

GOOD FRIDAY DEVOTIONAL

Our **Good Friday** devotional is based on the African-American spiritual, “Were You There?” It is found in the ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, our hymnal) and is a tune that is familiar to most of us.

(YouTube link to the hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bddEUMne010>).

Each section includes a stanza of the hymn, a scripture reading, a reflection, and an action. I hope that as you read through this devotional, you will hum or sing the verses before looking at each scripture. **It can be read straight through or it can be divided up as your schedule allows.** One suggestion is choosing to look at one stanza and text from scripture each hour as the day goes on.

On **Good Friday**, we journey with Jesus to the cross and the tomb. We settle into the sadness, the sorrow, and the darkness that fell on the day Christ died. May our reflections today prepare our hearts to truly appreciate the resurrection.

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Stanza One ~ (The First Hour)

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 27:11-26**

¹¹ Now Jesus stood before [Pilate] the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” ¹² But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. ¹³ Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?” ¹⁴ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

¹⁵ Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus^[a] Barabbas. ¹⁷ So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus^[b] Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?”^[c] ¹⁸ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.” ²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹ The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said,

“Barabbas.”²² Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?”^[d] All of them said, “Let him be crucified!”²³ Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood;^[e] see to it yourselves.”²⁵ Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”²⁶ So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Reflection question: Barabbas was the guilty one, but Jesus died in his place. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus died in our place?

Action: Begin to make your house a little darker. Turn off your bedroom lights and/or draw the curtains

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Stanza Two ~ (Hour Two)

*Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?*

Scripture reading: **Matthew 27:27-44**

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters,^[a] and they gathered the whole cohort around him.²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,²⁹ and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”³⁰ They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head.³¹ After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

³² As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),³⁴ they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots;^[b]³⁶ then they sat down there and kept watch over him.³⁷ Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

³⁸ Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by derided^[c] him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, ⁴² “He saved others; he cannot save himself.^[d] He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” ⁴⁴ The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

Reflection question: Jesus had committed no sins, yet he was hung with criminals. What sins do you need to confess to God today?

Action: Look around your house for art or decor that depicts crosses. Or look for cross shapes in nature, in the shadows, or see if you can spot cross shapes in everyday objects around your house.

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Stanza Three ~ (The Third Hour)

*Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?*

Scripture reading: **John 19:28-37**

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. ³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. ³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. ³⁵ (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows^[a] that he tells the truth.) ³⁶ These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.” ³⁷ And again another passage of scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”

Reflection question: Crucifixion was a very painful way to die. The soldiers pierced Jesus' side to prove that he was dead. How does 'death' or the idea of it make you feel? Take time to pray for those who are grieving.

Action: Walk through your home and look at any family pictures that you have out. Think of the generations gone before you and what lessons they taught you.

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Stanza Four (Hour Four)

*Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?*

Scripture: **Matthew 27:45-56**

⁴⁵ From noon on, darkness came over the whole land^[a] until three in the afternoon. ⁴⁶ And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." ⁴⁸ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."^[b] ⁵⁰ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.^[c] ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. ⁵³ After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"^[d]

⁵⁵ Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Reflection question: Darkness fell, the curtain was torn in two, and the earth shook. The soldiers were terrified. What are your fears today? Talk to God about them.

Action: Turn off your dining room and kitchen lights. If it is safe for you to do so, you might choose to fast from food for the rest of the evening until morning.

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Stanza Five (The Fifth Hour)

*Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?*

Scripture reading: **Matthew 27:57-66**

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹ So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

⁶² The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception would be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard^[a] of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.”^[b] ⁶⁶ So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Reflection question: Think about the stone being rolled over the entrance of the tomb. It created total darkness in the tomb. How does darkness make you feel?

Action: Turn off your living room lights and/or choose to turn off electronics for the rest of the evening.

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Optional Activity for Easter Sunday:

In celebration of the resurrection, feel free to sing this last stanza:

*Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Sometimes I feel like shouting 'Glory, glory, glory!'
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?*