

# GOOD FRIDAY 2016

On Sunday mornings we are currently going through the book of Acts. In what we have read so far, we have seen Jesus leave, ascend into heaven, and send His Spirit to empower believers to do what He did—be a witness to the glory and goodness of God. Jesus leaves because His presence would and could hinder His people from living the life He called them to; they would always “just let Jesus do it.” At Element, tonight, we also want to empower you to lead yourself, or your family, by letting you be guided by God’s Spirit, yourself, through this service.

You’ll find three stations located around the room. You can go to as many of them as you’d like. When you are finished, feel free to take communion in the middle of the room.

## STATION ONE

Matthew 27

*When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.*

*Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. [Verses 1-10]*

**30 Pieces of Silver** – Jesus didn’t come to do what most Jews expected of Him, which was to destroy those they saw as evil and set up a lasting earthly kingdom. This led Judas to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. We would like you to pick up the bag and deposit the coins in front of you. As you place the coins back into the bag, ask yourself (and your family) the following questions:

**Reflect** [*Find a seat to think through these questions.*]

When is the last time you compromised your values?

How much is your integrity worth?

How does the death of Jesus cover (or pay for) those compromises?

## STATION TWO

**N**ow Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. [Verses 11-26]

**Words/Cross** – At this station, you'll find a basket and paper next to the Cross. We encourage you to write down a word you want to leave at the Cross, and one you want to keep and take with you. Spend some time thinking about what you can let go of, in light of Jesus' sacrifice, and think about what He has given you.

## STATION THREE

**T**hen the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. [Verses 27-44]

**Forgiveness Paper** – At this station you will find small pieces of paper. Think of someone who has hurt you that you have not been able to forgive. Maybe they have died and you can no longer reconcile the relationship, maybe they do not live near, or perhaps the conversation is too painful to even begin. Write that person's name on one of the pieces of paper and put it into the candle. Let the consuming love and grace of Jesus erase, or begin to erase, that wound in light of His death for your many sins.

[Caution: Paper will ignite, and burn out, *fast*.]

# COMMUNION

**N**ow from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

*And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" [Verses 45-54]*

*1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

**Communion** – We call Jesus' death on the cross "substitutionary atonement." He died to pay the penalty for our sin because the wages of our sin is death, which is eternal separation from God. Jesus went to the cross not just as our example, but as our substitute. He paid for all that separated us from life and relationship with our Creator.

The night of Jesus' death started at a meal called Passover. This meal represented God's grace in passing over the Israelites to bring them from death to life, as described in the Exodus. At the original Passover, a lamb was sacrificed and its blood used to mark the households of those who trusted God. This act, thousands of years before Jesus' arrival in the flesh, foretold why He would come and what He would do—die for His people to bring them from death to life.

Many Jews had turned the rules and the festivals meant to honor God into IDOLATRY and worshipped the day and not the God behind the day. Jesus could have elevated Himself above the Father's plan (as we all elevate ourselves above God's desires for our own lives) and told any one of His disciples to stop Judas, or He could have stopped Judas by Himself, but He did not. He understands better than anyone the plan of God and what this meal represented as the salvation of all people.

That meal becomes what we celebrate in our rite of communion where we lay ourselves before Jesus. Tonight was meant to be a reminder of the burdens we all personally carry around that others, except Jesus, will never see or understand. We are to lay our burdens at the foot of the cross, including all of our selfishness, self-centeredness, and pain that we carry. We take communion by breaking the cracker, which represents Christ's body that was broken for us, and dipping it in the wine/grape juice to remember His blood that was poured out to wash away our sin. We partake of this table together and remember where God's plan started – the lamb who would die for His people and take away the sins of the world.