

youthESource Worship

Christ in the Midst of Crisis

by Bill Wolbrecht

This worship experience, designed for use during Lent, loosely follows the ancient "Stations of the Cross" devotion, which developed out of a desire on the part of medieval Christians to retrace in faith the last hours of Jesus' life. In the Scripture readings these "Crisis Stations" will touch some events in those last hours, as well as other crises during Jesus' public ministry, and relate them to our own crises and those in the lives of others. As is traditional, the "Voice of Jesus" is heard at each "Station." Suggestion: to underscore a major thrust of this service--that we are ALL to be Jesus to our neighbor--have a different person read each "Voice of Jesus."

Let the Spirit work as you prepare for this service. Use a combination of posters, banners and slides to depict the various themes of the "Crisis Stations." You may want to provide the opportunity for a "journey" of sorts, a cross-led procession from "Station" to "Station," having your posters/banners in various parts of the church. In your planning, consider especially the elderly. They love youth-led services, but they may have difficulty in moving from place to place, particularly if the movement is up and down a lot of stairs. So if elderly folks will be involved in your service, plan your "Stations" to make it as easy as possible for them to participate.

At each station, sing a verse or chorus of a song or hymn before moving to the next station. Consider using a Lenten hymn with multiple verses. You can use the *Lutheran Service Book* to find hymns, or consider the lists of contemporary worship songs found at <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=524>.

Many things are happening and being said in these "Stations," but two things must be underscored. First, it's okay to feel the things we feel in the midst of various crises. It's at that point that Jesus touches us with His healing power and presence. Secondly, this service, ultimately, is not the retelling of Jesus' journey to the cross, but a strong reminder of OUR need for constant cross-bearing and dying as the only true way to real and abundant life. Otherwise, we are just pretending that Easter didn't happen.

CRISIS (kri ' sis) "...a turning point in the course of anything;
a decisive or crucial time, stage, or event..."

CHRIST (krist) "...the Anointed One, the turning point of every crisis,
bringing hope to despair, life out of death, and meaning to that life..."

Originally published in Resources for Youth Ministry 80:1.

Updated for youthESource in February 2015

CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

Voice of Jesus: *These "Crisis Stations" you are about to walk, you do not take alone. I walk with you. Though you are you, and I am Me, yet we are truly one--one Christ. And therefore My way of the cross two thousand years ago and your way now are also one. But note this difference. My life was incompletely until I crowned it by My death. Your life will be complete only when you have "died" and crowned it with my gift of new and abundant life. Want to follow Me? Really? Then deny yourself--that's "death," you know! Take up your cross--you'll look good on wood--and let's get going.*

CRISIS STATION: INSIGNIFICANCE

Reading: Luke 19:1-10

Crisis Cry: I can't see what's going on! I never know what's happening! I always get lost in the crowd. The crisis of my life is that there IS no crisis. Nothing bad ever really happens, but nothing good ever really happens, either. "Dullsville"--that's my life! I'm JUST a housewife. I'm JUST a teenager. I'm JUST an employee. I'm JUST a senior citizen. How can anyone...how can God be interested in me?

Voice of Jesus: *I'm going to your house today. By My presence you will come to know the beauty and splendor of your personhood. Oh, and by the way, salvation has come to you through Me; and because it has, you can be the "tree" that "lifts" someone else up to see Me.*

Prayer: Jesus, in the dullness and monotony that often mark my days, help me to celebrate Your presence, for You make me someone very special indeed.

Song or Hymn

CRISIS STATION: COMPETITION

Readings: Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-30

Crisis Cry: It's important...to be important. Prestige. Position. Wealth. Being self-sufficient. That's the mark of success. That's the source of pride. The only glory is in being first...winning. Winning isn't the main thing; it's the only thing. A tie is like kissing your sister. Nice guys finish last.

Voice of Jesus: *If you are consumed by your passion for winning, your private resentments and secret grudges, your petty envy of others who have more; if you have sold yourself to your work, your position, your greed, then know that I am with you and it is time to "die." Whoever wants to be first--important--must be a servant of all. Looking for glory? Really? Then, find it in My cross. Seek not winning by defeating others, but by excelling in the use of the unique gifts I have given you.*

Prayer: Jesus, remove my consuming passion to be first, in control, having everything my way. Help me to see how shallow, superficial, and ultimately destructive this world's glory can be. Grant me grace and power to be, without shirking suffering or crisis, the cross-bearing servant You have called me to be.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: REJECTION

Readings: Mark 6:1-6; Matthew 9:9-13

Crisis Cry: I want to be accepted, liked, a part of the gang. I don't want to stand up for what is right, what is true...not if it means the loss of my friends. Why, they'll laugh at me, make fun of me, have nothing to do with me. Why should I associate with THOSE kind of people? If you're not choosey, you can get a bad reputation, lose your friends. I'd almost rather die!

Voice of Jesus: *Come on...you've got some "dying" to do! I have not called you to be popular or safe and secure, but simply to be...faithful...to Me and My will for your life. Choosey? You want to be choosey in picking with whom you will associate? I was known for the company I kept. I invite you to die to selfishness and do the same. I have chosen you to be My own. And in My choosing of you, you are free from having to be choosey.*

Prayer: Jesus, what you ask is so very hard. It calls for courage and self sacrifice and I am weak. Please give me strength. Don't let me run away because of fear. Jesus, live in me and act in me and love in me...to others.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: SPIRITUAL

Readings: John 13:31-35

Crisis Cry: What have you done, God? You thought You were so smart and almighty and creative! Just look at me, this monster You have created! I can't do anything right! Look at all the pain and brokenness, the cruelty and unhappiness in Your world! Starving babies! What do You care? I know You're there, God, but...so what? What difference do You make? Where is hope? Right now the score is Evil 55, Good 6! I want answers! Solutions! I've got to know! And I swear, if just one more person says, "Just have faith, everything will be all right," why, I'll throw up!

Voice of Jesus: *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things NOT seen. Even when you don't sense My presence or feel My power, I am there. I am there to fill the great emptiness of your life. I will never let you go, as I recreate, refresh, revive, renew you. You won't be exempted from suffering and crisis. Problems will go unsolved, questions will go unanswered. But in the midst of uncertainty and lack of understanding, you will never, ever walk alone.*

Prayer: Jesus, open my heart and my vision to see and experience Your love, Your healing power in y life. And Jesus, thank You for the love and presence and hugs of others in time of need. Help me to do the same.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: BETRAYAL

Reading: Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75

Crisis Cry: God, I hurt! Me! Of all people! I failed! I promised! I swore I wouldn't do it, but I did! I gave my word, by I broke it! I betrayed myself! I betrayed her! I betrayed his trust! My friends were counting on me. I feel sick, nauseated! The shame! The embarrassment! I hate myself! I can't be trusted...and no amount of point out how often others have failed me, betrayed me, let me down, lessens the reality of the pain I feel right now! I was just worried about what others might think! And it was just to save my own skin!

Voice of Jesus: *I have come that you might have life. I have come to offer you My forgiveness, in the midst of your failures and weakness, moods and betrayals. Learn, first, to trust Me. In doing so, you'll find power to once again be a trusted one...by yourself...by others. Oh, yes, I...have already saved your skin!*

Prayer: Jesus, give me faith. Remove my fear of myself and others. Free me up that, if need be, I may bear the condemnation of the whole world, rather than be found false and faithless when it comes to bearing my cross and following You.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: DESPAIR

Reading: John 20:1-2, 11-18

Crisis Cry: What's the use? I give up. I've done everything I can. My strength is gone. Guilt overwhelms me. Fear consumes me. I feel drained, worthless. I don't understand. My world has fallen apart. It's God's will? Baloney! I'm alone, bewildered, heartbroken, empty. I don't know what to do next. I'm falling apart! God, where are You when I need You? I'm in trouble but I can't find You or feel You near.

Voice of Jesus: *Mary...and John...and Donna...and Jim...and Courtney...and Kevin...all of you...each and every one of you--You are Mine. I call each of you by name. And in My voice, My child, hear this: your body may be hurting, your spirit may be broken, your hope seemingly destroyed. But no power on earth, no force in hell, can separate you from Me. Cry? Yes. In your pain, your grief, your loss, your sense of being overwhelmed, your brokenness, your despair. Cry. Cry your guts out, unashamedly, from the depths of your heart. But know this, that you are not alone with your tears.*

Prayer: Jesus, never let me feel that any sin or failure, any pain or fear of mine is greater than Your love. No matter what I have experienced in the past, in Your presence I can begin anew.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: LOSING CONTROL

Reading: Mark 4:35-41

Crisis Cry: Ah, this is great! I'm in control. I know what to do. I'm the captain of my ship, the master of my fate. Go ahead and sleep, Jesus. Everything's cool...or is it? What's happening? Listen to that thunder of despair. My God, the storm clouds of fear are rolling in. The rushing winds of change! What's happening? Save me! I perish!

Voice of Jesus: *You're all in the same boat. When you trust only yourself, all hell will break loose, waves and storms of life will overwhelm, if not drown, you. Your very security will be out of control. Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? Have your fear, but know that in all the storms and crises, the trials and suffering you experience, I am there...and you have the opportunity to grow in faith and learn to trust Me, rather than yourself...or others...or things...or nothing!*

Prayer: Jesus, strip me of vain pride, conceit and worldly values, and give me the graciousness of thanksgiving. You have calmed the storms of my life. You have delivered me from my distress. You are bringing me safely to the other side. Use me as Your instrument of calm and peace. Use me to touch the lives of those who are in the same boat of fear and unbelief.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: UNBELIEF

Reading: Matthew 19:16-30

Crisis Cry: I'm young! I'm rich! I'm successful! I've got it made! I did it! On my own! I am really set for life. I have a fine moral reputation. I've worked hard for what I have. Me! Me! I am really something! What more could there possibly be? What more could I possibly do?

Voice of Jesus: *Do? What could you possibly do? Give it all up...every bit of it! Everything I had I gave up--for YOU! And I have called you, not to be successful, in control, on top...but, simply, to be faithful and trust Me! Yes, if you really want to be something, do some "dying," that you may be free to reach out to touch your neighbor's need. In your Baptism, you were marked with the sign of the cross and equipped, by the Spirit, to be a cross-maker and marker. Make the sign of the cross on all you meet and touch. And never forget that you and all others are holy and special because you have been touched with My cross. Whoever and whatever bears My cross becomes holy.*

Prayer: Jesus, touch me with Your healing love when I try to play the big-shot, when I let who and what I am stand in the way of who and what You want me to be. Free me from my self-made prisons of success and self-trust. I believe. Help me deal with my unbelief.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: LONELINESS

Readings: Matthew 27:47, Luke 23:46

Crisis Cry: Where are my friends? Where's God in all this mess? Why doesn't God answer me? No one stands up for me. No one defends me. No one cares. Look at all I do for others, and this is the thanks I get! No one is listening. All the doors to home seem shut. I feel like I've lost the key to life. I'm abandoned! Neglected! Deserted! I'm so afraid, so alone!

Voice of Jesus: *If you can only groan because you hurt so terribly inside...if you feel so alone that you wish you were dead, then know that I have become a part of your humanity, including your pain and loneliness, your misery and despair, and I am with you always, with all of My life and light and love in abundance.*

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for touching me with Your presence, so that I no longer need ever walk alone. Into Your hands I commit my spirit, trusting that when I suffer the hell of abandonment and forsakenness and loneliness, You hear my cry and touch my pain. And help me to sense the pain and loneliness in others, that I may be an instrument of Your love.

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CRISIS STATION: DEATH

Readings: Luke 23:44-46; Mark 16:1-6

Crisis Cry: My God, would You just look at all this "death" and "dying" going on around here? Competition! Life out of control! Betrayal! Oppression! Unbelief! Insignificance! Despair! Rejection! Loneliness! Sickness! Depression! Fear! Shame! Guilt! Natural disasters! And not only these "deaths," but that death we learn to know only too well as, one by one, we lower our parents, our spouses, our brothers and sisters, and our friends into that stark hole in the ground. That death is mine to die also, and by my Easter shouts I dare not pretend that I will somehow escape it.

Voice of Jesus: *Have you gotten the point? In the mist of crisis, even death, you--yes, you--are called to be my sign of the cross. You are free to die all the "deaths" you confront in crises, because only through that "dying" comes life. Don't skirt your "dying," protect and trust yourself, or try to keep things in your own control. Any crisis, and decisive, crucial time in your life, is a turning point, and ultimately ends up as a question of trust. Do you trust yourself? Others? Things? Or Me? The cross is always a sign that the way of life for self and others is through death. BUT--and this is the glorious, eternal "but"--NONE, NOT ONE, OF THESE DEATHS HAS THE POWER TO DESTROY YOU, FOR YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH ME IN GOD. So shed your grave-clothes, keep your tombs empty and your spirits raised. I live! And so do you!*

Prayer: Jesus, grant that as I am baptized into Your death, my sins may be buried; and that through the grave and gate of dying, I may pass to the joy of new life. Grant me faith to know that I go to death with You--not alone, but with You, Jesus--and to know that You give life--today, tomorrow and forever. You live! And so do I!

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"

CONCLUSION

Voice of Jesus: *I told you at the start that My life was not complete until I crowned it by My death. Your "way" is not complete unless you crown it with My gift of new and abundant life. My cross stood on the Jerusalem garbage-dump and your cross-bearing may take you to the garbage-dumps of the world. But accept each moment and situation that comes to you with faith and trust that in all that happens, I am with you. Seek Me not in far-off places, for I am close at hand. Your work-bench, office, kitchen...these are where the turning points of your life take place...where you offer love. I am with you...always. So, go now! Take up your cross and with your life, complete your "way of the cross" on the altar of your neighbor's need*

Prayer: O Lord God, who has called us Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden and through perils unknown: Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing whither we go; but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Prayer of Holden Village, Chelan, Washington)

Song: "Let the Wind Call Your Name"