

## The Cross: Instructions Sheet

*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!  
For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.*

Psalm 51:1-4

Read back through today's text from John 19. Put yourself in the story – maybe in the crowd, or with John and the 3 Marys, or standing next to a soldier. Consider all of that is happening in these lean verses . . .

- “So they took Jesus, and he went out bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of the Skull.” (v. 17)
- “There they crucified him . . .” (v. 18)
- “After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scriptures), ‘I thirst’.” (v. 28)
- “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (v. 30)
- “But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.” (34)

Picture Jesus turning to look at you, like he looked at Peter upon the 3<sup>rd</sup> denial of him, with the same grieved, compassionate, knowing look, at any point during these events that unfold. Consider your utter inability to live up to your own expectations, let alone love God or neighbor as faithfully as Jesus does. Feel the desperate need for someone who would make it possible for you to know The Father and receive the transforming work of The Spirit. Then see Jesus turn his face from you and resolutely set it toward that hill – the Place of the Skull. Hear the nails pounding into his flesh, securing his beaten body to the cross . . . making a way. Hear his agony of thirst . . . making a way. See him give up his spirit with the cry, “It is finished” . . . making a way. See the blood and water pour out of his lifeless side . . . making a way.

Reflect for a moment:

Linger at this cross. Use the physical one here to help you imagine being at the actual cross of Jesus. Kneel, sit far off, lay prostrate – take whatever posture helps you do this. Meditate on the remarkable reversal that took place on this cross – *our* sin for *his* righteousness. *Our* weakness for *his* strength. *Our* inability for *his* incredible competence.

On a piece of paper provided, name specifically what Jesus took on for you that day.

- How does pride, fear, self-centeredness, (fill in the blank) warp the way you relate to others?
- How have the hurts/hardships in your own life shaped you into someone other than who you want to be?
- What lens colors how you view God? Yourself? Others? His world?
- What else might the Lord be bringing to mind that you need to confess?

As you write, confess these things to The Father. As you fold the paper when you are finished, hear Jesus' words, "It is finished", in declaration that your forgiveness has been purchased! Add your folded paper to the basket at the foot of the cross, in demonstration of where all of our sins are dealt with. Spend a few minutes expressing your praise and gratitude to Jesus.

Consider these words from the hymn "Rock of Ages" in closing:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save me from its guilt and power.	Not the labor of my hands Can fulfill Thy law's demands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All could never sin erase, Thou must save, and save by grace.	Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace: Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die.	While I draw this fleeting breath, When mine eyes shall close in death, When I soar to worlds unknown, See Thee on Thy judgment throne, Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.
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