The Jewish leaders had brought Jesus to Pilate, the Roman ruler of the Jews, hoping that Pilate would agree that Jesus must die. Pilate knew that he should set Jesus free because Jesus had done nothing wrong. But Pilate felt that it was more important to please the Jewish leaders. So he ordered his soldiers to crucify Jesus.

Pilate’s soldiers took the purple robe that they had used to make fun of Jesus off him and put Jesus’ own clothes back on him. Then they led Jesus out of the city of Jerusalem to a place called Calvary. There the crucifixion would take place.

A large crowd followed Jesus to Calvary. Some of these people hated Jesus and were glad to see him suffer. Others were his friends, people who loved him. Still others were only curious. They wanted to see what was going to happen.

The soldiers made Jesus carry the cross on which he would be crucified. But Jesus was very weak from the beatings he had received. Soon he could not carry the heavy cross any farther. The soldiers then stopped a man named Simon, who was passing by on his way to Jerusalem. They made him carry the cross the rest of the way to Calvary.

The soldiers also led two other men to be crucified with Jesus. The men were thieves who had done many wicked things.

It was about nine o’clock on Friday morning when Jesus and the crowd came to Calvary. There the soldiers nailed Jesus’ hands and feet to the cross. Then they also crucified the two thieves. One thief’s cross was placed on the right side of Jesus, and the other, on his left.

Pilate had told the soldiers to put a sign at the top of Jesus’ cross so that the people would know why he was being put to death. The sign said, “THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” This sign made the enemies of Jesus very angry. They wanted Pilate to change the sign to say, “This man said that he is the king of the Jews.” But Pilate told them, “What I have written, I have written. I will not change it.”

Many people made fun of Jesus as they walked by the cross. They said, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

The Jewish leaders also laughed at Jesus and said, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself.” They said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, why don’t you come down from the cross? Then we will believe in you.”

Even the thieves who were being crucified with Jesus made fun of him. But later, one of the thieves stopped doing this when he understood and believed that Jesus was his Savior.
Although Jesus was suffering greatly, he did not become angry. He willingly suffered and died so that all people could be saved.

1. God has given you many blessings. Finish the incomplete ones shown below, and draw one more. Then draw a circle around the most precious thing God has given you.

2. Is there a cross—the symbol of Jesus' saving love—hanging in your home? If not, perhaps your family could shop for one or make one (try gluing colorful dry beans and peas in a pleasing pattern on a cross cut from plywood or sturdy cardboard). Hang the cross where family and guests will be able to see it. Discuss why Christians display crosses in their homes and churches and wear them as jewelry. The cross is a constant reminder that Jesus paid the punishment for all our sins so that we can have eternal life.

Pray Together

I'm a sinner; I was lost.
Lord, you died upon a cross,
Suffering pain and agony.
Thank you, Lord, for saving me. Amen.

* John 3:16

* The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.