

XI PROMISE

TRULY I
TELL YOU,
TODAY YOU
WILL BE WITH
ME IN PARADISE.



WE ADORE YOU, O CHRIST, & WE BLESS YOU BECAUSE BY YOUR HOLY CROSS

CARE

JESUS SAID
TO HIS MOTHER
"WOMAN,
HERE IS YOUR
SON" AND
HE SAID TO THE
DISCIPLE
"HERE
IS YOUR
MOTHER."



YOU HAVE FED ME THE WORD, LORD JESUS, HELP US WALKING YOUR STEPS.

STATION XI: PROMISE

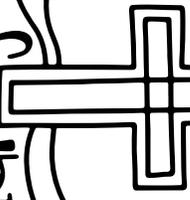
Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief: Luke 23:39-43

STATION XII: CARE

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciples: John 19:25-27

XI PROMISE

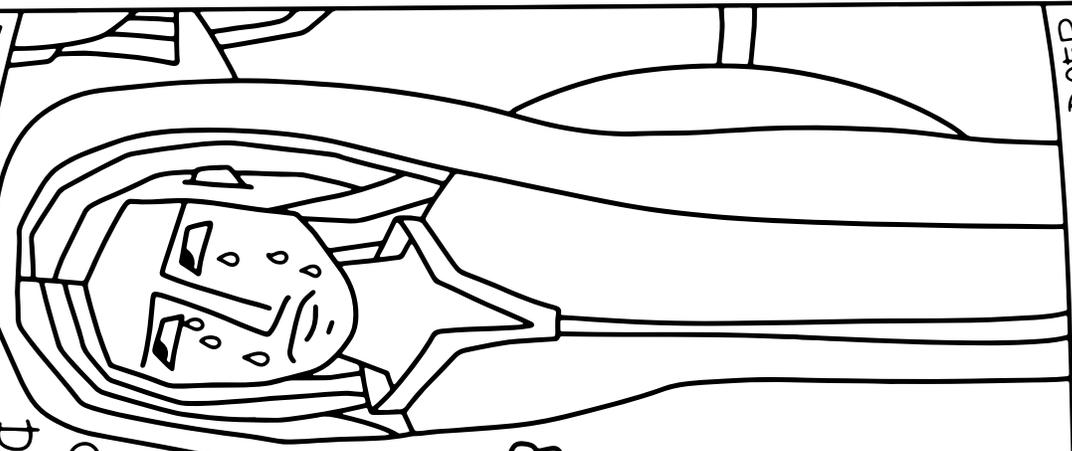
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"Woman
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YOU HAVE FOLLOVED THE WORLD. LORD JESUS, HELP US WALK IN YOUR STEPS.

STATION XI: PROMISE

Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief: Luke 23:39-43

STATION XII: CARE

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciples: John 19:25-27



Station XI: PROMISE

Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: Luke 23:39-43.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

The Botanical Gardens just north of Chicago are stunning places of natural beauty. In late fall, the gardens are filled with massive plantings of chrysanthemums in every imaginable hue. In winter, the beautiful twisted limbs and branches of barren trees are on full display against the dark sky. In the spring, tulips, daffodils, and crocus make their way up through the thawing ground. And at the end of summer, the air is perfumed with the scent of roses making their last appearance before fall sets in again. In short, the gardens are a little slice of paradise.

As he hung on the cross dying, Jesus promised the thief next to him, "Today, you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This word that Jesus uses, a Persian word referring to a "park" or a "garden", only appears two other times in the scriptures. Paul uses it in 2 Corinthians when speaking of a vision he had (2 Corinthians 12:3-4), and John uses it in the book of Revelation to describe the life that awaits those who have been faithful: "To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). Jesus' words in Revelation are clearly an echo back to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. The promise of Jesus is that, in the end, all things will be restored to their perfect state. Paradise.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. A garden of flowers appears to be emerging from the base of the cross. Paradise seems to be starting to bloom. During the worship of Holy Week, many churches sing the ancient hymn, *Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle*. The last stanza says this: "Faithful cross, true sign of triumph, be for all the noblest tree; / none in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit your equal be; / symbol of the world's redemption, for your burden makes us free."

The message of this eleventh station is that, for those who place their trust in Jesus, paradise begins to blossom...right here, right now. But just like the botanical gardens, there is a creative cycle in the paradise of life. Sometimes things are blooming all around us. Sometimes beauty is lying dormant for a while underneath a frozen earth. And sometimes things must wither and die in order to be renewed and reborn. This is all part of the life of paradise. But the promise of Jesus to the thief, and to us, is that *today* you can live with him there.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

There were two criminals crucified alongside Jesus on the day he died. One of them made fun of Jesus. But the other one knew that Jesus done nothing wrong. Because the man was a criminal, he thought that God didn't love him. But Jesus loved the man very much, and promised him that he would be able to live in paradise with him forever.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- What do you think heaven looks like?
- Have you ever wondered what happens to people when they die?

GOING DEEPER

- Jesus promised the criminal that today he would be with him in paradise. What do you think about the idea that paradise begins here and now?
- How might it change the way you practice your Christian faith to believe that we do not have to wait until we die in order to live in paradise with Jesus?



Station XII: CARE

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciples

SCRIPTURE

Take some time to read and reflect on this week's passage: John 19:25-27.

REFLECTION FOR ADULTS

Around 250CE, a devastating plague swept from Ethiopia across North Africa, then to Italy and the Western Empire. At the height of the plague, which was most likely an outbreak of smallpox, 5,000 people a day were said to be dying in Rome. Many Roman citizens simply abandoned their family and neighbors, tossing them out into the street to die. The early Christians however, went into the streets, caring for the dying, and burying the dead. Almost two hundred years later, around 416CE, the Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt organized groups of volunteers from the local church to transport and care for the sick. They were called *parabalani*, "the reckless ones," because they ventured into places of sickness and death where others refused to go. Where did these early Christians get the inspiration to be so reckless in their caring, not only for fellow believers, but for all their fellow citizens?

At this twelfth station we find the answer to that question. Jesus, now in his last moments of life, concerns himself not with his own suffering, but with the suffering of his mother and one of his best friends who were gathered at the foot of the cross. Mary, his mother, was most likely a widow at this point in her life. Now, with the death of her eldest son, she would be relegated to the lowest rungs of society with no one to look after her. So Jesus motioned to John, the beloved disciple, and asked him to take Mary into his own care. *Behold your mother.* And then he asked Mary to look after John as if he were her own son. *Behold your son.* There, at the cross, Jesus asked his followers to be reckless in their concern and care for one another. He asked them to strip away the traditional ideas of what constituted a family, and to forge a new family of faith that would care for one another at all costs.

Tertullian (160-220AD), an early Christian leader, once said that when the Romans saw Christians in action, they would exclaim: "See how they love one another!" As Christianity spread, so did the early Christians' love. They went on to establish some of the first hospitals in the world, buried the dead with dignity, and treated all people with care and respect.

Take a look at the picture you are coloring. The beloved disciple's arm is lovingly placed around Mary's shoulder. As you color, spend some time thinking about who is in need of your care at the moment.

REFLECTION FOR CHILDREN

Jesus taught us that we are all part of God's family. When he was dying on the cross, he asked his friend, John, to take care of his mother. And he asked his mother, Mary, to treat John like she would treat her own son. Even when Jesus was dying, he wanted to show us how to love and care for each other.

DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

- What are some ways you could show another person you care for them?
- Have you ever thought about the people in your church as your family?

GOING DEEPER

- When have you been "reckless" in your care for another person?
- How might your relationships with people in your congregation or community change if you thought of them as family?