

In these difficult days, Christians also remember the sufferings of Jesus. We remember the way he was publicly condemned, mocked, beaten and crucified. This season of reflecting on Jesus' suffering is a good time to reflect on the difficult times we are going through now.

Consider these things:

1. Christ Jesus understands our troubles.

We have trouble. The news stations are giving non-stop coverage to COVID-19. Like war-time news coverage, we hear daily reports of casualties. I don't like seeing those reports; maybe you don't either. Our country and all other countries are working to contain the virus. There is stay at home orders, school closures, business losses, unemployment. We have been through a lot of trouble in the past few weeks.

Jesus knows trouble. Jesus is 'familiar with suffering.' He suffered loneliness, betrayal, rejection and mockery. He suffered a brutal whipping, thorns pressed into his scalp and hit on his head, nails driven through his hands and feet. He suffered the shame of having his clothes taken from him and being on public display. In anguish he cried "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When we struggle with our pains, we can take comfort knowing that, in Jesus, God himself took on our sorrows. He took on those sorrows in love. To be God with us in the dust and in the dark. By his Spirit, he is with us in our troubles.

2. Reflect on God's care.

Consider using the following self-guided meditation over the next few days.

Take a few moments to let your inner thoughts settle. Be still.

Reflect on the following passages (they are written out on the back)

Isaiah 53: 3-6	Bore our sorrows
Matthew 27:27-31	Jesus' suffering
Hebrews 4:14-16	Receive mercy

As you begin, ask God to speak to you through the Scripture. Read one passage slowly and focus on how Jesus carried our sorrows or on how Jesus suffered, or how he carried our suffering, or his mercy for us. Sit quietly for a minute and pray your thoughts to God.

Read the passage once more, resting in God's presence in Christ Jesus for you and with you.

Isaiah 53:3-6

He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Mathew 27:27-31 and 45-46

²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.