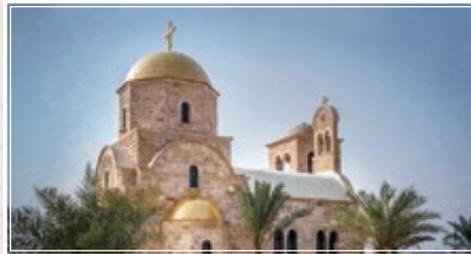


PLACES *of the* PASSION

# A Series of Services for the Season of Lent



The City of Jerusalem



Bethany



The Mount of Olives



Gethsemane



The Courtyard



Pilate's Judgment Hall

W O R S H I P   K I T

PLPU

PLACES *of the* PASSION

A Series of Services  
for the Season of Lent

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# PLACES *of the* PASSION

## A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

### ABOUT “PLACES OF THE PASSION”

In this worship series for Lent, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, contemplating what happened at each place our Savior stood along the path of his Passion for our sake. Written by theology professor Reed Lessing, each service explores the meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with the location highlighted. Parishioners will learn things they may not have known before as they grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

For each service, the kit contains: sample bulletins with complete orders of service • sermon • children’s sermon • prayers • music for the accompanist

### ORDERING INFORMATION

Additional resources are available from Creative Communications for the Parish. Contact us for current pricing and availability. Call us at 1-800-325-9414. Or visit our website:  
[www.creativecommunications.com](http://www.creativecommunications.com).

#### **Bulletins for the Six-Week Kit:**

Code **PLPP** • Pre-printed bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **PLPS** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 11"

Code **PLPR** • Blank bulletins • 8.5" x 14"

### **Holy Week Services to Complete the Series:**

Those who desire may supplement this series with other services that continue the series format and theme. Each is ordered separately and includes all the Worship Kit features described above, except the CD.

Or, order all four service kits together. As a bonus, orders for all four kits include a CD-ROM (Mac/PC) with text of services and of bulletins in .rtf (rich text format).

All four kits • Code **PLP9**

#### **Palm Sunday**

Bethphage • Matthew 21:1-11

*This place is where the ride into Jerusalem on a donkey begins for Jesus.*

Code **PLPZ • Kit**

Code **PLPT** (printed) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPW** (blank) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPX** (blank) • 8.5" x 14" bulletins

#### **Maundy Thursday**

The Upper Room • Matthew 26:17-29

*Climb the stairs to join the disciples in receiving the body and blood of Christ in bread and wine.*

Code **PLP4 • Kit**

Code **PLPC** (printed) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPG** (blank) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPL** (blank) • 8.5" x 14" bulletins

## **Good Friday**

Golgotha • Matthew 27:45-56

*The Place of the Skull is where Jesus breathes his last.*

### **Code PLP5 • Kit**

Code **PLPD** (printed) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPH** (blank) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPM** (blank) • 8.5" x 14" bulletins

## **Easter Sunday**

The Garden Tomb • Matthew 28:1-10

*See the place where they laid him who is now arisen.*

### **Code PLP6 • Kit**

Code **PLPE** (printed) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPJ** (blank) • 8.5" x 11" bulletins

Code **PLPN** (blank) • 8.5" x 14" bulletins

### **Other Resources:**

Code **PLP1** • Bookmark • 7" x 2.5"

Code **PLP7** • Promotional Bulletin Insert

Code **PLP8** • Display Posters • 11" x 17"

### **Bible Study Resources:**

Code **PLPSG** • Places of the Passion Student Guide

Code **PLPLG** • Places of the Passion Leader's Guide

PLACES *of the* PASSION

A Series of Services  
for the Season of Lent

ASH WEDNESDAY:  
THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for the Places of the Passion special service for Ash Wednesday, as we follow in the footsteps of our Savior, contemplating the places where Jesus stood on his path to salvation. In this service, we go to Jerusalem, the place of the Passover, where Jesus gathers with the crowds and sacrifices himself for us.

BULLETIN NOTICE

In this service for Ash Wednesday, we go to Jerusalem, the place of the Passover, where Jesus gathers with the crowds and sacrifices himself for us. The meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with this location are highlighted. We will learn things we may not have known before as we grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

## PLACES *of the* PASSION

# A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

## WEEK 1: BETHANY

### NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for the Places of the Passion special service for Week 1 of Lent, as we follow in the footsteps of our Savior, contemplating the places where Jesus stood on his path to salvation. In this service we go to Bethany to remember that Jesus is anointed for burial by his friend Mary, at her home in this small town. We are called to prepare our hearts for Christ's death as well, while still looking toward the fragrant surprise of the empty tomb.

### BULLETIN NOTICE

In this service for Week 1 of Lent, the place of the Passion is Bethany, as we remember that Jesus is anointed for burial by his friend Mary, at her home in this small town. We are called to prepare our hearts for Christ's death as well, while still looking toward the fragrant surprise of the empty tomb. The meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with Bethany help us to grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

# PLACES *of the* PASSION

## A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

### WEEK 2: THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

#### NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for the Places of the Passion special service for Week 2 of Lent, as we follow in the footsteps of our Savior, contemplating the places where Jesus stood on his path to salvation. In this service, we go to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus went with his disciples to pray. We are called to find places to pray this Lent and seek the will of the Lord in our lives.

#### BULLETIN NOTICE

In this service for Week 2 of Lent, the place of the Passion is the Mount of Olives, where Jesus went with his disciples to pray. We are called to find places to pray this Lent and seek the will of the Lord in our lives. The meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with the Mount of Olives help us to grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

# PLACES *of the* PASSION

## A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

### WEEK 3: GETHSEMANE

#### NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for the Places of the Passion special service for Week 3 of Lent, as we follow in the footsteps of our Savior, contemplating the places where Jesus stood on his path to salvation. In this service, we head toward Gethsemane, where Jesus is betrayed and arrested in this garden under cover of darkness. We witness Jesus being taken away by soldiers, but we know that his journey toward the cross will take away our sins.

#### BULLETIN NOTICE

In this service for Week 3 of Lent, the place of the Passion is Gethsemane, where Jesus is betrayed and arrested in this garden under cover of darkness. We witness Jesus being taken away by soldiers, but we know that his journey toward the cross will take away our sins. The meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with Gethsemane help us to grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

## PLACES *of the* PASSION

# A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

## WEEK 4: THE COURTYARD

### NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for the Places of the Passion special service for Week 4 of Lent, as we follow in the footsteps of our Savior, contemplating the places where Jesus stood on his path to salvation. In this service, we go to the Courtyard, outside of where Jesus is put on trial before the high priest and where Peter denies Jesus. We are called to confess that we often tend to distance ourselves from Christ, when we should be drawing closer to him.

### BULLETIN NOTICE

In this service for Week 4 of Lent, the place of the Passion is the Courtyard, outside of where Jesus is put on trial before the high priest and where Peter denies Jesus. We are called to confess that we often tend to distance ourselves from Christ, when we should be drawing closer to him. The meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with the Courtyard help us to grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

# PLACES *of the* PASSION

## A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

### WEEK 5: PILATE'S JUDGMENT HALL

#### NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Join us for the Places of the Passion special service for Week 5 of Lent, as we follow in the footsteps of our Savior, contemplating the places where Jesus stood on his path to salvation. In this service, we go to Pilate's Judgment Hall, where Pilate is positioned here to set Jesus free, but turns him over to be crucified instead. We are called to remember that the judgment that should have been placed on us was placed on him that we might be free.

#### BULLETIN NOTICE

In this service for Week 5 of Lent, the place of the Passion is Pilate's Judgment Hall, where Pilate is positioned here to set Jesus free, but turns him over to be crucified instead. We are called to remember that the judgment that should have been placed on us was placed on him that we might be free. The meaning, history and spiritual inspiration associated with Pilate's Judgment Hall help us to grow to understand more deeply the hard road our Lord took that the way to heaven might be open to us.

PLACES *of the* PASSION

A Series of Services  
for the Season of Lent

ASH WEDNESDAY:  
THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

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PLACES *of the* PASSION

A Series of Services  
for the Season of Lent

ASH WEDNESDAY:  
THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

ORDER OF SERVICE

*See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. Matthew 20:18*

Invocation and Call to Worship

**P** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C** Amen.

**P** Let us ever walk with Jesus.

**C** To see the depths of his love.

**P** To behold the gift of his forgiveness.

**C** To gaze upon the heights of his grace.

**P** To marvel at the magnitude of his mercy.

**C** We walk with Jesus to the City of Jerusalem.

**P** Because Passover is coming.

**C** **And the Son of Man will be crucified.**

**P** Faithful Lord, with me abide.

**C** **I shall follow where you guide!**

Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure,  
Through a world that would deceive us and to sin our spirits lure.  
Onward in his footsteps treading, pilgrims here, our home above,  
Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father's bidding.  
Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where you guide.

Let us also live with Jesus, he has risen from the dead  
That to life we may awaken, Jesus, you are now our head.  
We are your own living members; where you live, there we shall be  
In your presence constantly, living there with you forever.  
Jesus, let me faithful be, life eternal grant to me.

#### Confession and Forgiveness

**P** Magnificent and merciful Father, because I walk into dark and dangerous places, hear me as I confess my sins.

**C** **My feet take me to places of compromise and sinful ambition.**

**P** My heart lingers in places of lust and lies.

**C** **My words take me to places of anger, rage and hatred.**

**P** My ears delight in going to places of gossip, deceit and ridicule.

**C** **My mind takes me to places of selfishness and pride.**

**P** My eyes lead me to places of envy and greed.

**C** **Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!**

*(Please silently reflect on the fact that though our sin is great, Christ's love is greater.)*

**P** Hear the good news! Jesus walked to places of rejection, suffering, torment and death—for you. Jesus was determined to go to Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha—for you. That's why Jesus forgives you completely and loves you eternally. Faithful Lord, with me abide!

**C** **I shall follow where you guide!**

Imposition of Ashes

Prayer of the Day

Children's Sermon

Old Testament Reading ..... Exodus 12:1-13

Epistle Reading ..... 2 Corinthians 5:6-8

Gospel Reading ..... Matthew 26:1-5

Draw near and take the body of the Lord,  
And drink the holy blood for you outpoured;  
Offered was he for greatest and for least,  
Himself the victim and himself the priest.

He who his saints in this world rules and shields,  
To all believers life eternal yields;  
With heav'nly bread he makes the hungry whole,  
Gives living waters to the thirsting soul.

Come forward then with faithful hearts sincere,  
And take the pledges of salvation here.  
O Lord, our hearts with grateful thanks endow  
As in this feast of love you bless us now.

Sermon

Offering

Prayers

**P** Onward in Christ's footsteps treading, pilgrims here, our home above. Full of faith and hope and love. Let us do the Father's bidding. And so we pray. Jesus, you will finally deliver us from every storm so we lift our prayers and raise our petitions to you.

**C** Lord, hear our prayer.

**P** Deliver us from pride and arrogance, lest we fail to acknowledge our sins and confess them.

**C** Lord, hear our prayer.

**P** Deliver the world from the enemies of peace and from injustice and give us good and faithful leaders to protect the unborn and promote virtue.

**C Lord, hear our prayer.**

**P** Deliver the erring from their darkness, the doubting from their uncertainty, and the wandering from their ways, and return them to you.

**C Lord, hear our prayer.**

**P** Deliver us from the terror of death and the grave.

**C Lord, hear our prayer.**

**P** Deliver us from selfish desire, from the tyranny of things, and from the wasteful use of the resources you have entrusted to our care.

**C Lord, hear our prayer.**

**P** Deliver us from ingratitude for all your mercies and restore our hearts to hope and joy.

**C Lord, hear our prayer.**

**P** Jesus, deliver us and bring us to the table of your body and blood.

**C Jesus, let me faithful be, life eternal grant to me. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

**P** Jesus invites us to walk with him to Jerusalem, a place of great suffering and a place of great love. We will walk with Jesus all the way to the empty tomb—and resurrection victory.

**C Let us ever walk with Jesus!**

O Christ, you walked the road our wand'ring feet must go.  
You faced with us temptation's pow'r and fought our ancient foe.

No bread of earth alone can fill our hung'ring hearts.  
Lord, help us seek your living Word, the food your grace imparts.

No blinding sign we ask, no wonder from above.  
Lord, help us place our trust alone in your unswerving love.

When lures of easy gain with promise brightly shine,  
Lord, help us seek your kingdom first; our wills with Yours align.

O Christ, you walked the road our wand'ring feet must go.  
Stay with us through temptation's hour to fight our ancient foe.

PLACES *of the* PASSION

A Series of Services  
for the Season of Lent

ASH WEDNESDAY:  
THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP  
LEADERS

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** is shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

[www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/jerusalem-panoramic-roof-view-christians-jewish-310344683](http://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/jerusalem-panoramic-roof-view-christians-jewish-310344683)

- This **Theme Verse** is read aloud by the pastor at the start of the service or is read silently by the congregation before the service begins:

*See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. Matthew 20:18*

- The **Invocation and Call to Worship** are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

☐ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C Amen.**

**P** Let us ever walk with Jesus.

**C To see the depths of his love.**

**P** To behold the gift of his forgiveness.

**C To gaze upon the heights of his grace.**

**P** To marvel at the magnitude of his mercy.

**C We walk with Jesus to the City of Jerusalem.**

**P** Because Passover is coming.

**C And the Son of Man will be crucified.**

**P** Faithful Lord, with me abide.

**C I shall follow where you guide!**

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *Lasst Uns Mit Jesu Ziehen* 87 87 877 877, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure,  
Through a world that would deceive us and to sin our spirits lure.  
Onward in his footsteps treading, pilgrims here, our home above,  
Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father's bidding.  
Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where you guide.

Let us also live with Jesus, he has risen from the dead  
That to life we may awaken, Jesus, you are now our head.  
We are your own living members; where you live, there we shall be  
In your presence constantly, living there with you forever.  
Jesus, let me faithful be, life eternal grant to me.

- The **Confession and Forgiveness** are spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

**P** Magnificent and merciful Father, because I walk into dark and dangerous places, hear me as I confess my sins.

**C My feet take me to places of compromise and sinful ambition.**

P My heart lingers in places of lust and lies.

**C My words take me to places of anger, rage and hatred.**

P My ears delight in going to places of gossip, deceit and ridicule.

**C My mind takes me to places of selfishness and pride.**

P My eyes lead me to places of envy and greed.

**C Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!**

*(Please silently reflect on the fact that though our sin is great, Christ's love is greater.)*

P Hear the good news! Jesus walked to places of rejection, suffering, torment and death—for you. Jesus was determined to go to Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha—for you. That's why Jesus forgives you completely and loves you eternally. Faithful Lord, with me abide!

**C I shall follow where you guide!**

- The **Imposition of Ashes** takes place at this time. The assembly may come forward to receive the imposition of ashes. Ashes are placed on the forehead in the shape of the cross, as the following words are spoken: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." After the imposition is completed, the assembly may be seated for the Prayer of the Day.

- The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

P Almighty and everlasting God, send forth your Holy Spirit that this Lent we may ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure, through a world that would deceive us and to sin our spirits lure. We pray through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

- The **Children's Sermon** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

*"The Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." (Matthew 26:2)*

P "Ring-a-round the roses, a pocket full of posies, Ashes! Ashes! We all fall down." Have you ever played that game? If you haven't, let me tell you how it works. People walk around in a circle while singing this song together: "Ring-a-round the roses, a pocket full of posies, Ashes! Ashes! We all fall down." When the song stops on the word "down," everybody sits down as fast as they can. The last one standing is out of the game and sits off to the side while the game

continues. The last person standing wins.

Today is Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. On this day Christians around the world go to church and have ashes placed on their foreheads. The ashes symbolize our sorrow and sadness for sin.

“Ashes, ashes, we all fall down.” We all fall short of God’s glory. We all fall down because of sin. We all stumble, trip and fall because we disobey God. We hurt God and we hurt other people.

“Ashes, ashes, we all fall down.” But thanks be to God! God lifts us up through the victory of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Jesus says, “The Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” Jesus is the Son of Man. Crucified means to die on a cross. Jesus loves you. Jesus shed his blood for you. Jesus died for you. Jesus forgives you.

“Ring-a-round the roses, a pocket full of posies, Ashes! Ashes! We all fall down.” Because of sin, we all fall down. Because of sin we all get hurt. But Jesus lifts us all up when we fall down.

We call that amazing grace!

- **The Old Testament Reading**, Exodus 12:1-13, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”

- The **Epistle Reading**, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

- The **Gospel Reading**, Matthew 26:1-5, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Old 124th, abbr. 10 10 10 or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Draw near and take the body of the Lord,  
And drink the holy blood for you outpoured;  
Offered was he for greatest and for least,  
Himself the victim and himself the priest.

He who his saints in this world rules and shields,  
To all believers life eternal yields;  
With heav'nly bread he makes the hungry whole,  
Gives living waters to the thirsting soul.

Come forward then with faithful hearts sincere,  
And take the pledges of salvation here.  
O Lord, our hearts with grateful thanks endow  
As in this feast of love you bless us now.

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

Ⓟ If you know anything about Oklahoma, then you know that Oklahoma spring weather has a predictable pattern. Warm tropical air blows out of the Gulf of Mexico. At the same time, cool dry air comes down from the central plains. And to the west, warm dry air begins to build. When these three air masses meet, they produce a predictable pattern. What would that be?

Wildly wicked weather! Take cover! Get to the basement! Call 911!

Perhaps some of us have lived through a tornado. Almost all of us have lived through severe storms. The sky grows dark and cloudy. The wind begins to howl. The sirens go off. The rain comes down like holy buckets. The electric lines shiver and shake. Then emergency vehicles dart up and down the streets. We know that we're stuck in a bad place—a very bad place!

Lent begins today with Ash Wednesday and with it, we begin a sermon series called Places of the Passion. Using Matthew's gospel, we will walk with Jesus to places like the Upper Room, the Garden of Gethsemane, Pilate's Judgment Hall and the hill of Golgotha. The places of the Passion! Today we walk with Jesus to the city of Jerusalem.

“When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples ...” (Matthew 26:1)

Matthew records five teaching blocks of Jesus, patterning his gospel after the Pentateuch—the first five books in the Old Testament. Five times Matthew writes, “When Jesus had finished all these sayings ...” (Matthew 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Matthew 26:1 is the fifth and final time Matthew writes, “When Jesus had finished all these sayings ...”

What's the point? Matthew is finishing his gospel. He's wrapping things up. It's all coming to an end. And it will end with a massive storm. The sky is growing dark and cloudy. The wind is beginning to howl. Soon the rain will be coming down like holy buckets. How so?

“He said to his disciples, ‘You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.’ (Matthew 26:1–2) This will be Christ's last Passover in Jerusalem. He is about to be crucified, dead and buried. Jesus is stuck in a bad place—a very bad place with a storm ready to hit!

We all know what it feels like to be stuck in a vulnerable, exposed place when a storm hits. Are you raising teenagers? Did you get cut from the team? Did you lose the love of your life? Are finances tight? What about your health? Is old age getting the best of you? Has a doctor used the “C” word with you? Cancer?

Does anyone remember a soap opera called Secret Storm? A secret storm is the worst kind of storm because we feel so all alone. It's a secret storm because we're so ashamed and so embarrassed and so afraid that we don't tell a soul.

Most of life's storms come and go. There's another kind of storm that comes, but it never goes. It hammers and hounds. It brings with it hell and high water. Thunder roars. Lightning zig zags across the sky. What am I talking about? It's the storm called sin. Sin comes and it never goes. What does sin look like?

“Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill

him. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.’” (Matthew 26:3–5)

Joseph Caiaphas is the high priest. He held the office from 18–36 AD, far longer than anyone else in this era—indicating his skill and political shrewdness. Caiaphas knows that a public arrest of Jesus will be very risky. There would most certainly be an uproar among the people because they believed Jesus was a mighty prophet. Caiaphas couldn’t have Christ killed during the Passover feast, but he couldn’t wait until after Passover because then Jesus would probably leave Jerusalem and go back to Galilee—and escape again!

Why are the chief priest and elders plotting to kill Jesus? They were losing their place! They had the most important places in the synagogue and in the marketplace. They wore long tassels. They gave a tenth of their possessions. They fasted twice a week. They prayed long prayers. They could take their esteemed place in the community and thank God that they were not in the place of the other people—tax collectors and sinners. The chief priests and elders had a place of power and respect—until Christ came.

Christ’s ministry attracted crowds. His words touched hearts. His hands opened eyes. His presence brought about a life that was full of grace and truth. Then what happened? The chief priests and elders began to lose their place. That’s why they gathered to plot and prepare for Christ’s death.

Do you see what sin is? Sin is holding on to my place. Sin is not allowing Christ first place. And sin is making sure others stay in their place! We’re not that much different from the chief priests and elders. Eventually sin brings with it tornadic winds and life-threatening lightning that destroys everything!

What is Christ’s response to our sin? Does he condemn us? Does he lock us up and throw away the key? Do you remember what Jesus says in Matthew 26:2? “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” Jesus walks to a place called Golgotha—the Place of the Skull.

At Golgotha, Jesus walks into the storm. In 2 Corinthians 5:19 Paul writes, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” What does that look like?

Jesus willingly places himself in the middle of the storm—the tornado of all tornados! Listen. Can you hear him? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) “Today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43) “I thirst.” (John 19:28) “It is finished!” (John 19:30)

Are you stuck in a bad place? Jesus was stuck in a bad place. Are you hurting? Jesus hurt. Are you bleeding? Jesus bled. Do you feel like you’re gasping for air? Jesus gasped for air. Are you crying? Jesus cried. Is your heart breaking? Jesus’ heart was absolutely broken. What’s it all