**I Love to Tell the Story**

**Day 201 The Death of Judas Matt 27: 3-10**

Guided reflection:

I wonder why only Matthew records this part of the story. Judas tried to make things right – he went to get his money back – to take back what he had offered. But he found that they could care less about his guilty conscious. They wanted Jesus and they had him - who cared about Judas? Judas threw the coins on the floor and ran out. Overcome with what he had done, he hung himself. Hopelessness… despair… guilt... shame. My friend, if you are ever at a place where the only option seems to be to end it all, remember this story. This was not the end of it! Your story is not completed! You will find Jesus there at the end of your rope! Remember Judas!

Guided prayer:

*“For all those who feel there is no hope, please, Dear God, help them hear your word of hope. For those who do not know the love of Christ, help me show them your love. Amen”*

**Day 202 Jesus goes before Pilate Matt 27: 11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23: 2-5**

Guided reflection:

The chief priests and other religious leaders tried to cover all their bases – they needed the governor to be on their side. They had a laundry list of all the ways in which Jesus had done things wrong. Jeses did not say a word in his own defense. Pilate was frustrated - he realized these men had trumped up charges, but what could he do? Why didn’t this Jesus say something in his own defense?

Guided prayer:

*“Dear God, I still do not understand why Jesus did the things the way he did in his trial. It is not mine to decide what was wise or unwise. The whole proceedings just made Him closer to the cross and the empty tomb. Forgive humanity, O God, for the ways we twist the truth. How you must cry over us. Amen”*

**Day 203 Jesus goes before Herod Luke 23: 6-16**

Guided reflection:

Oops, Pilate found out Jesus was a Galilean. Pilate had a way out. He would send him on to Herod and maybe mend a few fences. Perfect timing, Herod was in town right then! And to make it even sweeter, Herod had always wanted to see this man, Jesus. Herod asked Jesus questions, but Jesus did not give him the time of day. More beatings and more accusations, and Herod gave up and sent him back to Pilate. What a story. Pilate told those who accused

Jesus that neither he nor Herod found anything wrong with Jesus. Pilot would release him and get rid of this mess. People in leadership do not always realize all the ramifications of their actions. Today, let us pray for our worlds’ leaders that they might have wisdom in their dealings. If you are a leader, treat those you lead with utmost respect.

Guided prayers:

*“This story gives us the facts of what happened but all the players have their own story, their own agenda. Right now, I pray for our leaders… those who make decisions that affect others’ lives. Give them your wisdom. Amen”*

**Day 204 Jesus is sentenced to death Matt 27: 15-26; Mark 15: 8-15; Luke 23: 17-25**

Guided reflection:

Isn’t it hard to believe that people would be so filled with hate that a hardened criminal would be chosen for favor over one who just made you uncomfortable with his teachings? How did things get so out of hand so quickly? Crucify Him! The mob mentality is a frightening thing. And religious intolerance is also a frightening thing. Do you hold to your beliefs so tightly that when someone crosses you - you want to cross them out? In a twisted way, these priests and scribes thought they were keeping their religious traditions pure! Where do you see intolerance in how people think? How do you hold on to your beliefs without compromising them when you accept others who think differently?

Guided prayer:

*“O God of the universe, our ways are not your ways, and our thoughts are not your thoughts. So how can we be so arrogant as to think that we hold ALL the truth? Loving God, help my heart be able to handle ambiguity- the not knowing of all the answers. Forgive us our lack of tolerance. Amen”*

**Day 205 The Soldiers Mock Jesus Matt 27: 27-31; Mark 15: 16-20**

Guided reflection:

It is one thing to kill someone. Bang, he is dead. But to torture and humiliate a person on their way to being dead, is the most loathsome thing humanity has ever devised! I guess that is why bullying is so horrific to me… it sets up another as more powerful for the very sake of torturing another. Cruelty at its cruelest! We cannot go back and fix any of this story, but we can do something about making sure we teach our children (and ourselves) that all persons were created in God’s image and Christ went through all if this for all humanity – even those who make you mad or think differently than you. Let’s do something about bullying – OK?

Guided prayer:

*“My heart aches to imagine what Jesus went through in this story. Even if it is a person I do not even know, my heart breaks, but this is my Savior we are reading about! How you must weep at our inhumanity to each other. . Forgive us, I pray. Amen”*

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