



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

I've heard a preacher call the book of Luke the *Gospel of nobodies*. In this he is referencing the character and emphasis of Luke's writings on Jesus' life. Consistently in Luke, Jesus gives attention to unexpected people: the shepherds in the fields who have no business being the honored few to see him at birth, the prophet Anna who blesses Jesus just a few days later, the prostitute who anoints him, the women first who encounter the risen Christ. Today's story is another story of how Jesus' life welcomed in the unexpected.

Simon of Cyrene was likely a man who was a part of the Jewish diaspora community in Cyrene, which is modern day Libya. He may have been one of the few black men (of African blood) in Jesus' story, further adding to the intentional narrative that Jesus was a Messiah for all people regardless of gender, vocation, class, or race. Either way he wasn't supposed to be a part of Jesus' story. He was likely in Jerusalem for the Passover and was simply passing by when a soldier compelled him to carry Jesus' cross on his behalf.

You never know exactly when and how Jesus' story might intersect with yours. Simon of Cyrene did not know that he would be compelled to lift the burden off Jesus and take it on himself. It was probably a pretty crummy addition to his day at first. And he may have never seen it this way, but now people of faith look back at Simon and see his act as a privilege to have been able to ease Jesus' pain in that moment. My prayer for you and for me is that we wake up every morning with the expectation that Jesus' story of redemption may make an appearance in our lives, and the intent to say yes when it comes.

— Rev. Katie Meek, Associate Pastor

A Family Affair

We are reviewing Holy Week in the Family Affair. Families will have the opportunity to visit all the events live at Resurrection Celebration on April 9.

Thursday of Holy Week is traditionally called Maundy Thursday. The word Maundy comes from a Latin word meaning *commandment*. Jesus gave his disciples the commandment to *love one another as he loved them*.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus and his disciples were celebrating Passover, remembering the story of the first Passover celebrated in Egypt before the Israelites were freed from the Pharaoh. Jesus and all twelve of his disciples had the Passover Supper together in the Upper Room of a small house. "One of you will turn against me and betray me," Jesus said. "But it will be sad for that person." The disciples wondered who it would be. They did not know it would be Judas Iscariot.

During the meal, Jesus blessed the bread and wine. Jesus told his disciples the bread and wine represented his body and his blood. When we receive the bread and wine (grape juice), we remember Jesus. Read together Mark 14:22-29.

Dear Lord, thank you for Maundy Thursday, which reminds us of the last supper that Jesus had with his disciples. We are eager to hear the stories from Holy Week leading to Jesus' resurrection. Amen.

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

Consider
the Source
Luke 23:26 - 31

Monday: Mark 15:16-21

It wasn't uncommon for Roman soldiers as part of the occupying force to compel people to do their will. Jesus makes reference to it in the Sermon on the Mount when he instructs his disciples when a soldier compels you to carry his pack one mile to go a second as well.

- How does the existence of an occupying force inform this story for you? Was does Jesus' context as a leader of an oppressed people say about why Jesus was being crucified?
- Have you ever been compelled to do something that turned out to be a blessing to you?

Tuesday: Luke 9:18-27

In Luke's gospel, Jesus tells them to carry their cross two separate times. This is the first.

- Do you have an example of when this rang true in your life? What does it mean to carry the cross?
- Jesus often works in paradoxes: lose your life to gain it. Why do you think God's truth is challenging and sometimes seemingly backward?

Wednesday: Luke 14:25-33

This second mention comes in the midst of Jesus' teaching on the cost of discipleship. To be a disciple means to lay some things down, to surrender yourself in order to be available to God.

- How is that good news?
- Why does it seem like such a challenge to follow?

Thursday: Luke 23:26-31

The crucifixion of insurrectionists and revolutionaries was not an uncommon occurrence. The women who stood by as Jesus and the other men carried their crosses may have been there protesting Roman brutality. They may have been there as supporters of the revolutionary fervor against Rome.

- Consider what it's like to be under a foreign occupation even though you understand that God had willed your people to be sovereigns over your own land. What sorts of feelings does this stir up?
- Why do they protest?
- What do you think Jesus means by his words to the women?

Friday: Luke 23:26-31

At the time this was written by the author of Luke, Jerusalem had been severely punished and overtaken after a successful (though short-lived) revolution against Rome. Rome surrounded the city and cut off all food supply from the outside. It is said the famine was so bad that women resorted to eating their own children. So when people first read this, the memory of that would have been very raw.

- What do Jesus' words mean in the context of that kind of suffering?
- It seems that Jesus is pointing out the brutality and pain that the corruption of power can bring about. How is the cross a counter-message against that?
- What might this say in our time today? Where is the good news in this?