

Jesus Christ is Hung on the Cross

When Pontius Pilate told the soldiers to take Jesus, they led Him away and put a big wooden cross on His shoulders. Jesus had to carry the cross up a hill called Golgotha. The cross was heavy and Jesus stumbled again and again. Finally He fell to the ground under its weight. The soldiers had to call a man who was passing by and made him carry the cross.

The soldiers placed the cross on the hill of Golgotha. They then crucified Jesus by nailing Him to the cross. There were two other crosses put up, one on each side of Him. Two robbers were also crucified. They were being punished for having killed and robbed many people. At the top of the cross on which Jesus was crucified the soldiers nailed a board with the words: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

A great crowd had followed Jesus to Golgotha. Some of them were His friends who stood by crying because there was nothing they could do to help Him. But many others laughed at Jesus, saying: "He saved others, let Him save Himself." The soldiers stood at the foot of the cross and divided among themselves the clothes of Jesus. Jesus, seeing them and the crowd gathered there, prayed to His Father: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

One of the two robbers spoke angrily to Jesus: "If You are Christ, then save Yourself and us." But the other robber stopped him, saying: "We are punished because we did many bad things, but this Man has done nothing wrong." And turning to Jesus, he said: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus answered: "Verily I say unto you: Today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Then Jesus looked at His mother and His favorite disciple, John, who were standing at the foot of the cross. He said to His mother: "This will be your son." And He said to John: "See, this is your mother." And from that day on John took the mother of Jesus to his home and took care of her.

About three o'clock in the afternoon Jesus said: "I thirst." One of the soldiers dipped a sponge in vinegar, put it on a stick and gave it to Jesus. Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands, I commend Myself." And having said this, He died.

On this sad day when Christ died the sun was covered with heavy clouds. There was darkness everywhere. The earth trembled and rocks broke into pieces. The curtain in the great temple of Jerusalem was torn in two. The people who were gathered on Golgotha saw many of these things. They became frightened and hurried home. The officer who commanded the soldiers, after seeing all this, exclaimed: "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Jesus died on the cross on Friday. Every year we remember this very sad day. We call it Good Friday. On the same evening a friend of Jesus, called Joseph of Arimathaea, came to Pilate and begged that he be allowed to take down the body of Jesus from the cross and bury Him. Pilate agreed. Joseph and another friend of Jesus, called Nicodemus, took down Jesus' body, rubbed it with precious scented oils, and wrapped it in a linen cloth. Not far from Golgotha there was a garden, and in that garden was a small cave, a tomb. The tomb in the garden had never been used before, so Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and put it there. A few women, friends of Jesus, stood by crying. They agreed that they would all stay home during the next day, Saturday, which was a holiday when people were not allowed to leave their homes. They also agreed that early Sunday morning they would return with scented oils and spices and take care of everything that had not yet been done.

A great big stone was rolled up close to the entrance of the cave. Soldiers remained at the entrance to guard the body of Jesus.