

## Scene 5 Anguish

We think about sacrifice, sitting with the heartache and suffering of Good Friday before the relief and rejoicing of resurrection on Easter Sunday. Can we appreciate the hills without the valleys? Could Jesus have related to humankind unless he endured suffering? In this week's character monologue, the thief on the cross reflects on Jesus' stepping down from glory in order to relate to him.

### The cross – Mark 15.33-39

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'



### Voices

#### Here Bereaved member of a congregation

If you'd told me a year ago that this is where I'd be, well... disbelief is an understatement. Losing someone who meant the world to you, someone you took for granted would always be there. It's true what they say, you never imagine it will really happen to you, but this virus doesn't discriminate – even the young and fit can be taken. Worlds can fall apart. No words can make it better. I flip between feeling God holding me and feeling a long way from faith. Coming up to Easter – let's just say Good Friday will have a whole new meaning for me and my family this year. The suffering, the pain, the crying out to God in anguish, the emptiness and loss, confusion, disbelief that someone so loved could ever really leave this world. I wonder sometimes, in that moment when Jesus breathed his last, did God feel the anguish I feel? Or was it a reunion for them, rather than a loss? Do I understand now how Mary felt, how the disciples felt that day? I believe my loved one is in heaven, but that's not helping me much right now. I've just got to have some hope that we will see each other again. I wonder if Jesus' friends had a sense of hope, or if – like now – everything felt lost and out of kilter. Does God really understand what I'm going through, because of the events that happened that Easter time? Am I closer to the heart of God because of the pain I feel? I wonder...

#### There Thief on the cross beside Jesus

If you'd have told me a year ago that this is where I'd be...I'd probably be surprised I wasn't caught sooner. I've lived my life on thin ice. Stealing to eat, stealing to live, to keep a roof over my family's heads. Day to day living has been such a struggle, I'd never really given much thought to the big questions – spirituality, God and all that. Until my final day, my final hours – beside this man, Jesus, who has done no wrong yet still ended up between two thieves who got what they deserved. They say your life flashes before your eyes when you're dying – mine wasn't much to speak of, other than the love in my family. I've never done anything noble or heroic, I've always been the taker not the giver. I felt entitled to what I took, but I didn't deserve it, not really. And yet, this man Jesus – as crazy as this sounds, I felt that he was there for me – those final words he said to me, Today, you will be with me in paradise...they gave me something I'd never felt before – purpose, meaning. There is more to life than food and shelter and clothing and things – this man, this incredible, innocent man showed me so, by the look in his eyes, the determination and belief in his face. He didn't just believe, he knew where our souls were going after our bodies had given up. I truly believe this man was the Messiah, the Son of God, and yet he chose to step down from his glory and die on a cross, next to a thief like me. Somehow, he found forgiveness and generosity in his heart to offer me a place in his paradise. I knew he was there for me, to suffer and bleed and die with me, so he would know how it felt, so he could release me from all the trouble I'd made for myself all my life. With my final breath, I gave thanks to God for sending his Son to die beside me, to understand, to truly relate to me. Am I closer to the heart of God because of the pain I feel? I wonder...

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### Conversation and reflection

- 1 What do you feel or think about the idea of Jesus being able to relate to our personal pain and suffering because of the crucifixion, and all that came before it?
- 2 Discuss the conversation between Jesus and the thief on the cross, and what it may mean to you.
- 3 How might Jesus' suffering and death speak to someone who has been bereaved?

### Listen

[Christ Crucified](#) Lou Fellingham

[And Can it Be?](#) recorded for Songs of Praise

### Prayer action

If you feel comfortable to, say the names of people out loud whom you know who have died or been adversely affected during the pandemic. Pray together:

Loving God, we hold our friends and family before you. Words are not enough, but you hear the silent prayers in our hearts. Bring comfort and peace, enable us to support those left behind, and give us hope of life everlasting in your kingdom. In your name Jesus, Amen.

### Follow-up activity

Make space this week to sit down with a pen and paper or some simple craft materials. Sketch or make the cross in whatever form or style, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you – whether it is basic or complex. Write words or prayers in or around your cross, if you wish.