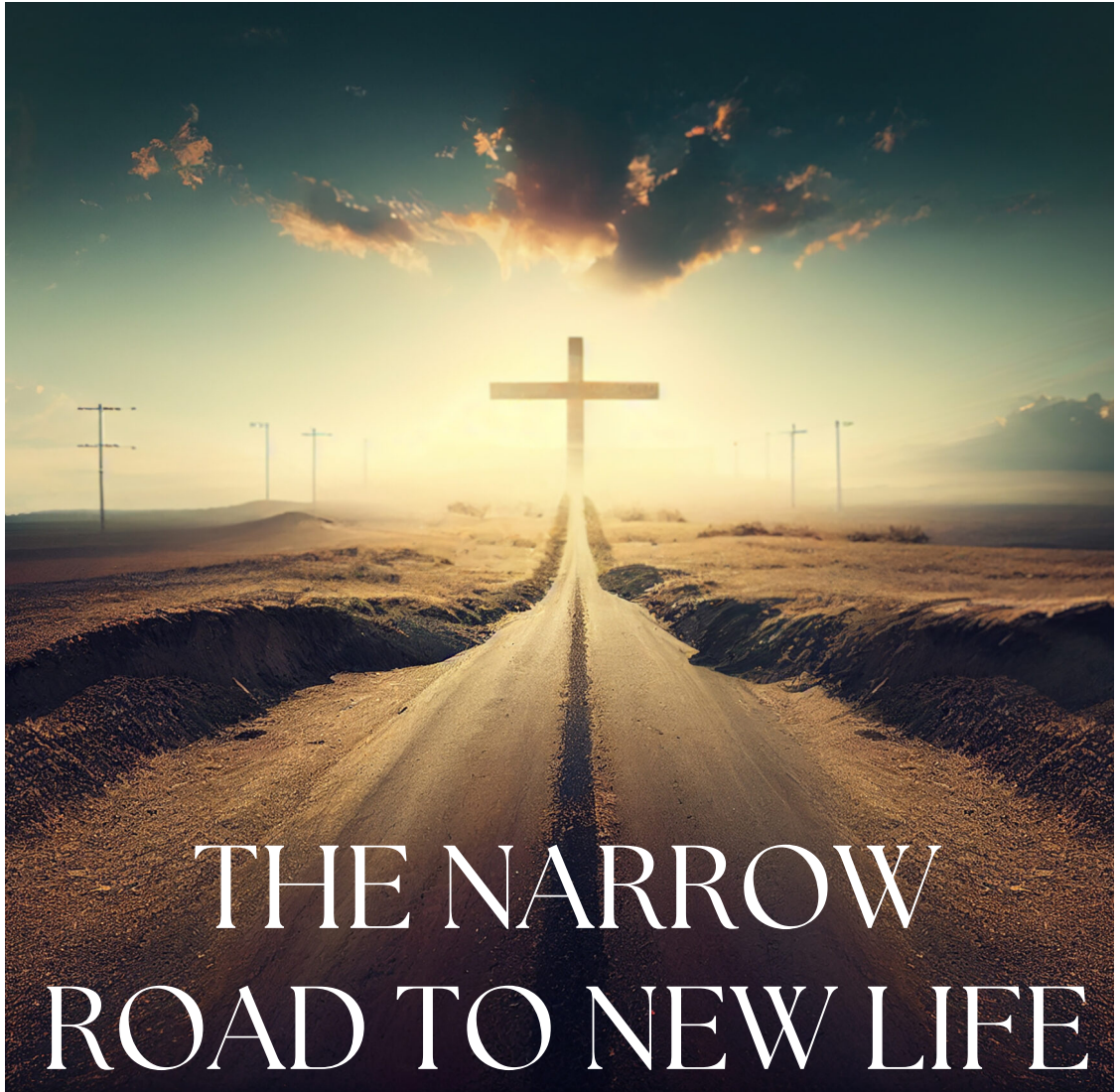


CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
DEVOTIONAL SPRING 2024



THE NARROW ROAD TO NEW LIFE

Following Jesus as the One
Who Suffered For Us

THE ALTAR
George Herbert

A broken A L T A R, Lord, thy servant rears,
Made of a heart, and cemented with tears:
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workman's tool hath touch'd the same.

A H E A R T alone
Is such a stone,
As nothing but
Thy pow'r doth cut.
Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame,
To praise thy name.

That if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
Oh let thy blessed S A C R I F I C E be mine,
And sanctify this A L T A R to be thine.

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Preface

Beloved brothers and sisters of CPC,

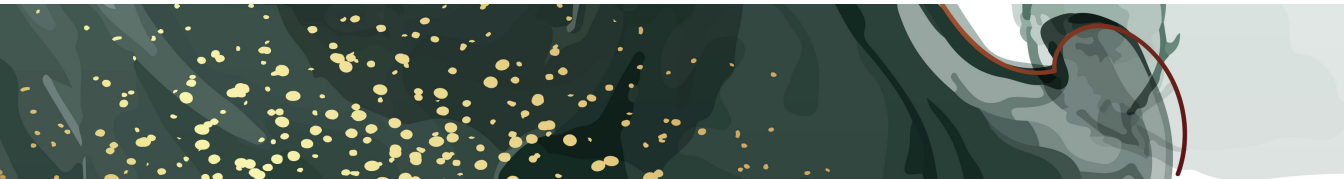
We are invited to take the narrow road to new life in Jesus Christ, and in this journey we are invited to do so together. The sheer magnitude of what Christ accomplished on the cross is worthy of constant meditation. Throughout this month, we will be praying and fasting for two main things:

1. **Renewal- For renewal of the gospel toward deeper repentance and faith.** As Jesus says, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” 23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” Luke 9:22-25

The only way to Easter is through the Cross and the only way to Resurrection is through Death. Our prayer is that this journey will deepen our sorrow for sin as well as our confidence in God’s transforming grace. May we yearn for Easter morning through tears of repentance.

2. **Consecration- For all of CPC as we elect new elders, and for Tyler and Josh to be especially consecrated in the Lord.**

Praising God for His gracious provision for under-shepherds, we want to be intentional about the calling to be a part of the body of Christ. May the Lord be gracious to us as we seek His glory among us.



To these ends, we will pray and fast. Fasting ought to be a “handmaiden to prayer”, which means we don’t simply abstain from something, we do it so that we would pray more and shape our desires after Christ’s own desires. Similar to the early church in Acts, we want to pray for God’s will and mercy during this time in our church (Acts 13:2-3, 14:22-3). This season will also, God willing, be a time where we all draw closer to Him in holiness as the Spirit weans us from the comforts and idolatries of the world.

To participate together, we encourage you to choose one of two options below. Please know that you enjoy freedom in Christ to choose one (or both or none!), and that we have no specific preference. We encourage everyone to share their plan with another person in their Life Group. From our convocation on fasting last year, you can find the notes to a [Theology of Fasting](#) and the [Practices of Fasting](#) (noting that our specific purposes are different this year).

- **Option 1: Traditional fast** from all food on Fridays in March
- **Option 2: Alternative fast** throughout the month of March, fasting from something you spend a lot of time, money, energy or focus on. Examples include: social media, alcohol, TV, Netflix, watching sports, eating certain foods or drinks, etc. These should be things that are not sinful in and of themselves.

As you will notice, this devotional includes the passage from Luke preached each Sunday, with space for notes and prayers throughout the following week. There is also a midweek reflection. We should also prepare for the coming Sunday by reading the passage ahead of time.

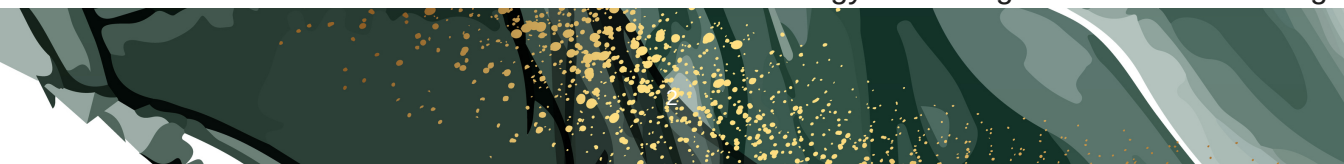
Much love in Christ,
Pastors Craig and Jerry

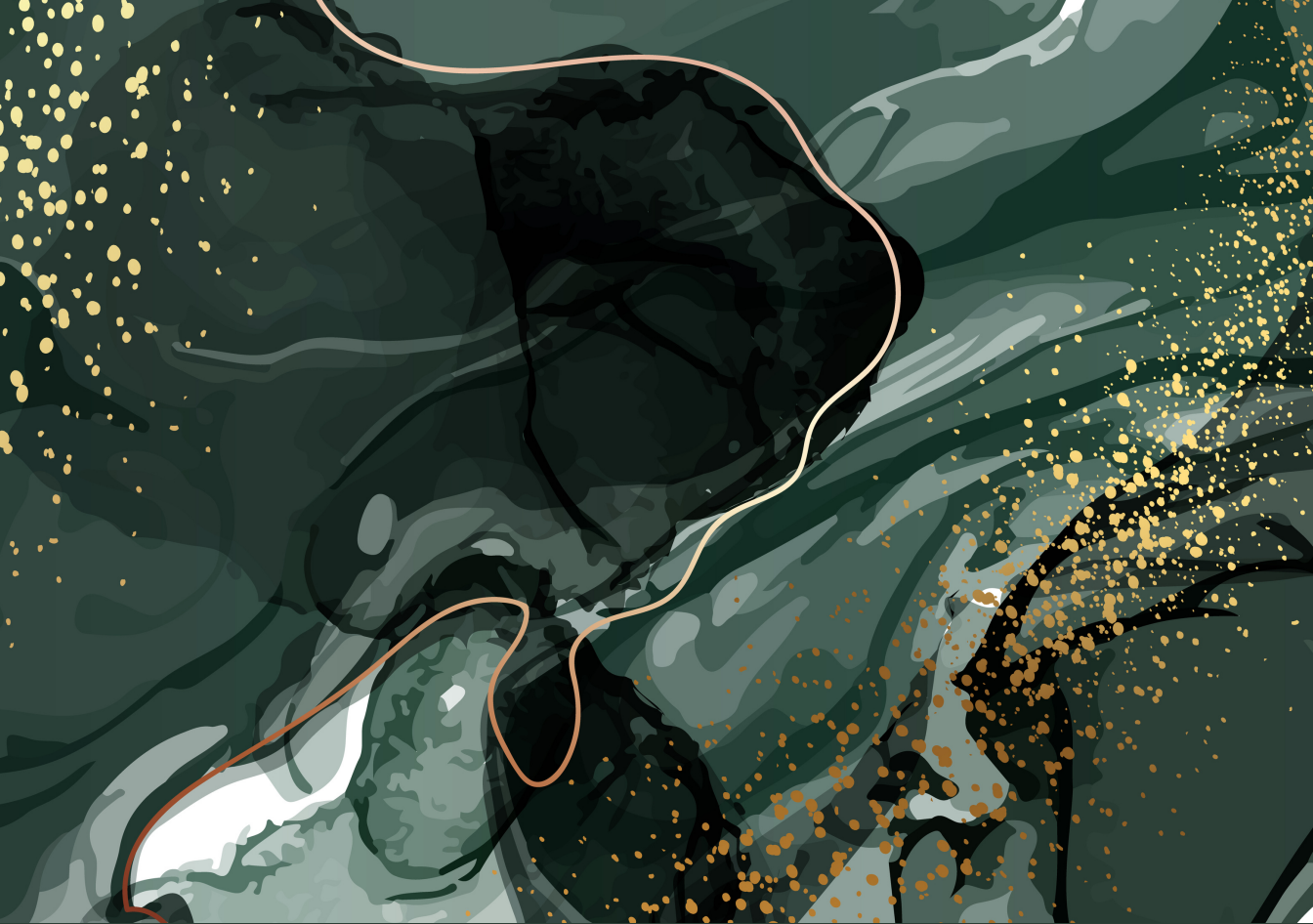


Theology of Fasting



Practices of Fasting





Week One

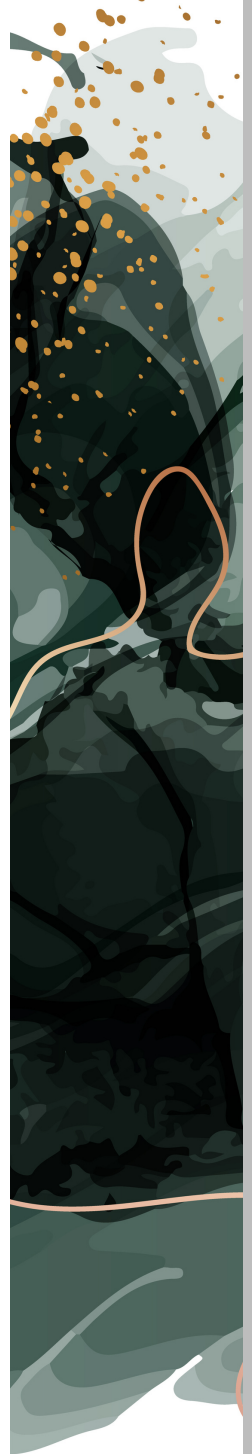
Jesus Suffers Our Agony

SUNDAY, MARCH 3

Luke 22:39-46

[39] And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. [40] And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” [41] And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, [42] saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” [43] And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. [44] And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. [45] And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, [46] and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

Sermon Notes



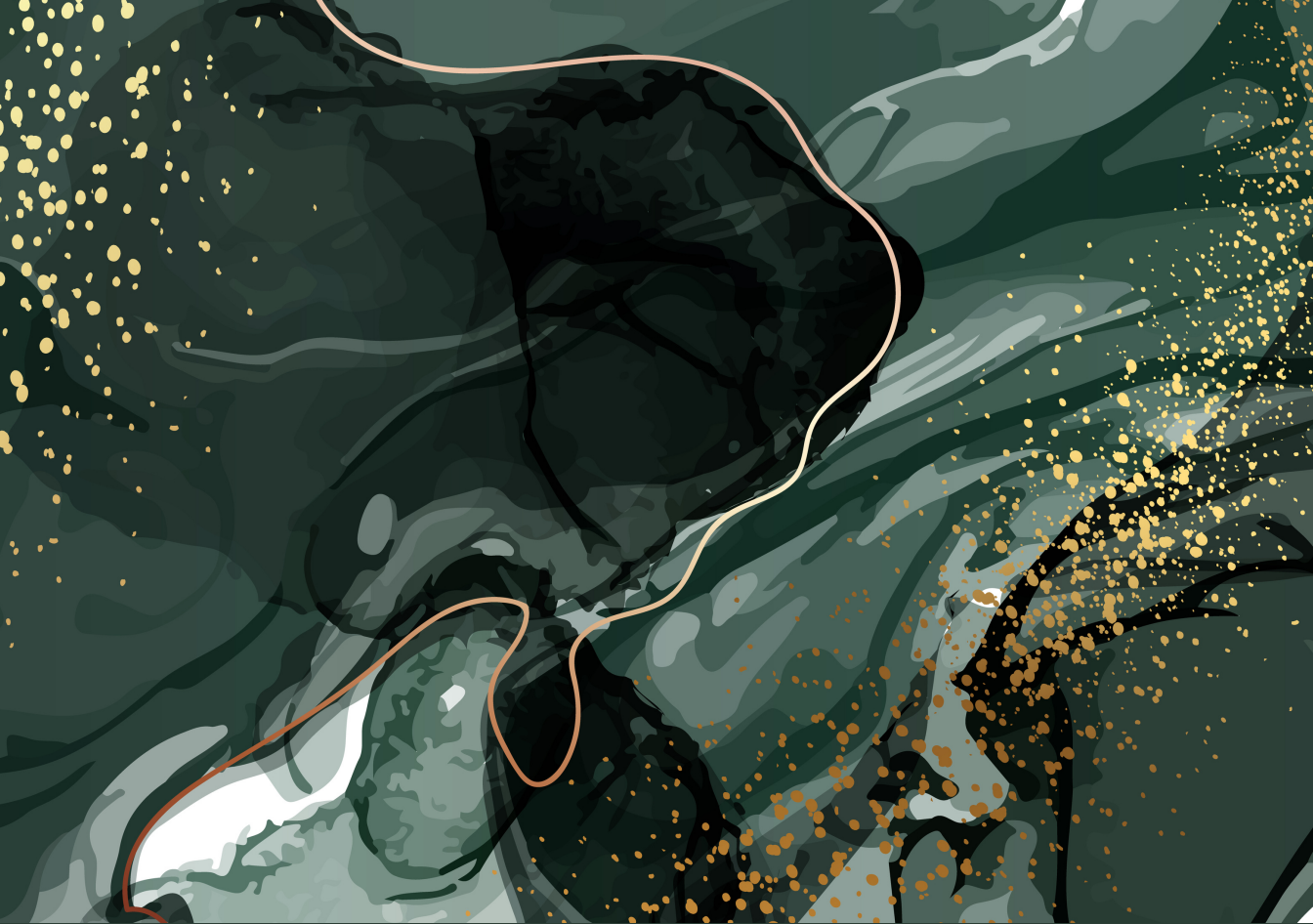
Midweek

Pray for the congregation's election of elders - that we would be humble and sober-minded in our devotion to the Lord, since it is a serious matter to elect anyone to be our overseers whom we are called to obey. Pray also that we would take seriously the picture of the church given in 1Peter.

[1] "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: [2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. [5] Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." [6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, [7] casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. [8] Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. [10] And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. [11] To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

1Peter 5:1-11

Respond



Week Two

Jesus Suffers Our Shame

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

Luke 22:47-65

[47] While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, [48] but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” [49] And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” [50] And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. [51] But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. [52] Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? [53] When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” [54] Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house, and Peter was following at a distance. [55] And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

Luke 22:47-65

[56] Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." [57] But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." [58] And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." [59] And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." [60] But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. [61] And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." [62] And he went out and wept bitterly. [63] Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. [64] They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" [65] And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

Sermon Notes

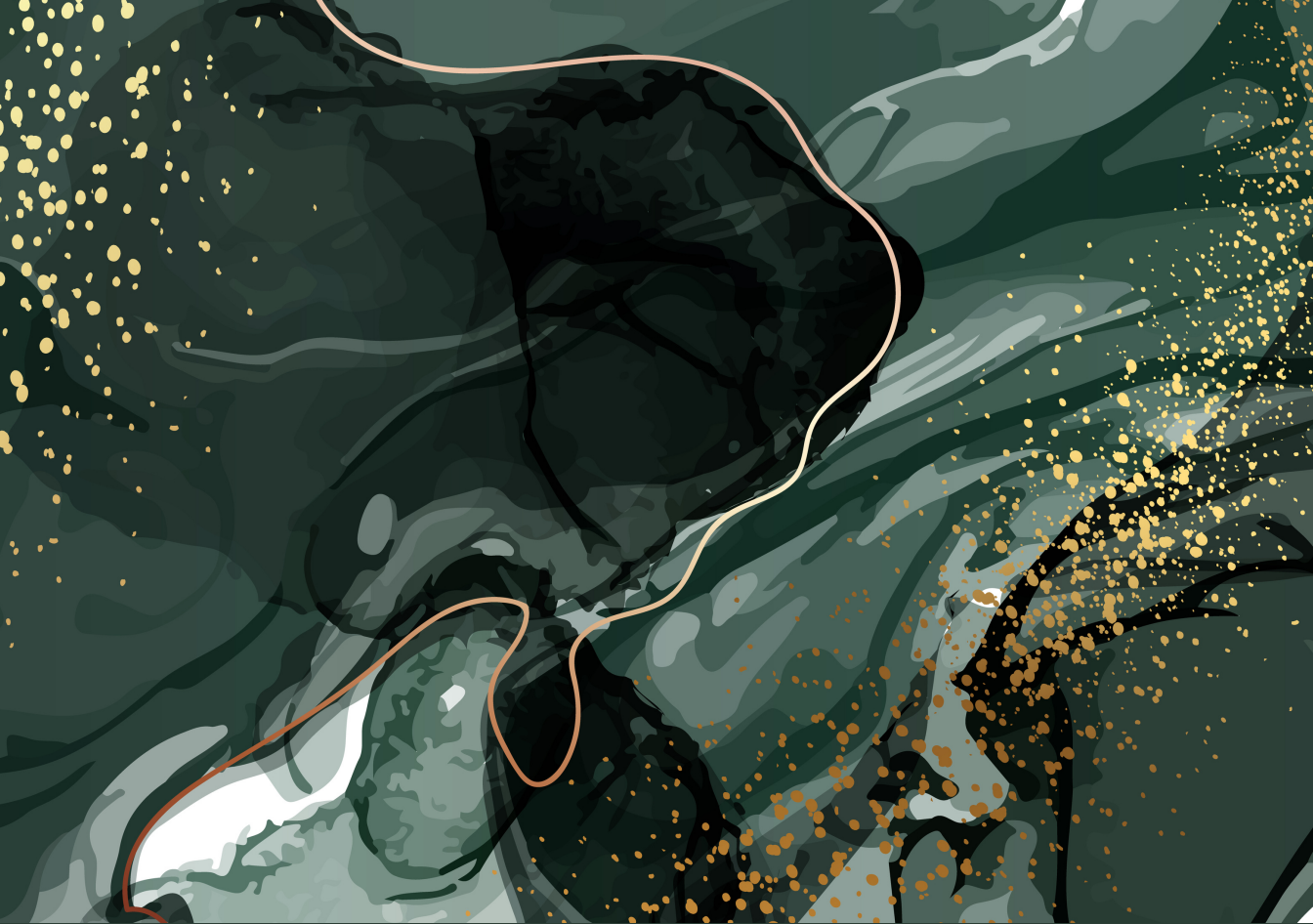


Midweek

Pray - for the Spirit to give us wisdom and insight into just how deeply our sin runs and how we can have confidence nonetheless that in God's justifying grace we stand forgiven.

"We cloak ourselves with invisibility to prevent further intensification of the shameful emotion. We are only as sick as the secrets we keep. And shame is committed to keeping us sick. Turning away, while temporarily protecting and relieving us from our feeling, ironically simultaneously reinforces the very shame we are attempting to avoid. This dance between hiding and feeling shame itself becomes a tightening of the noose. We feel shame, and then feel shame for feeling shame. It begets itself." - Curt Thompson

Respond



Week Three

Jesus Suffers Our Injustice

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

Luke 22:66–23.25

[66] When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, [67] “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, [68] and if I ask you, you will not answer. [69] But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” [70] So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” [71] Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

[1] Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. [2] And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” [3] And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” [4] Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.” [5] But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

[6] When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. [7] And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. [8] When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.

Luke 22:66–23.25

[9] So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. [10] The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. [11] And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. [12] And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

[13] Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, [14] and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. [15] Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. [16] I will therefore punish and release him.”

[18] But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—[19] a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. [20] Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, [21] but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” [22] A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.” [23] But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. [24] So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. [25] He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

Sermon Notes

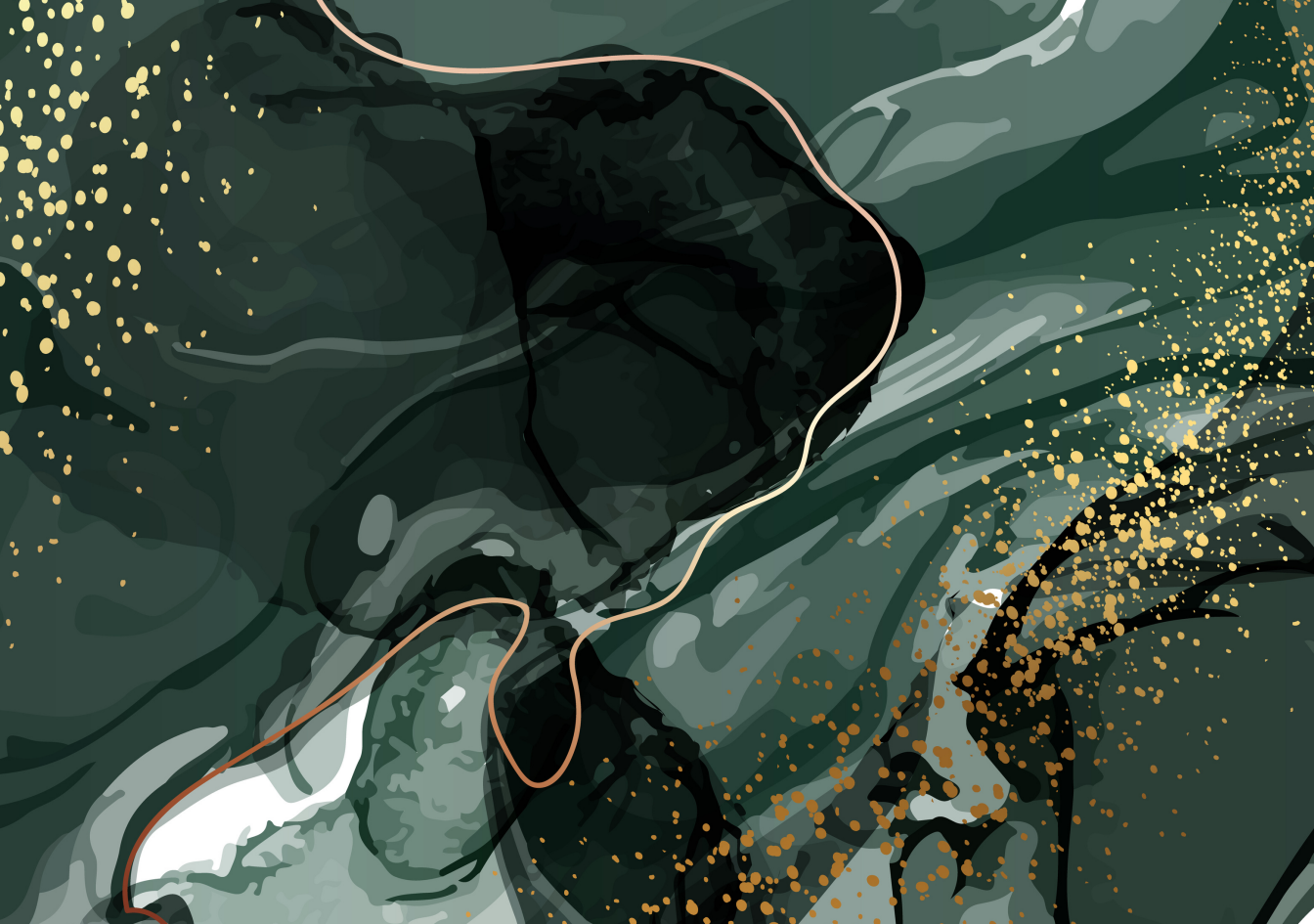


Midweek

Pray for Elder candidates Tyler Rice and Josh Kebabian - that they would be wholly consecrated unto the Lord; that the Spirit would prepare them to receive the calling of ordination; and that they would model for us all how to find life by participating in the sufferings of Christ.

“From the moment that you stand there dead in Christ and dead to everything you are and have and ever shall be and have, every breath you breathe thereafter, every thought you think, every word you say and deed you do, must be done over the top of your own corpse or reaching over it in your preaching to others. Then it can only be Jesus that comes over and no one else. Your life must be signed by the Cross, not just Christ’s Cross (there is really no other) but your cross in his Cross, your particular and unique cross that no one ever died—the cross that no one ever could die but you and you alone: your death in Christ’s death.” - William Still

Respond



Week Four
**Jesus Suffers Our
Estrangement**

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

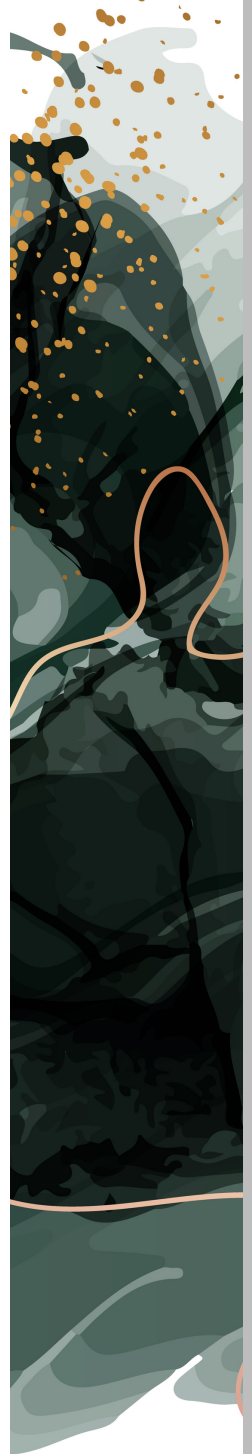
Luke 23:26-43

[26] And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. [27] And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. [28] But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. [29] For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' [30] Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' [31] For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

[32] Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. [33] And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [34] And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. [35] And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" [36] The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine [37] and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" [38] There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

[39] One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" [40] But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? [41] And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." [42] And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43] And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Sermon Notes

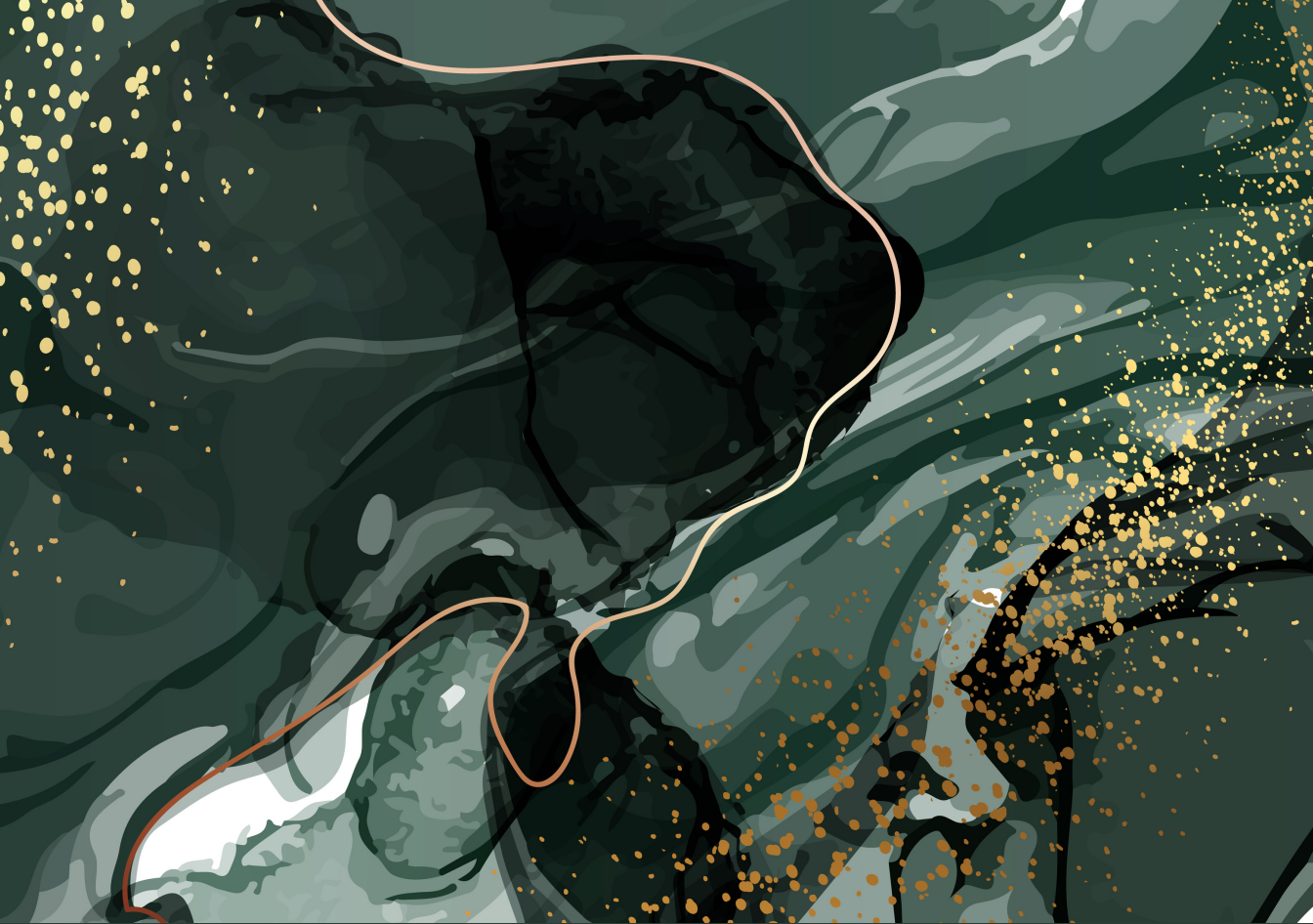


Midweek

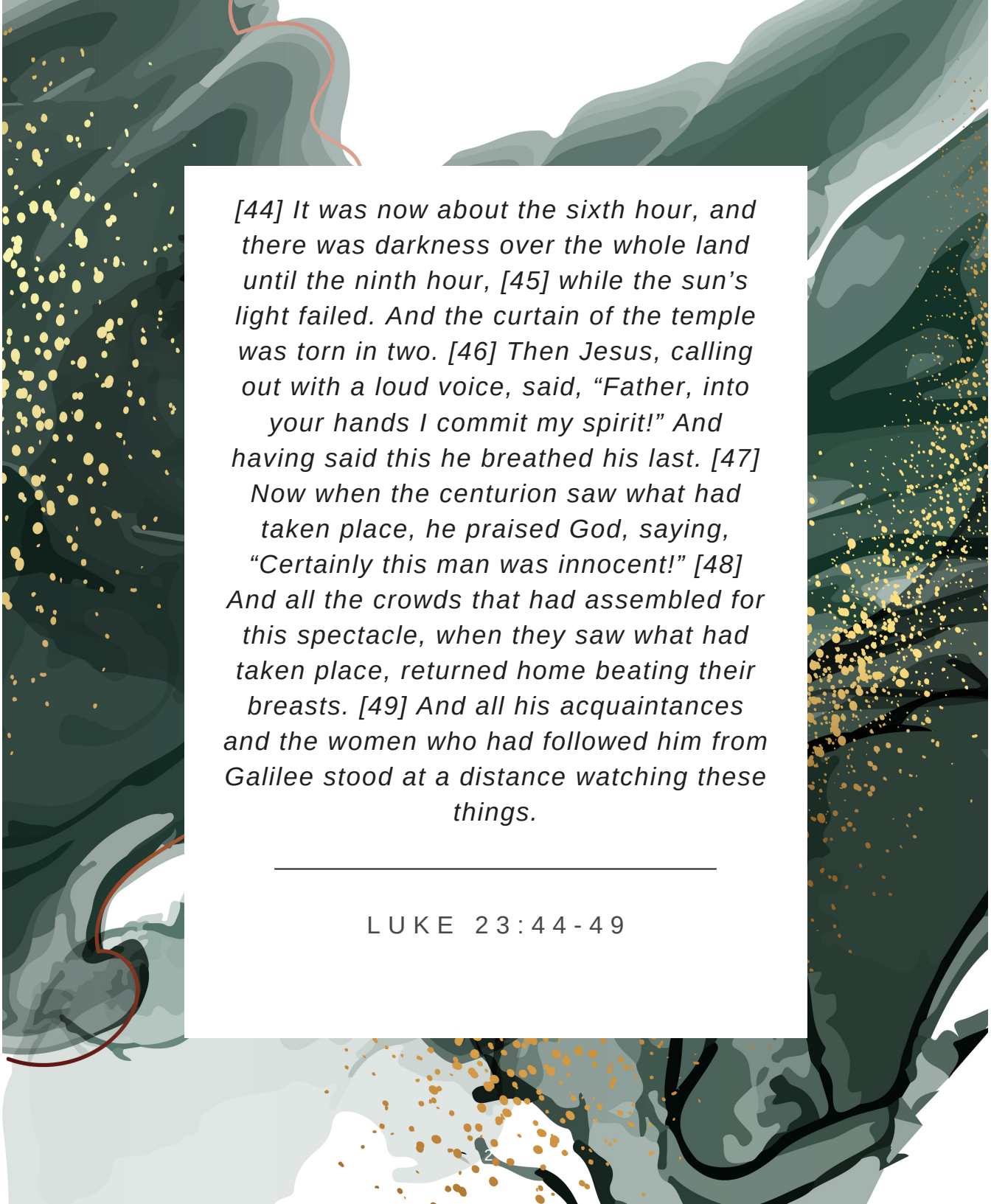
"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

"Lent is the liberation of our enslavement to sin, from the prison of 'this world.' And the Gospel lesson of Matt. 6:14-21 sets the conditions for that liberation. The first one is fasting--the refusal to accept the desires and urges of our fallen nature as normal, the effort to free ourselves from the dictatorship of flesh and matter over the spirit. To be effective, however, our fast must not be hypocritical, a 'showing off.' We must *"appear not unto men to fast but to our Father who is in secret."* The second condition is forgiveness--*"If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you."* The triumph of sin, the main sign of its rule over the world, is division, opposition, separation, hatred. Therefore, the first break through this fortress of sin is forgiveness: the return to unity, solidarity, love. To forgive is to put between me and my 'enemy' the radiant forgiveness of God Himself. To forgive is to reject the hopeless 'dead-ends' of human relations and to refer them to Christ. Forgiveness is truly a 'breakthrough' of the Kingdom into this sinful and fallen world." - Alexander Schmemmann

Respond



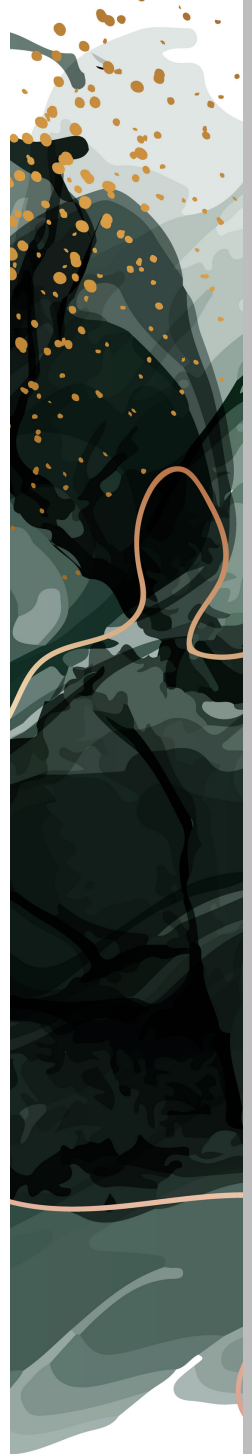
Good Friday

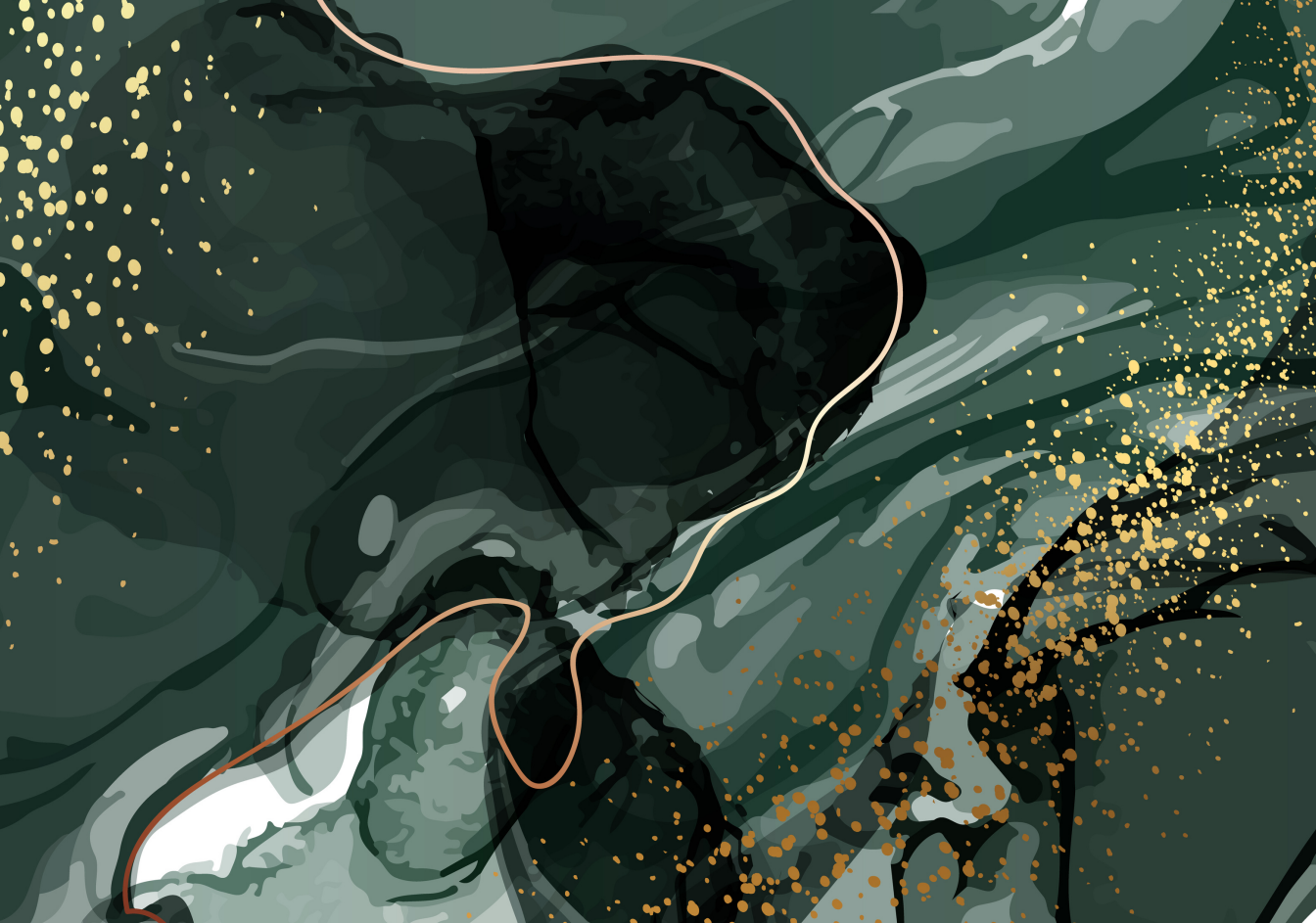


[44] It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, [45] while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. [46] Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. [47] Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" [48] And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. [49] And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

LUKE 23:44-49

Notes





Week Five

The New Story Begins

SUNDAY, MARCH 31: EASTER

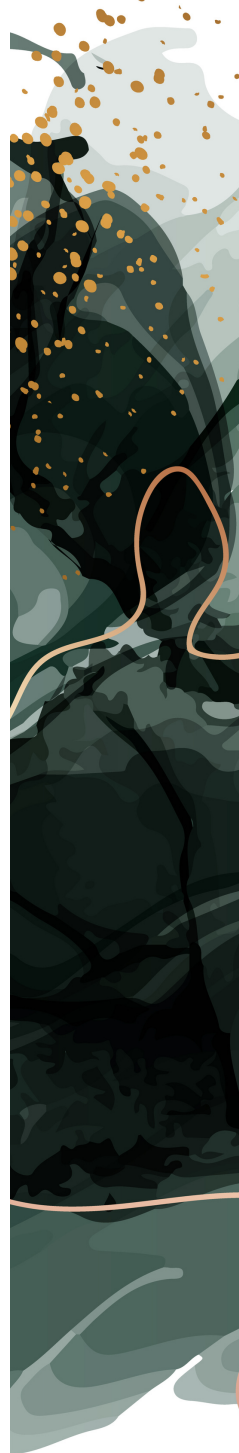
Luke 24:36-53

[36] As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" [37] But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. [38] And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? [39] See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." [40] And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. [41] And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" [42] They gave him a piece of broiled fish, [43] and he took it and ate before them.

[44] Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." [45] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, [46] and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things. [49] And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

[50] And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. [51] While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. [52] And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, [53] and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Sermon Notes



Midweek

This is now the reality of the world. Death has been defeated, sin has been forgiven, and we can taste heaven now by faith. After Paul's weighty description of the resurrection of Jesus as the firstfruits of what we too will inherit, he concludes thus,

"[56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

1Cor. 15:56-58

"The whole book thus attempts to reflect the Lord's Prayer itself when it says, 'Thy kingdom come, on earth as in heaven.' That remains one of the most powerful and revolutionary sentences we can ever say. As I see it, the prayer was powerfully answered on the first Easter and will finally be answered fully when heaven and earth are joined in the new Jerusalem. Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present. Our task in the present is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, which our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, is a sign of the first and a foretaste of the second." - New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright

Respond



Christ Presbyterian Church
New Haven

135 Whitney Ave. | New Haven, CT 06510 | 203.777.6960
The Office and Study Center are open by appointment with staff.
Pastoral Counseling is available by appointment.
www.cpcnewhaven.org