires, passions, whatnot. The real thing is a lot worse.”

Pause:

10. Jesus is stripped of his garments

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“Then they crucified him, and shared out his clothing, casting lots to decide what each should get.”
Mark 15:24

Jesus speaks:

“I am at the place of the skull. I know the temple mount is close by. I can sense the nearness of the old city walls of Jerusalem. On a good day I could see, in the distance, the Herodion, the place King Herod built as his tomb. He’s buried there. This is not a good day, and I am not looking that way. It is dark, strangely dark. The sun has set early. The sun was worn out, exhausted on this day before its due time. It is *all dark*. It is all over. I can only wait now, wait for another sun to rise....”

Pause:

11. Jesus is nailed to the cross

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“It was the third hour when they crucified him. The inscription giving the charge against him read ‘the King of the Jews’. And they crucified two robbers with him...one on his right and one of his left.” Mark 15:25-27

Jesus speaks:

“No one takes my life away from me. I lay it down of myself. I own my self. I give myself. I had a choice. I chose to do this. I loved them, and I delivered myself for them. I know what will happen. I can’t even stand up now. I own my weakness. I have nothing more to give them. I am a victim of terrorism. But I want you to know that I am given. My life is given. I know the brutal side of it. I see

it as – a privilege. I am not worthy of it. I am one of the many who have been given. I thank God, now that the time has come, that I am clear and lucid about it. I want to be – given. I don't want to die, I don't want them to murder me, to crucify me. But I am given because I love them, I love this robber, I love this centurion, I love this mocker, and I love you. My life is lost now. Given. God's. Yours. Thanks to you all. *A Dieu.*"

Pause:

12. Jesus dies on the cross

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

"When the sixth hour came, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried in a loud voice, 'Eloi, eloi lamma sabachthani'. But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last." Mark 15:33,36b

"Without beauty, without majesty, we saw him, no looks to attract our eyes, a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, a man to make people screen their faces, despised, of no account. Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb dumb before its shearers, never opening his mouth". Isaiah 53:2-4, 6-7

Silence

- Jesus is dead

13. Jesus is taken down from the cross

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

"Joseph of Arimathea bought a shroud, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the shroud and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock". Mark 15:46a

Reader 2:

There is a young man at the tomb.

There is another man earlier in Mark's gospel. He lived among tombs, he was naked, he had enormous strength, no one could tame him, no chain could hold him, he cried all the time with a loud voice (phone megale), he was possessed, indeed by 'Legion', that is 'many' devils. After he is healed by Jesus, we find him sitting and clothed, and he is the first person in Mark's gospel that Jesus orders to 'go tell others'.

The young man at Jesus' tomb is portrayed in almost the same words as this man. When the young man is seen, he is grabbed by his clothing, and loses it, and runs off naked. When he appears again, on Sunday morning, he is sitting and fully clothed, in Jesus' tomb. One wonders if he actually lived

among those tombs. One wonders did he too have the strength to roll the stone away? Did he have faith that can tell a mountain to throw itself into the sea? The young man seems to have lost his fear when he lost his clothes. He lost his 'sindona' – the same word for the clothing in which Jesus was buried, in Mark. When he appears again, clothed, he is clothed in 'stole leuke' – a white garment...

Is it only someone who has experienced the nakedness, the abandonment that Jesus knew, who can witness death-resurrection?

Silence

14. Jesus is laid in a tomb

Leader: We adore thee, O Christ, and we praise thee.

All: Because by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.

Reader:

“He then rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joset were watching...” Mark 15:46b-47

“And some seed fell on rich soil, and yielded a crop, growing tall and strong, thirty, sixty, a hundredfold....” Mark 4:8

Reader 2:

Women who do not speak ...

There are women at the tomb. They do not speak. Their behaviour is rather unusual for women friends of a deceased person, *especially* a friend. They don't lament, they don't cry (in Mark, anyway), they don't weep, they don't beat their breasts. They just sit, watch, and 'come' there. Perhaps they came with plans to anoint the body, but they are manifestly too late for that.

These women at the tomb will be told to go and not return there, they are told they have come to the wrong place. And they are told not to tell anyone! In a real sense, wherever the dead Jesus was laid was not a permanent tomb. It was only a temporary burial. There is to be no-grieving going on there or anywhere else. There is to be no cult – ever - of Jesus-as-dead.

The women say not a word. In the silence, in their silence

Silence:

- Jesus is rising from the dead