



KISEMANITO PAKITINASUWIN

The Creator's Sacrifice

A Holy Week Guide by BIC Canada

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A NOTE FROM BIC CANADA...

Dear Friends

We are excited to share this Holy Week resource with you, and pray that it will serve as a tool to help you pause, reflect and remember the significance of this Easter season. This year we began to put this together in a different way, starting with the artwork.

In partnership with The Indigenous Christian Fellowship, we have showcased a series of beautiful paintings entitled The Creator's Sacrifice by Ovide Bighetty. The selected images and related scripture for each day were used as inspiration by our BIC authors, as they worked to craft the daily prayers, reflections and guiding questions. Each day weaves several spiritual practices together, including Lectio Divina, meditation, contemplation and prayer. The artwork enables us to explore an additional practice known as Visio Divina, described by Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler below:

"Visio Divina facilitates a relationship with an image or subject, patiently being with it, receptive in mind and heart, perhaps even in dialogue with it. In stillness, we allow the image to reach beyond the intellect and into the unconscious level of our being, a place that can't be accessed directly. In wonder, we are invited to look at every aspect of an image and ponder it as an encounter with God. It is a way of seeing an aspect of ourselves in God at the non-verbal, heart level. The canvas then becomes alive with personal meaning meant just for us. This is the same movement of the Spirit we can experience with Lectio Divina and Scripture."

Gail Fitzpatrick- Hopler

We invite you to take your time each day to keep company with Jesus while contemplating the artwork, scripture and the written reflections. Invite God to partner with you in your times of quiet meditation, that you may discover a new appreciation for the love of God displayed through the work of Jesus.

It's a privilege to partner with you in ministry.

Peace
BIC Canada Team

Creator's Sacrifice Introduction

By Rev. Dr. Ray Aldred

I remember when we named the paintings for the Creator's sacrifice series by Ovide Bighetty. Deanna Keewatin, Shirley Bonk and I are elders, and we went from painting to painting, to name them. The paintings, as you know were depicting the Passion of Jesus Christ. I, like others, often associate passion with our actions. We seem to believe that passion is something we do. It is ironic, but Christ's Passion was about him receiving upon his body our actions. These paintings depict Jesus taking upon himself the actions of human beings. He was suffering himself for the people and for all of his creation.

So, we looked at each painting and waited for it to tell us its name. You see, a common phrase I heard from another Elder in Regina, Saskatchewan, that you don't get a name, but you take a name. I think what he was driving at was the reality that those who know us can see who we are, even before we see ourselves. Regardless of what we call ourselves, who we are always becomes evident. In the same way with these paintings, since they were flowing out of Ovide's creative genius, they would take a name. We were not giving them something, they were giving us something, and we were merely acknowledging that reality.

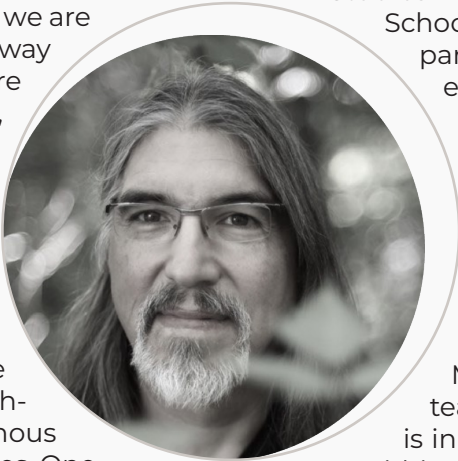
So, I walked from painting to painting with these Indigenous women elders, and we tried to hear what they were saying. Some were obvious, but with others, we struggled. As with all Indigenous stories, there are stories within the stories. One painting I remember specifically ended up being called "the women wait." It is the painting where the women are waiting, grieving outside the tomb. At the time, it was significant for me because in 2002, the same year the painting series was commissioned, my younger brother passed away from a stroke. He was only 41 years old and had died not long after Easter that year. As I looked at the painting, I remembered how my brothers and I struggled to stay in the pain of my brother when he was slowly dying in the hospital. My brother's wife and all the sister in-laws, they waited with him and with us.

As I looked at the painting and remembered that all the disciples ran away when Jesus was arrested, but the women wait. I remembered that all the disciples were huddled together in fear, but the women waited. I remembered how in many of our communities,

the women wait and work to comfort, heal, to take care of the relatives who pass away. The women always wait and where would we be without them.

So, there is always a story in a story. As you look at these paintings and reflect upon the story of Jesus who came to take upon himself the world's suffering. As the world poured onto his body their actions and he suffered, he continues to bring our story into his story. The story of us taking on a name and Jesus taking on a name and living out his name as Saviour.

Ray Aldred



Rev. Dr. Ray Aldred is the director of the Indigenous Studies Program (ISP) at the Vancouver School of Theology whose mission is to partner with the Indigenous Churches around theological education. Ray also leads The Teaching House, an internationally recognized initiative that addresses the need for truth, reconciliation, and healing among indigenous peoples, and to foster greater understanding for all societies. Dr. Aldred is ordained with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. His teaching and research specialization is in narrative and systematic theology within the indigenous context. He is a frequent presenter and speaker, guest lecturer and writer across North America. Ray is Cree, Treaty 8 born in Northern Alberta and now resides with his wife in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. He is former Director for the First Nations Alliance Churches of Canada, now a committee member, where he works to encourage Indigenous churches. Ray's passion is to help as many as possible hear the gospel in their heart language.

Ovide Bighetty



Artist of The Creator's Sacrifice

Ovide Bighetty was born in 1969 in Pukatawagan Manitoba Canada. He is a Cree Missinippi- Ethinivak self-taught artist well known for his various painting series.

In 2002, Indian Metis Christian Fellowship (IMCF) commissioned Ovide to depict the vision that an elder had of Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin - The Creator's Sacrifice; the Easter story or the Passion of Jesus Christ. Ovide accepted the challenge to paint the story in a fashion consistent with both the accounts in the gospels and aboriginal culture. Ovide painted the elder's vision of the Easter story in his own aboriginal style which he describes as 'Woodland Cree'. The setting for this Christian aboriginal artwork is the pre-European landscape of Ovide's childhood home, Pukatawagan First Nation, Manitoba, Canada.

Bighetty's paintings are based on spirituality, stories and symbolism passed down by elders. He's well known throughout the Canadian provinces, and Europe. Ovide passed away March 20, 2014, and his artwork continues to make an impact.

DAY

01

“ THE LAST SUPPER ”



Written by
Dean Morris
REUNION Richmond

OPENING PRAYER

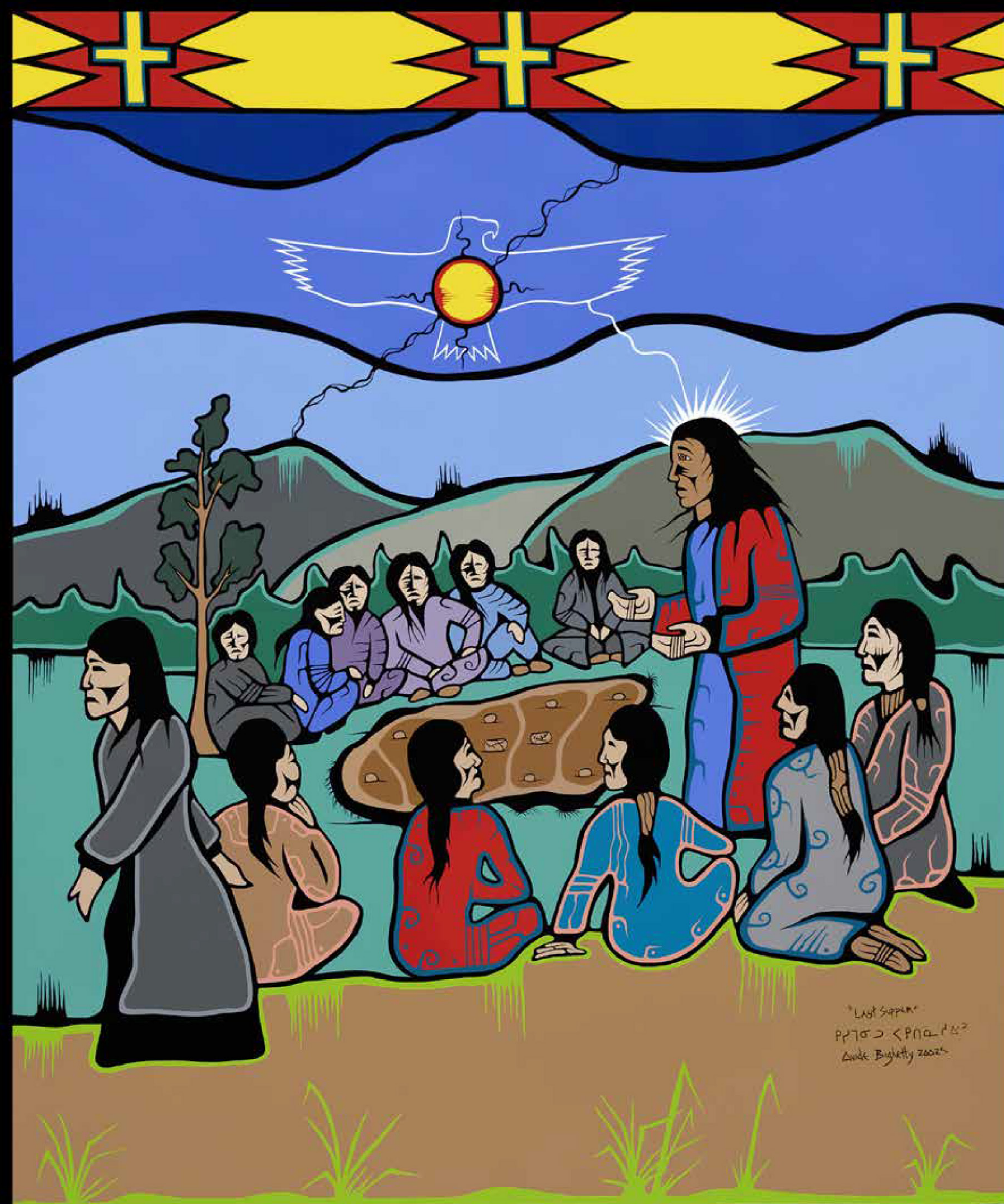
Lord, may we move close to you during this Holy Week reflection. May we see You in new and surprising ways, that draw us to a deeper connection with you. As we remember your journey towards the cross and the empty tomb, may we remember that you modelled for us, and invite us to live a life centred on radical forgiveness, other oriented love, and power rooted in vulnerability. May we live more fully each day into the life you call us to. Amen.

READING

Matthew 26:17-30

17 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?” 18 He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” 22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?” 23 Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.

But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” 25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.” 26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” 27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” 30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



REFLECTION

"Surely not I, Lord?" So much of Jesus' ministry was done around the table. It is therefore quite fitting that our Holy Week begins with a story of Jesus and his Disciples sharing a meal. As he often did, Jesus invited himself over for dinner to 'a certain man's house' for the passover meal. There in the upper room of this unnamed man's home, Jesus and the twelve partake in the meal. There is lots of intrigue in this short passage of scripture, and much to contemplate as we meditate on the intimate gathering that took place in the upper room. Jesus is clearly not one for suppertime small talk, as he levels the tone of the room in one sentence - "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." Upon hearing this the disciples were 'deeply grieved'. After a moment of stunned and uncomfortable silence, each of the disciples respond to Jesus by saying "Surely not I, Lord?". Notice how they are not making a declaration, but rather, they are asking a question. These are Jesus' closest friends. If anyone ought to be confident of the fact that they would not betray Him, it is these guys. And yet, each of them asks, wonders, worries if it could be them. "Surely not I, Lord?" How could they be so unsure of themselves? They had spent so much time with Jesus, they listened and learned from Him, and watched as He performed miracles, so how could there still be room for doubt, for betrayal? I personally find some comfort in knowing that those who were closest to Jesus struggled just as I do with doubt, and betrayal even in the midst of my belief and faithfulness. And what I find remarkably redeeming is that Jesus does not seem interested in rooting out the betrayer, but rather concludes the meal by inviting each of the disciples to share the bread and cup, His body and blood, and to enter into the new covenant which centres on forgiveness. I imagine as Judas received the bread and cup from Jesus, he may have asked again "Surely not I, Lord?"

CONTEMPLATION

1. Look at the image by Ovide Bighetty. Pay specific attention to the faces of the disciples. What is the mood Bighetty creates in the scene? How does it capture Matthew's narrative?
2. Imagine yourself in the upper room, around the table with Jesus when he says, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." Contemplate how you might respond. How would you feel hearing these words?
3. Judas had planned to betray Jesus, and Jesus knew it. Jesus could have called him out, could have sent him away. He could have confronted him, but what did Jesus do instead?

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, we confess that we too have betrayed you in small and large ways. Help us to know and experience the love, grace and forgiveness you extend to us, even as you extended the bread and wine to Judas. Help us to receive your forgiveness, and give us strength to overcome our doubts and betrayals and live more fully in your presence each day.

DAY 02

“ STARTING THE JOURNEY ”



Written by
Charlene Neuman
WestHeights Community Church

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Master and Saviour, I come to You now to receive from Your story. Give me a heart to see. Make me aware of Your presence. Help me to discover more of who You are.

READING

Mark 14:32-42

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.” 35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” 37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.

“Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. 41 Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”



REFLECTION

Our holidays, or Holy Days, often remind us that Love can be captured in an image: Love is Jesus, our Saviour, stumbling under the weight of the cruel cross on which He will be brutally tortured. And at Christmas time: Love was Jesus, stepping down from glory into the bleak struggle of humanity.

But here, in Gethsemane, this is Love. Here is Jesus, overwhelmed by distress and fear, literally buckling under His own anguish. Here, he straddles the threshold, with desperate, whispered prayers. Jesus, clutching at the neck of His Papa, while the story marches on towards a loss that we, the readers, clearly cannot fathom... What will be taken from Him will be replaced with isolation, oppression, pain, and death — the opposite of everything He is and came to be. Here is where we, followers of this same Jesus, are compelled to imagine the horror of through-and-through Good being handed over to Evil, of the darkness of sin descending on the One who is uniquely sinless.

What a mystery! God in agony, devastated by an anxiety and a grief so severe that He felt as though He might die from it.

We are perplexed, even disturbed, by seeing our God this way. Beside Himself — overcome. Weak, by human standards. But this is the way of Love.

Here is where Jesus — the One who commanded the wind, the waves, and all the powers of darkness — lays down all control, and all power, confessing that even now, the plan can be changed...But that He will not choose to abandon it.

From here, we know the story well. It accelerates into the nightmare Jesus not only feared, but foreknew.

But not before resolve confronts fear, and the mission comes clearly into view. We are breathless and inspired, alarmingly assured of Christ's humanity, and marvelling at the Divine laid bare.

CONTEMPLATION

1) Think about times when you have felt anxious, alone, overcome by loss - in anguish over suffering or injustice. Jesus experienced anxiety and distress - not only to some vague degree, but profoundly. What does it mean to you to know that He knew what it felt to be overwhelmed?

2) Reflect on the idea that Jesus prayed for a different path. Where in your life do you need to be honest with God about what you want, while still accepting His sovereignty?

3) In what relationship or situation is God calling you to lay down your power and control, to demonstrate His kind of love?

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank you for the gift of Gethsemane. For making these intense moments of tension, pain and struggle a part of Your story. For letting us know that You do know. As we live out this season of pandemic, as we feel so many things so very deeply, help us to trust Your will, understand Your heart, experience Your comfort. Give us the resolve, each day, to lay down what power we do have for the love of all those around us. Amen.

DAY
03

“ THE
BETRAYAL ”



Written by
Karmyn Bokma
The Meeting House, Oakville

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, I invite you to be the holder of my heart as I sit with your word. May you be ever present as I reflect on the story of your betrayal, and may you gently invite me into your experience. Help me to understand, again or for the first time, how your story of rescue and redemption includes this scripture, and also includes me. May your Spirit lead and guide this time with you now.

READING

Matthew 26:47-56

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” 49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. 50 Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. 51 With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” 55 In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.



REFLECTION

This is the part of the crucifixion story that always leaves me with a bubbled up sense of injustice in my chest. It's only the beginning of the horrific torture Jesus is about to endure, but there is just something about reading the account of this betrayal that leaves me wanting to shout out loud "BUT IT'S NOT FAIR!"

One of Jesus' closest companions turns on him, which seemingly is what begins the path toward his death, and knowing the pre-planned, selfish intentions of Judas make this portion of the story hard to swallow. Perhaps this is because we know what it leads to. We know the story, and the suffering that Jesus is about to endure, and it begins with this betrayal. There is a heaviness, a sadness to see the choice of Judas, the one who followed Jesus as a disciple. There may be a personal sense of betrayal as you notice your own feelings as you read. There can be a sense of deep emotion picturing the scene that is unfolding; a mob with weapons, the dark of night, the increasing loneliness Jesus must have been sensing, the confusion and shock of his disciples watching one of their own on the other side. What feelings and thoughts rise up for you as you read this? This passage can be heavy.

However, as we take time to reflect on this portion of scripture today I invite us to notice something else: the character of Jesus. Through these 10 verses we see the beginning of the injustice and suffering Jesus will endure and right along with it, the attributes of the one who walked to the cross for us come through. There is an "and yet," invitation through each of these verses.

Judas, with intention, betrays Jesus (v 48) and yet... Jesus calls him friend (v 50) There are rash, impulsive acts of violent protection (v 51) and yet...Jesus gently models peace (v52) There is a mob of people heightened with anticipation, violence and accusation (v 47), and yet...Jesus submits to the plan set before him (v 54, 56)

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he continued to be obedient to his Father, model peace and gentleness, and exude love to all those in the crowd. This is the Jesus who went to the cross for you, and this is the Jesus who in relationship with you, still invites you into the and yet... parts of your own life.

CONTEMPLATION

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

1) Think about times when you have felt anxious, alone, overcome by loss - in anguish over suffering or injustice. Jesus experienced anxiety and distress - not only to some vague degree, but profoundly. What does it mean to you to know that He knew what it felt to be overwhelmed?

2) Reflect on the idea that Jesus prayed for a different path. Where in your life do you need to be honest with God about what you want, while still accepting His sovereignty?

3) In what relationship or situation is God calling you to lay down your power and control, to demonstrate His kind of love?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank you for the gift of Gethsemane. For making these intense moments of tension, pain and struggle a part of Your story. For letting us know that You do know. As we live out this season of pandemic, as we feel so many things so very deeply, help us to trust Your will, understand Your heart, experience Your comfort. Give us the resolve, each day, to lay down what power we do have for the love of all those around us. Amen.

DAY 04

“PETER'S FAILURE”



Written by
Peter & Alison Lublink
REUNION, Kingston

OPENING PRAYER

God, open my heart and my mind to the ways in which you want to speak to me today. Help me not to be so hard-hearted in my ways, denying closeness and intimacy with you.

READING

Luke 22:54-62

54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. 55 And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. 56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.” 57 But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said. 58 A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” “Man, I am not!” Peter replied.

59 About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.” 60 Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.



REFLECTION

We seem to have a habit of saying that if given the chance, we would handle ourselves better than a character we see on television, a contestant on a game show or perhaps even real life stories like that of Peter denying Jesus. Somehow our knee jerk reaction to seeing someone else fail is, "I would have been better" or "I wouldn't have made the same mistakes."

The reality is, though, that innate desire for self-preservation that likely triggered Peter is the same thing that is preventing us from rising up in significant ways today. Peter knew that by denying Jesus he might escape torture and probably death. He was just trying to survive another day.

Standing up for what's right can cost us our careers, our reputation or even our lives.

That desire for self-preservation, however, runs deep in all of us. The cure? A genuine and wholehearted belief in the teachings and example of Jesus. Not just an acknowledgement of his teachings, but a deep embracing.

The selflessness, others-oriented, sacrificial, unconditional love modelled by Jesus in his teachings and in his death on the cross are the ultimate antithesis to our narcissism and penchants for self preservation. In Jesus we see that having it all is not about holding onto it, but rather giving it up for the sake of others. He calls those who choose to follow him to give, to love, to sacrifice and to ultimately follow his path to the cross.

The list of noble causes Christians should be involved in today is endless. The work to be done remains significant. But just as the world 2,000 years ago needed a selfless revolution of love, so too does it need it today.

This year, in view of God's mercy towards us, let us truly live our lives for those around us. Let us be the Jesus people we are called to be. Let us move past selfishness and embrace His Way.

CONTEMPLATION

1. Peter was ashamed to admit that he knew Jesus personally. How often does shame impact your decisions? How does this affect your daily life? How does this affect your spiritual life?

2. Peter was trying to distance himself from Jesus in these moments. In what ways are you following Jesus from a distance?

3. After the rooster crowed, Peter realized he'd denied Jesus three times, just like Jesus had predicted. What is significant about his response at this moment? Why does he weep? What is your response once you realize you've sinned?

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, I pray that you would give me the strength to move past my innate selfishness and embrace your way. May others see your selfless love reflected through me, rather than the self-centredness to which I am prone.

DAY
05

“ CROWNED
FOR OUR
GLORY ”



Written by
Glenn A. Robitaille
Penetanguishene, ON
Waypoint Centre for Mental
Health Care

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, who looked upon creation and pronounced it good, be with us as we find our place in these present challenges. Show us how to support one another and to be your hands and heart. For we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

READING

Mark 15:1-15

15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. 2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "You have said so," Jesus replied. 3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." 5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. 6 Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.

8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. 9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. 12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. 13 "Crucify him!" they shouted. 14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" 15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.



REFLECTION

It is not easy to be treated unfairly and take it graciously. The arrest of Jesus wreaked of injustice at every turn. People often think Christ's version of humanity sheltered him from conflicting emotions and the resultant suffering. We imagine he felt no anger at the Sanhedrin that gathered illegally and condemned him unjustly. It is easier to think he was above all that and absorbed such betrayal and remained unaffected. It is very possible the opposite is true. If Jesus was "In all ways tempted as we are," as Hebrews 4:15 states, the encounter with Pilate required focus and discipline. His sharpened appreciation for injustice and the selfish dynamics driving it required a greater degree of grace. In the face of that abuse, he stood before mere peons with overinflated estimates of their own self-importance and did nothing; but that hardly means he felt nothing. "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me," he said earlier. The kind of death he was to die was not the only indignity filling his cup. I am encouraged to know Jesus felt what I might be feeling without doing what I would be tempted to do. He "battled dragons" that day without "becoming one," even though he had the power to call 10,000 angels to his defense.

We learn very early that life is not fair. Handling inequities with grace and dignity is one of the greater challenges of our existence. Some disparities have to do with the hand we are dealt—things based on the social determinants of health and the random distribution of benefits and privilege—and others with the events that test our resilience. Jesus likely knew that emotions are not chosen; they are what they are. He could be tempted in every way as we are, because feelings say nothing about our character. Actions are chosen. Responses are chosen. Virtue, integrity and character are chosen. Jesus said nothing because nothing he could say would alter his course. It did not matter how he felt. His singular focus was on authentically and compassionately fulfilling his calling.

We all face challenges every day, some of which disturb our peace and amplify the deficits we experience. Jesus stood firm in his conviction and rested in the embrace of his Father. Life is not fair, but we can be. Whatever feelings we are processing, we can respond with grace and integrity. We may not feel much joy in the moment. But we can be certain that our Maker does.

CONTEMPLATION

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

1. How well do you separate your feelings from your actions in the choices you make?
2. How do you draw on your relationship with Jesus to find strength when you are treated unjustly?
3. How does Christ's resolve in the face of injustice impact your own process when working through an unjust circumstance?

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Lord that we are entrusted with this ministry of good news. In times when hearts are weakened and spirits low, help us bring your joy that is our strength. May we be conduits of your grace and beacons of Christ's hope to bring the same comfort to others with which we are comforted. For we ask in Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY

06

“ CREATING A NEW FAMILY ”

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, as I reflect on your life and willingness, may my heart, eyes and mind and soul be aware of your presence and engaged to grow in you. Help me to love as you love, see as you see, feel as you feel.

READING

John 19: 17-27

17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. 19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” 22 Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.” 23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining.

This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did. 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.



Written by
Chris Chase
The Meeting House,
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REFLECTION

In John 19, we are invited to witness the final moments of Jesus' life. We see him mocked, abandoned by the people he came to liberate, nailed to his cross under the sarcastic sign "The king of the Jews", fulfill Old Testament prophecies, take upon himself the sins of mankind, die and be buried. Seems like a lot for one day. And yet, verses 25 to 27 are worth multiple glances.

Here is Jesus, his body bruised from beating, his soul anguished from insult – finding a moment to zero in on his mother. His mother, who knew that one day "a sword will pierce through you own soul also (Luke 2:35 NKJV)", is now watching her son with a mix of pride, pain and panic for her future. She's helpless...unable to be His "mommy" as she was when he took his first steps, asked to play with the other kids, got left behind on that one Passover trip that became a longstanding joke over meals (Luke 2:41-50). And Jesus makes eye contact with her. Imagine the conversation those eyes made among the yelling of the crowd and the tears of his followers. Sadness, agony, comfort, encouragement and worry. And so Jesus does something incredible while providing mankind the greatest miracle – He cares for his mom one more time.

He sees John, his friend and close friend "...standing nearby" to Mary and invites them into a beautiful blended family.

"Mom – here's your son. John – here's your mom." (Chris' translation). Jesus would have known John's family situation and why he was just as much in need for a mother in his life as Mary was for a son to care for. And John, the author of this gospel, tells us that this stuck – "And from then on this disciple took her into his home. (vs 27b, NLT)".

I love this because it points out to us that while Jesus cares about the eternal (Our salvation) he also cares for the temporal. On his worst earthly day, He makes time to care for family, for community, for "together".

This family wasn't 'traditional' but maybe that was the point. Perhaps Jesus was saying that however your family is formed (nuclear, blended, adopted, spiritual, etc), he cares about it as a unit and that you and I have SOMEONE to go through the pains of life with. He doesn't only see the end of our stories – he sees what we need today too. And he cares about that.

CONTEMPLATION

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

1. What does the story of Jesus, Mary and John teach us about the role family plays in our story?

2. Describe some of the emotions Mary and John must have felt as Jesus connected them during his time on the cross. How important are our feelings in the midst of loss and gain?

3. How is the idea of "family" seen in our day? How does Jesus turn that view on its head through his actions? What does that say about his heart for family and community? What are some ways we can open our hearts and lives up to those around us in need of family? How can we ourselves open ourselves up to be welcomed into a deeper community?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for caring for family in its many forms. Thank you for knowing our need for community and highlighting this for us. Help us to care for those around us, inviting them into our own circles of care so that even in their worst moments, they'd never feel alone.

DAY 07

“IT IS FINISHED”



Written by
Charlie & Becky Mashinter
Be In Christ Canada

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, I pause to quiet myself today once again and spend a few moments just reflecting on your sacrifice and your great love for me. I long to hear a fresh word from you today to guide me on my journey through this holy week. Teach me your ways that I may gain a heart of understanding to follow you more nearly. Amen!

READING

Mark 15:33-47

33 At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” 36 Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. 37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. 38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” 40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. 41 In Galilee these

women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there. 42 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45 When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.



REFLECTION

The World Went Dark ...

At noon darkness fell across the land! No moon, no street lamps, no house lights illuminating the streets. Darkness. There were two kinds of darkness that afternoon. Darkness encompassing all of the physical world. The second kind of darkness was the blackness of hopelessness. The soul darkness. Jesus cried out, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani? Translation ...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Is there any more penetrating blackness than that of feeling forsaken? I try to imagine Jesus' cry that day, choked out as he hung, broken, wrenched, mocked, bleeding. How could he even draw enough breath to be heard? Soul darkness is a powerful force and it wants to be heard.

Darkness also forces us to search for light. Mark was not a witness to all he wrote in these verses but he felt that certain details of the accounts told to him were important. Perhaps Mark thought it important to communicate that light can still shine in the darkest night.

After the darkness, there were new cracks of light appearing. It was not light from an old, tired story but it was light from a New Kingdom. The Kingdom Jesus came to establish. As the Old Covenant was finished, the New Covenant was ushering in new light. Mark tells of a Roman officer who said, "This truly was the Son of God." Light for the Romans. Mark names the women at the cross. It was important for people to know there were women witnessing the darkness too. Yes, women were to be recognized in this New Kingdom. And for Joseph of Arimathea who "took a risk" to ask for Jesus' body. New light for a Jewish leader in the form of courage. Joseph took Jesus' body, wrapped him in linen cloth and laid him in the tomb.

Seasons of darkness come into our lives. Our family is living in a season of great personal darkness these days. We are constantly looking for light. We need light! Because light is hope. What about you? Are you living in some darkness? Are you on a search for cracks of light? It's not an easy search.

CONTEMPLATION

1. Why did Mark seem to go out of his way to note the Roman centurion, the women at the cross and tomb, and Joseph of Arimathea?

2. How have new stories begun to be written even in dark places in your life?

3. When our world goes dark at times, what do we need to remember?

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, I can't imagine how you endured such darkness. My heart is full of gratitude for your gift of life. Thank you for giving us new hope, cracks of light in dark seasons, and a new way of living with you. Lead us every day so that we can make room for everyone to move from darkness into light.

DAY
08

“ HALLELUJAH
CHRIST HAS
RISEN! ”



Written by
Jeremy & Karyn Conway
REUNION Brockville

OPENING PRAYER

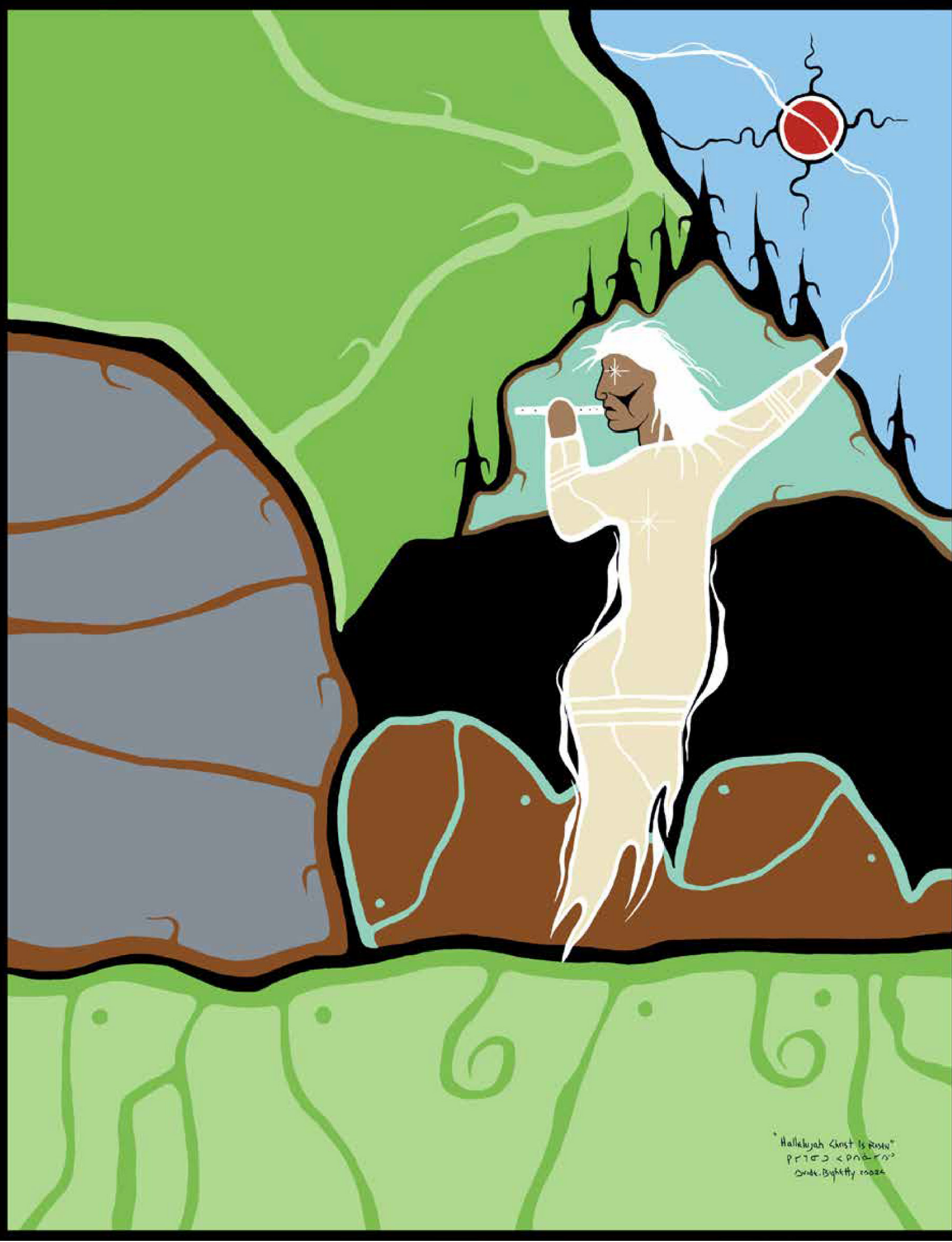
Heavenly Father, I invite your Holy Spirit to direct my imagination during this time of Scripture reading, reflection and prayer. I ask that you quite the noise within me and around me so that I can focus only on your voice speaking to me and leading me.

READING

Matthew 28:1-10

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”



REFLECTION

Imagine for a moment that you're one of these Marys and your rabbi, who you have given your life to and had revealed Himself to be Israel's long-awaited Messiah is now dead. What happens now? These disciples had spent hours watching Jesus interact with people, listened to and learned from Him and were just with Him, revelling in His presence. So, I can understand why these ladies would have wanted to just be with Him at His tomb. But much to their (unexpected) surprise there's an earthquake, an angel appears causing soldiers to pass out as if dead, a huge stone is sent rolling and this heavenly messenger just casually sits on it as if this sort of thing should be expected when God is involved. Then, the ladies are sent out as the first evangelists of Jesus' resurrection. What an incredible, unlikely, dare I say, unbelievable story. But I think that's the point.

As is commonly known, women at this time weren't even allowed to be witnesses in a court of law (thankfully we've come a long way from that!) but God chooses these two to be the first witnesses and evangelists of the unbelievably incredible news that Jesus is risen and the power of death has been defeated! Isn't this just like God, to choose what the world sees as weak to confound the powerful and the 'wisdom' of the world. There's a lesson in there for us for sure.

However, I love that the text tells us that the Marys, "left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy", because who wouldn't have a little fear in this situation? These powerhouse apprentices didn't let fear stop them and the joy that came from knowing Jesus was alive allowed them to obey their commands to head for Galilee and Jesus meets them on their way, reassuring them to not give into fear.

Maybe the lesson here is that we shouldn't wait till all our fears are gone to be used by God in a powerful way, whether that's walking across our street to share the good news of Jesus with a neighbour or heading in the direction of someone we have hurt or who has hurt us to seek reconciliation. As we head out with

the joy that comes from knowing Jesus is alive leading the way and overshadowing our fears, Jesus will meet us, give us His peace and guide us as we follow Him into resurrection life.

CONTEMPLATION

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Read the scripture again between each question.

- What word(s) in the passage caught your attention?
- What in this passage brought you comfort?
- What in this passage challenged you?

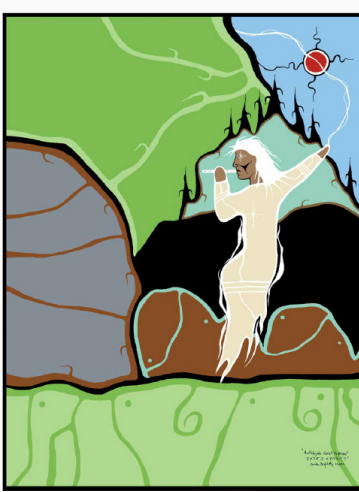
1) What does it teach us that Jesus first appeared to those who the broader culture would have viewed as weak, insignificant and without power? What implications does this have for us today?

2) What fear(s) stand in the way of you being a witness to those around you of the Good News message of Jesus?

3) Who might be someone in your life that needs to hear God is in the business of bringing dead things back to life? Begin to pray for them and then move in their direction, praying for the Spirit's guidance as you go.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, may your Spirit give me the strength and the boldness to share you and your love with others regardless of my current circumstance or fears. May I share you with my words, my actions and may you fill me with your joy and your peace as I go. Amen.



Indigenous Christian Fellowship

Indigenous Christian Fellowship (ICF) is a Canadian Indigenous urban ministry formed in 1978 that serves the spiritual and social needs of Indian and Metis people of Regina, Saskatchewan. While affirming individual and cultural contributions, ICF celebrates the Creator's gift of healing and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. ICF worshipping/working ministry recognizes the Creator's unconditional love and great gifts each of us may offer.

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