

Praying Together

Spend time praying together with your group, giving time to share joys and concerns, but making sure you have enough time to actually pray. Jot down your own prayer requests before your gathering begins.



“Who is Barabbas?”

Matthew 27: 15-26; Isaiah 53: 4-6

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Notes on How to Pray for Others

How to Pray for our Church

Pray for unity

Pray for the board as it selects a chairperson for the pastor search team

Pray for the church staff during this time of transition

Pray for Easter (April 1), that people will be responsive to the Good News

Other:

Pray for our Community, the World, and our Missionaries.

Opening Up:

Were you ever in a play, or involved in drama? What role did you have?

Digging into Our Text:

Read Matthew 27.15-26. What do you learn here that you didn't learn in last week's sermon about Pontius Pilate? What does this text tell you about Barabbas? If you have time, take a look at Mark 15.6-14; Luke 23.17-23; John 18.39-40, and note what were the crimes of Barabbas. What else do you learn about him?

Use your imagination and draw up a character sketch of Barabbas. Was he an early version of Robin Hood, or a cold-blooded murderer? Now play out the drama. What happens to Barabbas *after* he exits the scene? Is there any possibility in your thinking that Barabbas actually came back to thank Jesus? What might have compelled him to, and what might have prevented him from coming back?

Sit with the terrible injustice of this event, and note the words of Pilate's wife in Matthew 27.19. Compare the character of Jesus with the character of Barabbas.

Identify some of the ways Jesus could have gotten himself out of this mess. Note what Jesus said earlier, as recorded in Matthew 26.53. Think about *why* Jesus didn't take advantage of his power to break free from the horror of crucifixion. What do you think is the ultimate purpose of Jesus' death? (Identify some Scripture verses to help you with this)

Read Isaiah 53.4-6, understanding that it was a prophecy written about Jesus. According to those verses, what did Jesus do for us? Underscore the terms that describe why we needed Jesus to suffer for us. What do the powerful final words in verse 6 mean to *you*? Are you repelled by what is being described in Isaiah 53? Are you drawn to it? What do they tell you about God? What do they tell you about us?

Getting Personal:

What motivated God to substitute his Son for us? Ponder Romans 5.8 in this light (see also Ephesians 2.4-5). How does this affect your understanding of God's character? What do you think God calls us to do in response to what he's done in Jesus?

For Pondering in Private:

Do you have a sense of how indebted you are to God for his gift of Jesus? In a very personal way, think of your own sins that Jesus took on himself to the cross, paying the full penalty. What is God calling you to do in light of that? Make a specific decision to do something, or say something, about that.