

John 19:16-30 "The Last Sign"

Read John 19:16-30a

1. Describe your mental picture of the crucifixion. What does the cross look like? How high is it? What does Jesus look like? Where are the soldiers, Mary and the other women, John the beloved disciple? Do you envision any other people in the scene? Are any parts especially vivid or hazy? Have any particular artistic representations influenced you?

Leaders: this is just a chance for people to get specific about ideas they have about the crucifixion that they may never have put into words.

2. Why did the sermon suggest that humiliation and degradation were at the essence of the meaning of the crucifixion for us—that we are saved by its obscenity? Was this hard to hear? What does it mean that the Son of God voluntarily endured this? Why does the sermon suggest it is hard to look at the cross?

Leaders: the sermon suggests that humiliation on the cross shows that there is no limit to God's outreach in saving love—that Jesus draws the worst of human experience into himself to redeem it. It is hard to look at the cross because it is profane and obscene.

3. Why do you think John emphasizes the aspects of the crucifixion that he does: the sign on the cross, the gambling for Jesus' clothes, the pairing of Mary and John, the drink of water?

Leaders: there are no right answers here – this is an opportunity to visit different themes than the sermon explored if people don't want to go in that particular direction. You can see what comes up in exploring this combination of themes.

4. "It is finished." What is "it"?

Leaders: let's see what people say! But here is a chance to connect to the rest of John's gospel, in particular the descriptions of Jesus' mission in chs. 6 and 12: that Jesus has come to do the will of the Father, to gather up a people and return them to God, which is connected to the "eternal life" mentioned in John 3.