

# Luke's Stations of the Cross for Downtown Flagstaff

## **What are the Stations of the Cross?**

Back in the day religious folks would make a pilgrimage to Israel to visit the monuments and sites of Jesus's life and death as a way to grow in their faith. Eventually, to make it possible for devoted people to share this experience without the burden of travel, churches started hosting their own "stations" that followed the story of the last couple days of Jesus's life. Each station embodies a moment along the journey, and often used a piece of artwork for the viewer to not just think about the story, but to "enter into" it – it is the hope that each of us can imaginatively take the journey with Christ on His Way to the cross, and prayerfully reflect on it at each step.

## **Downtown?**

Originally the stations were real public places in Jerusalem. Then they became works of art in church sanctuaries – this is great for quiet, focused contemplation. It's the hope of this version that we take the stations back into the public – perhaps it will let us experience how the Way of Christ is present in the sacred space of any street corner, graffiti mural, or store front. And not just "any" of those but the very ones we have, here, in Flagstaff.

## **How does it work?**

At each station you'll get a piece of the story from the book of Luke, then a short piece for meditation, some questions to reflect on, the directions to your next station, and then a breath prayer to pray inside as you walk to the next station. This is a self-directed spiritual exercise – take as much time as you'd like for any station and any piece of the process. Plan ahead though – it will take about an hour just to walk the stations and read the prompts. It generally good practice to avoid rushing through it. You can do this alone, or with a partner/group – whatever works.

## **Why am I doing this?**

Doing the Stations has been a way that some people experience any of the following good things:

- 1) You'll enter the story in a more deep way than simply reading the text.
- 2) You will see how you are experiencing the story of Jesus, the crowd, and his followers yourself.
- 3) You may be compelled to new action – toward God or toward others.
- 4) You may consider if Jesus's Way is the Way that you are on, and celebrate or adjust as you see fit.

Those are all nice, but, really there are two outcomes that I want all of us to discover most, as we gaze upon Jesus at each station:

- 1) You will find new amazement and wonder at the goodness of Christ.
- 2) You will find new thanksgiving for His goodness rising up within your soul.

\*Some of us may have grown up in religious environments where the story of Jesus's suffering and death was used to make us feel, primarily, shame or guilt instead of wonder or gratitude. This can be difficult to divorce ourselves from this, but I invite you to do so – remember, when Jesus returns he isn't interested in increasing their shame, but in inviting them to be with Him again. It doesn't seem to be God's intention that the crucifixion leads to guilt, but instead to love and thanks – and while to be human is to struggle with guilt, be careful that it's guilt that God does not intend for you, or that causes you to take your gaze off of Christ and onto yourself.

I would love to hear about what your experience of the Stations was like! Please contact me at [kevin@thumc.com](mailto:kevin@thumc.com) if you have feedback, questions, comments, or, just want to chat.

## **0) Start – At Park**

*Begin at the war memorial in the middle of Wheeler Park.*

Memorials are objects and images that we keep so we don't forget something important – something so important that if we remember it, it will make us a certain kind of people, who live together a certain kind of way. We see the images, but they look back and see us, giving us the opportunity to reflect on our lives and make changes as we go forward.

Before we set out to journey to the cross with Jesus, let's prepare our hearts and minds and bodies to have an encounter with God and with ourselves at each Station – our hope is that each station isn't still-life for you, but an image, a story, and a moment for you to gaze upon Christ and you to find Him to gazing back at you as well.

When you are ready, begin the breath prayer below – pray it while you journey to your first Station.

**Journey:** walk north up the cement path that leads to Kendrick, one block, along the Urban Trail path, find a grassy spot at the end of the creek at Cherry.

### **Breath Prayer:**

Inhale: Lord, You are looking for me.

Exhale: And I long to see You.

## **1) The Garden (Lk 22:39-44)**

*He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.*

Jesus seeks one last quiet moment to be with His Father before it all begins. Once he finds the quiet patch of garden he brings one last request to the Father – he pleads for another Way forward. Other times when Jesus prays the Father speaks – but here all Jesus receives is Silence – the same Silence we might receive when we pray.

Our Way is not always God's Way, and Jesus experiences anguish over this. Choosing God's Way can be painful. How great that Jesus goes the Way that saves, that brings life, instead of the other Ways of the world.

**Reflect:** Which Way are you on – God's Way or Another Way?

**Journey:** Go back through the park to Aspen, go east to Beaver, then south to the courthouse, and stand outside the entrance.

### **Breath Prayer:**

Inhale: Even if You are Silent

Exhale: Help me to follow Your Way

## **2) The Trial (Lk. 22:66-71)**

*When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"*

The entrance to the courthouse is dark – there's no bright, sunny windows, like at City Hall. There's a metal detector inside. When you go in for your case, you don't control what happens - you are at the mercy of the Law and the Judicial System. By choosing the Way the Father has for Him, Jesus offers control over to the crowd. At any moment, he could call for a legion of angels, but he never does – he is at the mercy of people on a different Way. He's left his defense at the door. He holds nothing back. He's submissive. He's Vulnerable.

### **Reflect:**

- Who is Jesus? Is He open and vulnerable, or do you often feel like He is holding back on you?
- What do you hold back from God? From others? From yourself?

**Journey:** Go south to 66, and turn right, then walk to the top of the small hill in front of City Hall.

### **Breath Prayer**

Inhale: Kings take any things they want,  
Exhale: But You wanted us more.

## **3) The Shouting (23:18-25)**

*Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.*

Recently the crowd came to the hill to hear Him teach, to be fed, and to see Him heal. Once, they shouted praise, now they shout for execution. The crowd has chosen a different Way - they choose the Criminal, not for the Son. They give Barabbas mercy, they give Jesus the Cross. It's not right. It's not fair. There's no justice to be found.

**Reflect:** Who do you know that suffers from the mercy of the crowd today? How can Christ be with them?

**Journey:** Go east to Humpreys and go north. Turn right onto Birch, then another right to go south on Leroux. Stand across from the Old Town Shops, and look up at the mural above them.

### **Breath Prayer:**

Inhale: You stand with those who suffer  
Exhale: Help me stand with them, too

#### **4) The Help (23:26)**

*As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.*

There's a myth of Self-Sufficiency that's pervasive in our culture. We all want to be self-actualized, self-motivated, and self-made. We resist being needy, weak, or bankrupt – and there is a stigma for many people that are. We all want to be tall tales and superheroes – it's in the blood of America. And yet, in these kinds of old photos of pioneers and fore-parents of the West - aren't people always in a group? Somehow in our myth we think only of the Wagon and not the Wagon Train.

For Jesus to accomplish the work His Father gave him, he needed other people. There was a short moment in history when God Himself needed a mommy and a daddy to feed, clothe, and protect Him. Now, He needs someone to carry the cross for Him – The Son is too weak to do it alone.

**Reflect:** Have you been avoiding weakness, or have you shared your needs with others?  
How can you move from our Myth to God's Way?

**Journey:** Go south on Leroux to Aspen, turn left/east, go south on San Francisco and enter the alley on the left between West of the Moon & Red Curry, walk until you see the mural of feet on the garage doors to your left (if the doors are up, you'll see a bunch of bikes).

#### **Breath Prayer**

Inhale: Most High God, You were Weak,  
Exhale: Free me from the Need to be Strong.

#### **5) The Women (23:27-28, 49, 55)**

*A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him... But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things... The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.*

First, a great number and the women... then, all his acquaintances and the women... finally, just these women remain – women who had been with Jesus since the beginning. They refuse to leave, give up, be scared away – they follow in His footsteps along the Way until the very end. They Walk and they See. They cannot take His place, but they can make sure that Jesus is not walking alone, that His eyes may find their eyes in the crowd – eyes that are willing to See his pain and return a gaze of compassion, grief, and love.

**Reflect:** Who Walks with you? Who Sees you?  
And who do you Walk with? Who do you See?

**Journey:** go north to Aspen, turn left, and walk into the middle of Heritage Square.

#### **Breath Prayer**

Inhale: You are the One who Sees all,  
Exhale: You walk with us to the end.

## **6) Stripped (23:32, 34-35)**

*And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him...*

God once gave Adam and Eve clothes as a gift of protection – to cover the shame they felt from their nakedness and the danger of exposure. As the soldiers and the crowd Strip Jesus of his clothes, they remove the gift, and leave Jesus visible and Exposed. The leaders see his body, and respond by shaming him.

We live in a time when it seems like everyone is desperate to be seen, but terrified of being exposed. Social Media allows us the opportunity to be more visible than ever before, and yet, for us to carefully craft a digital "fig leaf" and control what people see, to "win" admiration and avoid shame. We live in a Heritage of shame, so we cover ourselves as best we can. Beggars, who often find their way to the Square, have no choice – they make themselves as visible as they can to get help.

### **Reflect**

Stand on the bench in the middle of the square – feel the gaze of any who may see you:

-If you were Exposed to God, would God respond with shame, or with love?

-Are you ready to offer compassion and safety to those who have been Stripped?

**Journey:** Head east on Aspen, turn right/south on Agassiz St, and stop at the corner of Agassiz and 66. Look across the street to the railroad car loaded with logs.

### **Breath Prayer:**

Inhale: "His father saw him, and was filled with compassion;

Exhale: "...Put His arms around him and kissed him"

## **7) Crucifixion (23:32-34)**

*Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."*

This town was built by logs – both literally and metaphorically. We're a lumber town of lumberjacks. Trees went down and shipped out to be used to build. We take a gift from the Creator and use it to make our own creations. Sometimes we create houses and hospitals. Sometimes we build crosses.

Jesus is at the mercy of the Way people have chosen to follow – it's the Way that will exploit others and seeks to punish wrongdoing, or to get revenge when we are hurt. As the nails go in, Jesus prays His Way: forgiveness. In the face of humanity's darkest moment, the Son cries for His Father to give grace and mercy to them.

### **Reflect:**

-Which Way are we following? The one that leads to death? Or the one that leads to life?

**Journey:** Go back north on Agassiz, turn left/west on Birch. When you get to the north side of Old Town Shops, look at the inside set of glass doors on the north entrance.

### **Breath Prayer:**

Inhale: Your Way gave Your life,

Exhale: To give life that gives life to give life.

## 8) Invitation (23:39-43)

*One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."*

"THIEVES BEWARE." It's what the inside door says. To keep ourselves safe we draw boundaries with others. Sometimes, though, we can let hurt and fear make us bitter toward others. We get fed up and we can stop treating others like guests and start treating them like enemies. We celebrate when we receive mercy for our own wrongdoing, then celebrate when others receive their full consequences.

Jesus hangs on the cross, and his last breaths are used to offer an Invitation to Thieves. The Son never gets bitter, resentful, fed-up, or tired of them. Even as he is dying, Jesus has no enemies, only friends – He welcomes anyone to enjoy all that He has in His Kingdom.

### Reflect:

- What words or message would be written on the doors of the Kingdom?
- Have you made anyone an enemy that Jesus receives as friend?

**Journey:** Continue west on Birch, turn right/north on Beaver, stop just past Cherry and look up at the statue of Mary holding Jesus on the side of the church.

### Breath Prayer

Inhale: Jesus, You are so strange -  
Exhale: You'll welcome any of us!

## 9) Breath (23:44-46)

*It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.*

There was a time when God needed a mother. She carried and birthed Him. She rocked, nourished, shush-ed Him. Taught him to walk and talk, and watched him play, then watched him teach and heal. Now, Mary watches her precious boy die, and the whole Creation feels the loss.

The words for "breath" and "spirit" are the same in Jesus's language. When God brings things to life in Genesis, he "breathes" His "Spirit" into them. It is the first gift from God when life begins, and it's the last thing Jesus can give away to His Father, and to us. The Temple curtain is torn – the Spirit of God is not Kept Away, but generously given to all.

### Reflect:

- How has God been generous with you?
- What have you Kept Away?

**Journey:** Continue north on Beaver, turn left/west on Dale, then left/south on Humphreys. Stop just past the entrance doors to San Francisco de Asis, where there are still Christmas/Advent decorations in the classroom windows.

### Breath Prayer

Inhale: Your life is as free as Breath,  
Exhale: I receive this life as a gift

## **10) Burial (23:50-53)**

*Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.*

The crowd, the leaders, the soldiers – their Way lead to death. Joseph followed a different plans for a different Way. He was Waiting Expectantly, but now Jesus is dead. He buries Jesus. Then goes home to Prepare. Joseph is in Advent - He once Waited for the Kingdom to be born, now he Waits for the Kingdom to come again.

Good or Bad – we have to let things die when it's time. We have to Bury them, Wait, and Prepare for new life to come. The mystery of Jesus's Way isn't that things may be *changed*, but that they may be *resurrected*. It often takes time – a Sabbath rest, a season of Advent. We are waiting, but we are Waiting Expectantly.

### **Reflect:**

- What do you bring that needs to die and be buried with Christ?
- What new life have you been waiting for?

**Journey:** This is the final station. You may stay, walk further, or finish here.

### **Breath Prayer**

Inhale: Lord, let my Way die

Exhale: May Your Way arise in me

Your journey through the Stations concludes here, and now we wait for Easter Sunday,  
where we may find the Resurrected Christ, together.

Blessings and peace on you, even in the midst of grief, tension, or challenge  
that Good Friday may leave with us as we wait.