



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

... through the eyes of Jesus

Artist, Pam Dawson writes: 'I had long thought it would be good to try to paint a series on the 'Stations of the Cross' - Christ's journey in Passion Week - but did not want it to be too traditional or what one might usually expect. Eventually the idea came to me that I might try it through the eyes of Jesus himself - what he saw and felt - the humanity of Christ.'

1. JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH Luke 23: 13-25

We are standing with Christ as he surveys the baying crowd. We hear the words 'Away with this man! Release Barabbas' and 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Jesus knows the journey to death is truly beginning and he looks to the distant hills where he will undertake the dark journey of the cross. There is a barrier between him and the crowd. A separation. They have not dared to cross over to his teaching and promise. It is the sign of denial. We cannot see the eyes of the crowd or distinguish very much between them. They are blind to the truth and herd together as one.

Reflection: *Are we sometimes blind to Jesus' way? Do we join the crowd which denies him and hide our faith? Is there a barrier between him and us which stops us from truly serving and committing ourselves to him?*

2. CHRIST CARRIES HIS CROSS John 19: 16-17

Jesus is walking in the heat and as the sun beats down, he sees his shadow and that of the cross. He is carrying this great burden, the cross. He is taking this and the sins of the world on his shoulders and is bowed down with the weight. His humanity is weak but his Godly core is strong. He is doing this for us.

Reflection: *We all have burdens to carry – and in our human frailty try to cope on our own, thinking we are strong and can manage. Christ has carried the biggest burden of all and if we can submit to him and unburden ourselves, he will be there to help us bear our fears, worries and, above all, our sins.*

3. JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME Isaiah 53: 4-6

Here the weight of the cross has become too much for Jesus. He falls and the cross crashes to the ground with a sickening thud. But Jesus knows that it has to be picked up and that he must carry on. He displays his humanity – he feels the weight, weakens and falls, and hears the dreadful sound. As God, he could have miraculously lifted the weight but, in obedience to his father, he goes on with the journey that is set before him.

Reflection: *We find the journey of life hard at times and fall by the wayside giving in to anger and resentment and denial. Sometimes things are too hard to bear. We might think of the disciples who also found the journey difficult – they slept in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter denied Christ, they argued over who should be the greatest.*

4. JESUS SEES HIS MOTHER Luke 23: 27-28; John 19: 25-27

We can perhaps look at this painting from two perspectives.

- *Was Mary among the women Luke mentions? Does Jesus look at the physical face of his mother, a face he discerns in the crowd? Does he recall her love and care as he grew up? Is he sorry for the times that he had to leave her and carry out his heavenly father's bidding just as he is about to leave her now?*
- *John's gospel reports that Mary was certainly at the foot of the cross. Jesus sees that she can hardly bear to look at his suffering - her eyes are downcast. But her half smile shows her tenderness and love as she follows him to his death. She is actively involved and yet obedient - just as she accepted her role at the annunciation, so now she accepts the inevitable will of God.*

Reflection: *We might think of someone we are far away from either physically or mentally.*

5. SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY THE CROSS Mark 15: 21

Here Jesus has the weight temporarily lifted. Compassion has been shown. We are told Simon was forced to carry the cross. Was compassion shown by the soldiers? Or was Simon so close that he was in the wrong (or right) place at the right time? These strong hands are lifting a burden, sharing Christ's suffering.

Reflection: *We all have a cross to bear. We all know the relief of having the weight taken off our shoulders or minds by family or friends – and, of course, Christ can lift impossible burdens. Jesus' heart is lifted when we accept his sovereignty and especially when lost souls are brought to him or back to him. In what ways are we able to help others? It is good to remember that we cannot go it alone and to always be aware that beside us walks the Lord.*

6. A WOMAN WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS Revelation 7: 16-17; Luke 7: 37-38

Although the incident of a woman wiping the face of Jesus is not recorded in the Bible, it is good to think that some in the crowd were filled with compassion. Luke tells us how Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. She touched him not only physically, but surely his heart also. We might think of Veronica's cloth and the mysteries surrounding it. Jesus' face on the cloth is depicted because sometimes when we have something wrong with our face, we go to a mirror to look at ourselves. The artist has imagined Jesus imagining his image on the white cloth. What a relief it must have been for Jesus to have someone wipe his face. To quote French theologian, Michel Quoist: 'Were your tortured features imprinted on her cloth? Maybe. In her heart surely.'

Reflection: *Do we reach out to others? Do we have Jesus' image imprinted in our hearts?*

7. JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME Genesis 3: 6-7; Matthew 26: 33-35

Here a repeat of the image of the first fall but with a darker palette. Jesus' pain is increasing, his eyes are dimming as he suffers the weight of the cross, and he collapses with exhaustion dropping it, and again it thuds to the ground. His human side is failing but he will carry on with the journey to the ultimate end.

Reflection: *We might recall the fall of Adam and Eve and the knowledge of good and evil. How many times do we, as humans, choose the latter? Have we fallen from the true way? We recall the parable advising us to build our house (faith) on a foundation of rock. Jesus gives us the promise that if we trust in him, he will save us from falling. The reading from Matthew reminds us of Peter's fall. How often have we made promises and not kept them? Jesus' promise is steadfast. His physical fall is a metaphor for our slips and stumbles on our own road to faith.*

8. JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS John 19: 23-24

Jesus sees his clothes ripped upwards and away from him leaving him humiliated and naked before the crowd and his tormentors. We also see the purple robe to remind us of how he was also mocked as a false king. He has lost all dignity and his last possession, the simple robe he wore throughout his ministry. His garments will be gambled over by casting lots for ownership and possible future sale.

Reflection: *In our modern culture, possessions are so often seen as the ultimate goal, together with high position and show of wealth. Materialism is the new religion - idolised and strived for. Some of us may have given things up for Lent, but how much more did Christ give up for us? Not only his life, but in these last hours, he lost all which man considers important and was frail and naked. All his human weakness is in full view. Can we be open like this before God? Do we hide behind a façade? Is there a barrier behind which we keep our true feelings? What are the things we cling to, which can separate us from God?*

9. JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS Mark 15: 22-32

Jesus sees the nail and hammer coming down towards his flesh. There is no escape from the final agony and degradation. He is about to fulfil his promise of redemption, his sacrifice planned by God to save all who believe in him.

Reflection: *Are we willing to accept this gift, to give him sufficient thanks and adoration? Are we willing to serve him and sacrifice even a little part of our own selfish desires? Perhaps we want to stay comfortable and not get too near this powerful God.*

10. JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS Mark 15: 33-39

There is often a great darkness in the thought of death, and darkness covered the land when Jesus died. The darkest moment of all comes when we lose someone we love. There seems to be no light and everything appears to be finished.

Reflection: *Pause to remember a dark moment in your own life, not necessarily one of death.*

11. JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB Matthew 27: 57-61

A blank white canvas awaits the next scene in the story - Jesus is waiting to fulfil the final promise.

Reflection: *After the husband of the artist died, she felt that her life was an empty canvas with no direction as to where to begin or to carry on. As we look at the empty canvas, perhaps we can think of how we can move on in our lives with Our Lord, or maybe have a new beginning. What would you like to put on the canvas?*

12. RESURRECTION John 20: 19-23

Out of darkness comes light. The sun is rising, a new day is beginning a rebirth of life. A truly joyful moment and one which was experienced first by Mary Magdalene and then the disciples.

Reflection: *We surely can imagine the amazement of this miracle and look forward to the promise of eternal life.*

A PRAYER:

O Lord of life,
For each step that I might take,
Be my guide.
For each load that I might bear,
Be my strength.
For each challenge I might face,
Be my power.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.