

Study Guide
Series: The Gospel of the Nobodies
“Final Words on the Cross”

Monday - Luke 21:5-38

Picture a worst-case scenario, the hardest tragedy you can imagine. That’s what the destruction of the Temple sounded like to first-century Jewish ears. Jesus told his hearers this unthinkable event would happen, yet told them to keep their faith because their “redemption was near”. Think back to a hard time you’ve faced. Did your faith help you weather the storm? What made it hard to keep your faith in the midst of the hardship? • The life of faith is not always easy. Scholar N. T. Wright put it this way: “This is what it’s about: not an exciting battle, with adrenalin flowing and banners flying, but the steady tread, of prayer and hope and scripture and sacrament and witness, day by day and week by week.” Is there anything that’s testing your faith journey right now? Who has modeled living with patient faith when life gets hard for you?

Tuesday - Luke 22:1-30

The Passover pointed to God’s great act in the past. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, it didn’t just recall the cross, but also pointed forward. The CEB Study Bible notes that “until it is fulfilled” (verse 16) “is a promise to Luke’s readers that the kingdom truly will come.” Do you trust that God’s promises are not just empty “church talk,” but offer a future you can count on? How can taking part in Communion reinforce your trust and hope? Scholar William Barclay noted of verse 10 that in Jesus’ day, “A man carrying a jar of water would be as easy to pick out as, say, a man using a lady’s umbrella on a wet day. This was a pre-arranged signal.” Jesus made careful preparations for this important meal. In what ways can you intentionally prepare your heart to get the most out of being with Jesus in worship this Easter?

Wednesday - Luke 22:31-62

Of all the disciples, only Peter walked on water. He was first to say that Jesus was the Messiah. He was no coward—just a human being under pressure. Has pressure ever led you to be ashamed of and to hide your allegiance to Jesus? Jesus told those who arrested him, “This is your time, when darkness rules.” Was there anything Peter might have done to keep the darkness from seeping into his soul (cf. verse 46)? All four gospels tell of Peter’s shattering failure, yet when the gospels were written, Peter was known as a great apostle and a prominent church leader. It seems likely that he had openly shared his failure, and the forgiveness and hope he’d found in its wake. When have you grown through a failure that you were able to embrace and learn from by God’s grace?

Thursday - Luke 22:63-23:12

When the religious leaders finally had Jesus in their power, the contrast was striking. Jesus remained calm and in control of himself. The leaders, who claimed great “righteousness,” were frenzied, unfair and cruel, showing a spirit filled with hatred and evil. In verse 63, Luke said Jesus’ guards taunted and beat him BEFORE the council met for the trial. This was a classic case of “verdict first, evidence later.” Pontius Pilate saw through their charges, saying, “I find no legal basis for action against this man.” Has anyone ever treated you unfairly? In what ways can you grow toward having the spirit like Jesus had as he endured this mockery of a trial? The religious leaders loathed tax collectors for working with Rome, yet now, they readily set aside those

principles to gain their help to kill Jesus. Have you ever seen or been a person who was willing to use bad means to achieve a desired purpose? From God's perspective, who was really on trial—Jesus, or Pilate and the religious leaders, who refused to acknowledge Jesus as their king?

Friday - Luke 23:13-46

Jesus was nailed to a cross by a public road. He asked God to forgive his executioners, promised a crucified thief eternal life, and prayed Psalm 31:5 as he died. On that Friday, he absorbed and transformed human evil into God's central saving act, and turned that day into "Good Friday." Pontius Pilate was a somebody—Rome's highest official in Jerusalem. Jesus looked like a nobody—a poor, rabbi despised and rejected by the leaders of his own faith community. All through his gospel, Luke points to the way God lifts up the nobodies. Trying to remain a somebody, Pilate agreed to a gross injustice. Have you ever had to decide whether to do something you believe is right, even if it will cause people to be upset with you, maybe even turn against you? How did you decide? Many Jewish mothers used Psalm 31:5 ("into your hand I entrust my life") as a children's bedtime prayer. Jesus may well have learned the verse from Mary as a little boy and repeated it on the cross. Imagine what Mary must have felt hearing her dying son repeat the trusting words of the bedtime prayer she taught him so many years earlier. Are you able to entrust your life fully into God's hand?

Saturday - Luke 23:47-56

Scholar N. T. Wright sums up today's passage: "It really happened. It wasn't a mistake. We didn't get it wrong. It's true. You can rely on it. This is the main point of Luke's account of Jesus' death and burial. He began his book telling Theophilus he could rely on these facts, and now that the most vital one is before us he presents his witnesses one by one. The centurion saw it ... The crowds standing by saw it ... Jesus' followers, not least the women, stood at some distance, but they too saw it ... Then, the burial: the women saw what happened ... Evidence. Eyewitnesses. This is what Luke promised, and this is what he's now giving us." How does your belief in the facts of Easter impact your life and how you face the challenges before you? How might the hymn, "Because He Live I can face tomorrow..." express your experience of Easter?