

# BENEATH THE CROSS The Collection

**POST TENEBRAS LUX SERIES**  
of Services for Good Friday



Lisa Wallover

# Beneath the Cross: The Collection

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\*For ease of use, each is the complete service and contains some materials similar to those in the other services.

*"Beneath the Cross offers church leaders a dynamic liturgical resource that can be easily customized to the context of any church. I especially appreciate that the musical elements can be customized to match the canon of song within a given community."*

*- Tim Nicholson, founder of Liturgy Collective*

## INTRODUCTION

### **BENEATH THE CROSS: THE COLLECTION** **Post Tenebras Lux Series of Services for Good Friday**

*Beneath the Cross: The Collection* is a set of five distinct and complete Tenebrae services, providing five sets of reproducible readings/scripts, director's notes, lighting/layout/program guides, cover graphics, and recommendations for song selections.

The complete set is based on the four Gospels and the Seven Last Words of Christ. Churches can rotate through these five services in five years and repeat them as desired.

***Kingdom Blessings*** is based on the Beatitudes and the Passion narrative in the Gospel of Matthew.

***The Way of the Lord*** is based on encounters with Jesus and the Passion narrative in Gospel of Mark.

***Thy Kingdom Come*** is based on the Lord's Prayer and the Passion narrative in the Gospel of Luke.

***Light into Darkness*** is based on the "I Am" statements and the Passion narrative in the Gospel of John.

The fifth service, ***Beneath the Cross***, is based on the Seven Last Words of Christ from across the Gospels and so follows a slightly different structure.

All of the Good Friday services follow the pattern of **story**, **Scripture**, and **song**, which occurs seven times with the gradual extinguishing of candles.

The four Gospel-specific services share a similar structure for the reading of the passion narratives (Upper Room, Betrayal in the Garden, Before Pilate, Mocking/Carry Cross, Crucifixion, Death, Burial). If helpful, this allows Music Directors to use familiar choral selections from year to year for any of these four services.

Of course, music selections can be adjusted to meet the needs and desires of the congregation, singers, and setting.

Graphics for Program/Bulletin covers are available as free downloads from [Pcacdm.org/Tenebrae](http://Pcacdm.org/Tenebrae).

# KINGDOM BLESSINGS

**A Good Friday Service Based on the  
Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew**



**POST TENEBRAS LUX SERIES**  
**Good Friday Services of Scripture, Story, and Song**  
(Song Suggestions Provided)

Lisa Wallover

# Kingdom Blessings

## A Good Friday Service Based on the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew

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## INTRODUCTION

### MEANING:

#### **Holy Week**

Since the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Church has observed the unique importance of the week we call “Holy.” This eight-day period begins on Palm Sunday and culminates with the great celebration of Christ’s Resurrection on Easter.

Throughout the centuries, the Church has especially noted the events of the first Palm Sunday, Maundy (“Commandment”) Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, as well as Easter, and often commemorates them each year.

#### **Good Friday Tenebrae Service**

The Psalms are filled with expressions of sorrow and lament. The Tenebrae service, in its many forms, hearkens back to that biblical foundation. Consideration of the events surrounding Christ’s crucifixion is a powerful and legitimate way to reflect on the sorrow of sin and a call to repentance.

The word “tenebrae” comes from the Latin meaning “darkness/shadows.” The Reformers used the term in their motto: *Post Tenebras Lux—After Darkness, Light!*

The Tenebrae is an ancient Christian service that poignantly makes use of physical darkness, gradually diminishing light through the extinguishing of candles, in remembrance of Christ’s passion and death on the cross.

Moving and sacred, the Tenebrae service that began in medieval times has been adapted in rich and diverse ways and is now observed in a variety of denominational traditions.

This service of reflection is worshipful and unique in its tone and experience; it provides believers a place to ponder, to feel the sorrow and the cost and the weight of Jesus’s sacrifice. It allows us to be sad, to lament.

As adapted by Protestants, this service is generally condensed and relies on the customs of reading Scripture and extinguishing candles to lead a congregation through the solemn events of the crucifixion.

We join Christians across generations and around the world as we use this distinctive observance of darkness to prepare for the moment, three days later, when we join in celebration to proclaim: “He is risen! He is risen, indeed!”

## Kingdom Blessings

### **Kingdom Blessings**

(Reading Time: 15-20 minutes)

*Kingdom Blessings* provides the readings and structure for a Tenebrae service of Scripture, story, and song that is based on the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew. The balance of all three elements, with the gradual dimming of lights and extinguishing of candles, creates a meaningful opportunity for thought and reflection. Musical selections are suggested.

One of the strengths of this service is that it is accessible and adaptable to a host of settings. It is designed to fit your context.

Originally presented in a mid-sized church, the readers were members of the congregation or choir who were comfortable reading aloud and expressively. Through the years, the readers became more comfortable portraying the biblical characters, and that was reflected in their representations. In addition, selecting music that fit the strengths of the church musicians was key.

The Tenebrae quickly became one of the most beloved services of the year.

## THE SERVICE

### READERS (TWELVE MEN REPRESENTING THE TWELVE DISCIPLES):

While originally presented as a Good Friday service in a mid-sized church, we encourage groups of various types (including churches of all sizes, youth groups, college fellowships, senior centers) to produce and experience *Kingdom Blessings*. Therefore, the ages listed for the readers should be considered as suggestions or guidance.

**NARRATOR/MATTHEW** – a man, aged 30 or older and a strong reader

The additional 11 READERS are all men, college-age or older.  
Simon Peter should be aged 35 or older.

The order for reading:

**NARRATOR/** Matthew

**FIRST READER/**Judas Iscariot

**SECOND READER/**Simon Peter

**THIRD READER/**James and **FOURTH READER/**John

**FIFTH READER/**Andrew and **SIXTH READER/**Thomas

**SEVENTH READER/**James, son of Alpheus and **EIGHTH READER/**Thaddaeus

**NINTH READER/**Philip and **TENTH READER/**Bartholomew

**ELEVENTH READER/**Simon the Zealot

### SETTING/SERVICE DIRECTIONS:

*To begin, the sanctuary is well lit. The service will conclude in complete darkness. (As every setting is designed uniquely, the following description is to be used as a guide. Though this is not a theatrical production, terms such as “upstage” and “downstage” are used to most clearly explain placement and movement.)*

*A large, spotlighted cross is upstage center.*

*The music ENSEMBLE is seated immediately downstage of the cross.*



## Kingdom Blessings

*A podium with light and script binder for READERS is farther downstage, stage right. Across the stage from the READERS' podium is a small podium or music stand with a light, a script binder, and a stool for the NARRATOR, stage left (can be center left). This will create an antiphonal dialogue between the READERS and the NARRATOR.*

*Farthest downstage is a table with twelve white taper candles in a row, with an additional larger, white Christ candle in the center of them, and one or two candle snuffers for READERS to use.*

*Prior to the service, turn on all podium lights and light the twelve taper candles and the Christ candle.*

*Elements such as a prelude, a welcome, prayer, responsive reading, musical reflection, etc. can precede the introduction of the Tenebrae service.*

*The music ENSEMBLE is seated on the stage at the director's discretion (either before the welcome or after), but prior to the reading of the Tenebrae introduction. The READERS are seated throughout the audience and/or choir.*

*A brief introduction (see Bulletin Notes) is read aloud by the pastor or service leader.*

*The NARRATOR is seated at his podium prior to the congregational hymn.*

*The Congregation sings the hymn, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus."*

*As the hymn ends, the microphones for the NARRATOR and READERS are turned on. The FIRST READER has left his seat and takes his place several steps away, slightly hidden, from the READERS' podium. He will step to the podium after NARRATOR'S introduction.*

## The Service

**CANDLE #1** (Last Supper; selections from Matthew 26:26-29)

**NARRATOR/MATTHEW** (*to congregation*):

Each year at Passover, we ask:

*Why is this night different from all other nights?*

This Passover, we ask the same question. For truly, **this** night is like no other.

I am the Voice of Matthew.

I have worked for one ruler—and followed quite another.

Two kings . . . two kingdoms.

One hired me; the other called me.

One promised all the security that riches and power can bring.

The other set all that aside for the sake of His people.

As I had kept careful accounts for business, so these past three years I have kept a careful account of our time with the Rabbi Jesus . . . whom we called Messiah.

On this night, perhaps, His words can bring us peace.

*(READER steps to podium; NARRATOR speaks to READER)*

*Shalom*, Judas . . . brother . . . how my heart aches! Will you remember with me now, how we were together with Him on the mountain, when He opened His mouth and said, . . .

**JUDAS**:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

**NARRATOR/MATTHEW**:

*Yes!*

**JUDAS**:

Oh yes, I remember. I remember everything. I have heard every sermon He preached. . . seen every miracle He performed . . . but I have *not* seen this kingdom come with power.

No, the kingdom is not an inheritance to wait for.

It is something the strong must barter for—and buy.

For 30 pieces of silver, we will see what this King is made of.

## Kingdom Blessings

### **NARRATOR/MATTHEW:**

Judas, what have you done?

### **JUDAS:**

We will see. We will all see . . .

*(FIRST READER turns the page in the binder, walks to the table and extinguishes a taper candle next to the center Christ candle. Turn off or lower lights as candle is extinguished. The NARRATOR begins as READER returns to his seat.)*

### **NARRATOR/MATTHEW (to congregation):**

Now as we were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to us, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to us, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

*(The ENSEMBLE sings (for example): "The Upper Room." As the song ends, the SECOND READER leaves his seat in the audience and takes his place at the READERS' podium.)*