

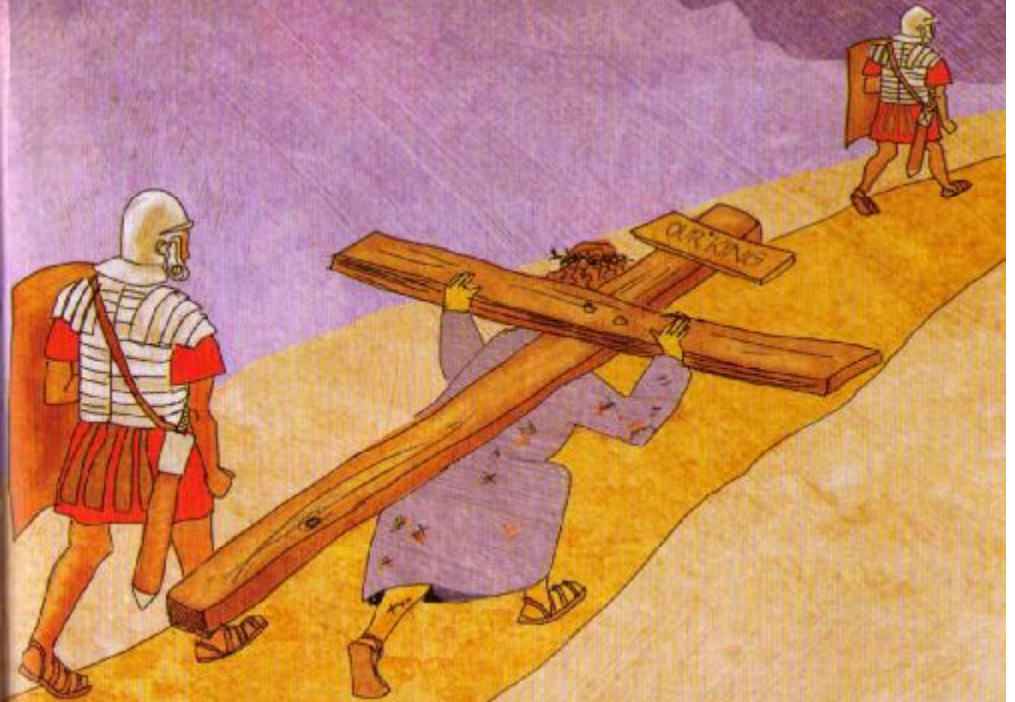
The sun stops shining

The Crucifixion, from Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19

"SO YOU'RE A KING, are you?" the Roman soldiers jeered. "Then you'll need a crown and a robe."

They gave Jesus a crown made out of thorns. And put a purple robe on him. And pretended to bow down to him. "Your Majesty!" they said.

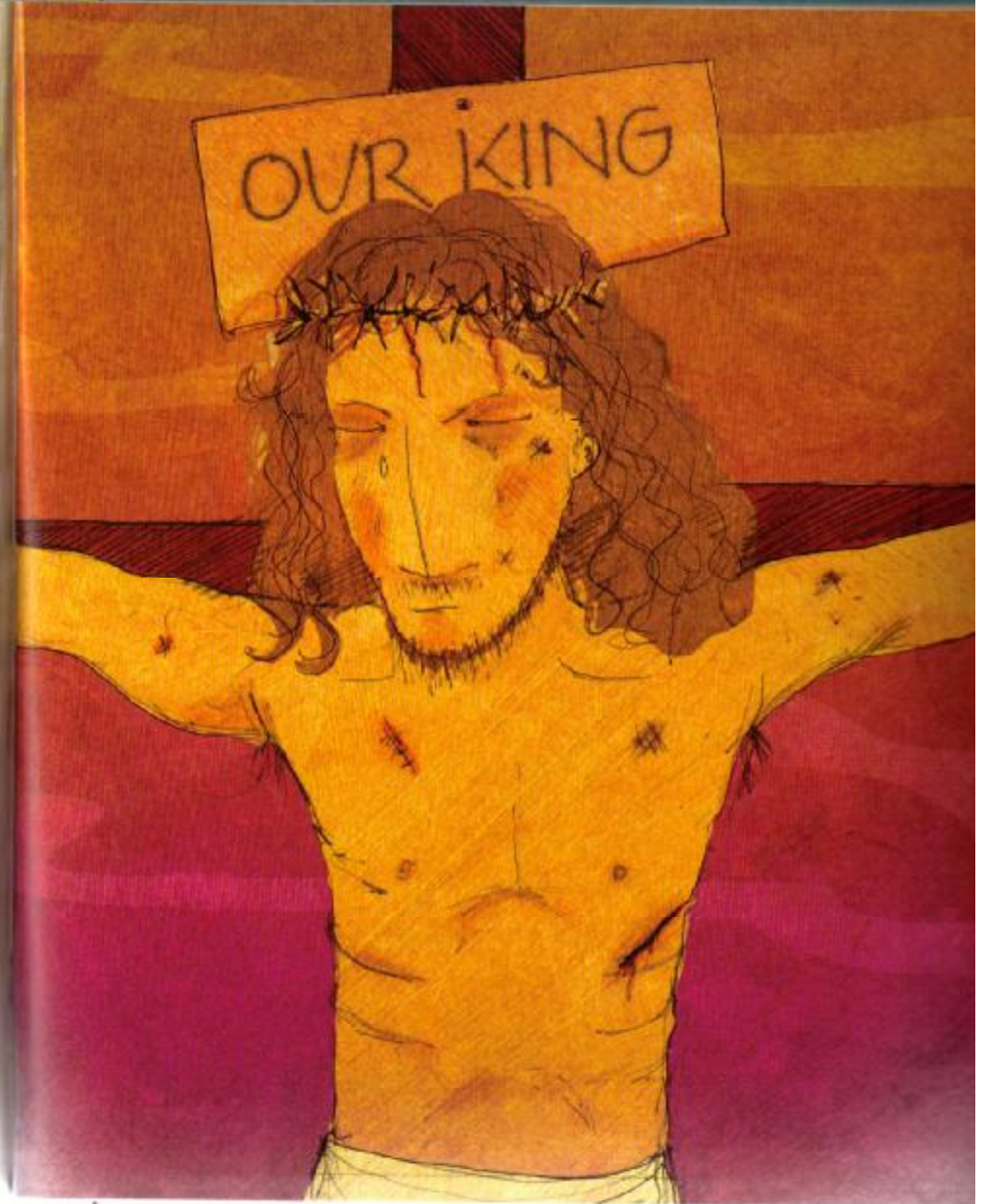
Then they whipped him. And spat on him. They didn't understand that this was the Prince of Life, the King of heaven and earth, who had come to rescue them.



The soldiers made him a sign — "Our King" and nailed it to a wooden cross.

They walked up a hill outside the city. Jesus carried the cross on his back. Jesus had never done anything wrong. But they were going to kill him the way criminals were killed.

They nailed Jesus to the cross.
"Father, forgive them," Jesus gasped. "They don't understand what they're doing."
"You say you've come to rescue us!" people shouted.
"But you can't even rescue yourself!"
But they were wrong. Jesus could have rescued himself. A legion of angels would have flown to his side — if he'd called.
"If you were really the Son of God, you could just climb down off that cross!" they said.
And of course they were right. Jesus could have just climbed down. Actually, he could have just said a word and made it all stop. Like when he healed that little girl. And stilled the storm. And fed 5,000 people.
But Jesus stayed.
You see, they didn't understand. It wasn't the nails that kept Jesus there. It was love.
"Papa?" Jesus cried, frantically searching the sky.
"Papa? Where are you? Don't leave me!"
And for the first time — and the last — when he spoke, nothing happened. Just a horrible, endless silence. God didn't answer. He turned away from his Boy.
Tears rolled down Jesus' face. The face of the One who would wipe away every tear from every eye.



Even though it was midday, a dreadful darkness covered the face of the world. The sun could not shine. The earth trembled and quaked. The great mountains shook. Rocks split in two. Until it seemed that the whole world would break. That creation itself would tear apart.

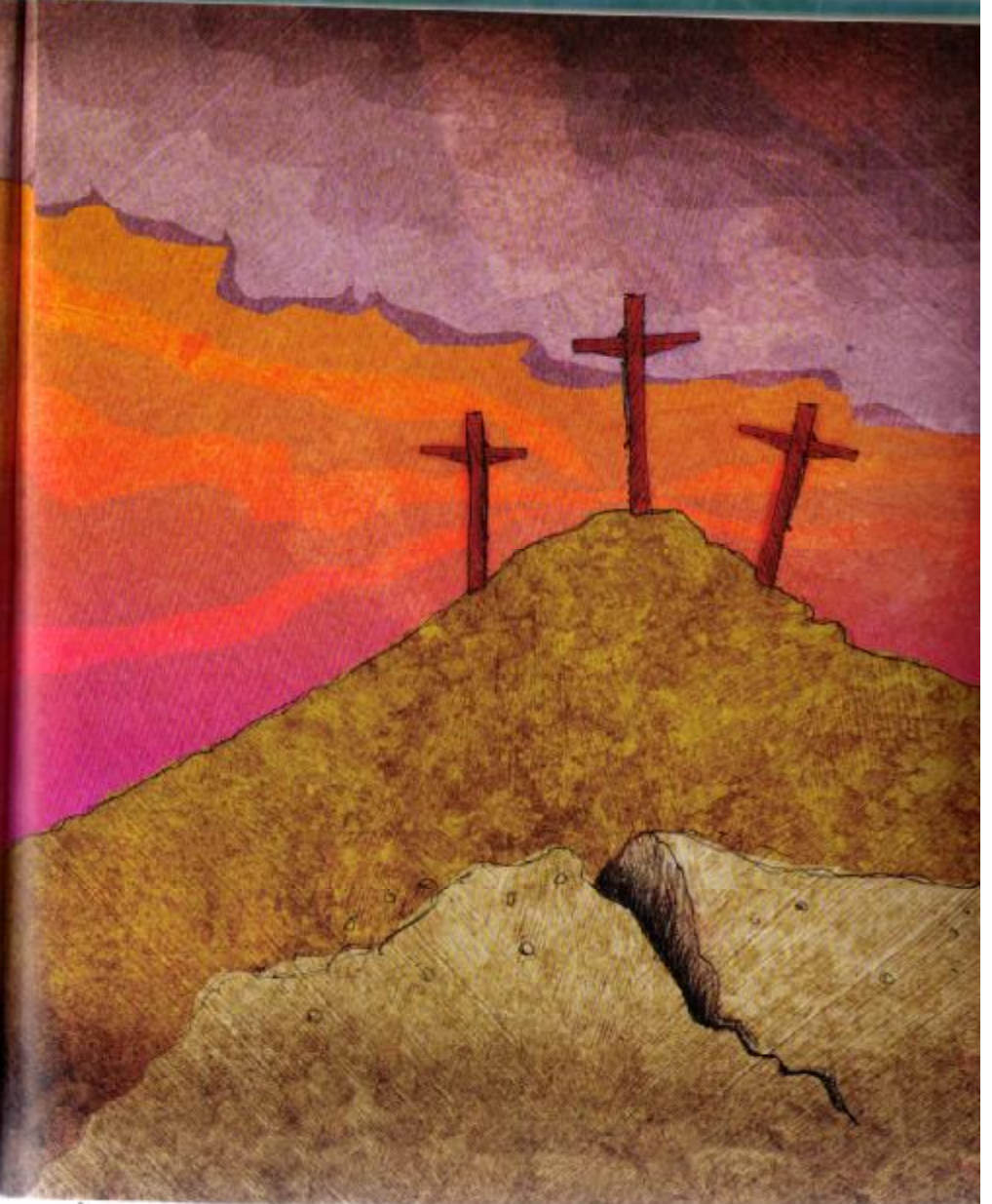
The full force of the storm of God's fierce anger at sin was coming down. On his own Son. Instead of his people. It was the only way God could destroy sin, and not destroy his children whose hearts were filled with sin.

Then Jesus shouted out in a loud voice, "It is finished!"

And it was. He had done it. Jesus had rescued the whole world.

"Father!" Jesus cried. "I give you my life." And with a great sigh he let himself die.

Strange clouds and shadows filled the sky. Purple, orange, black. Like a bruise.



Jesus' friends gently carried Jesus. They laid Jesus
in a new tomb carved out of rock.

How could Jesus die? What had gone wrong? What
did it mean? They didn't know anything anymore.
Except they did know their hearts were breaking.

"That's the end of Jesus," the Leaders said.

But, just to be sure, they sent strong soldiers
to guard the tomb. They hauled a huge stone in
front of the door to the tomb. So that no one
could get in.

Or out.

