

# Return to Me

A Choral Service based on the Stations of the Cross

by

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## **Suggested prayers before the anthems**

### **1. Salvation Stands with Open Arms**

Savior, we approach your table as if approaching your cross. We sense that your brokenness is because we refuse to be broken. We see and recognize the sins you bear. We stand awestruck to see love and forgiveness flowing from your wounds. Now, every meal we eat will bring us back to this table; not because of guilt, but because of humble gratitude. Now, every sin that we will admit and confess will bring us back to this table—not because of fear, but because of forgiveness. In love we bow, and in your name we pray. Amen.

### **2. Hail, King of the Jews**

Savior, rejection, betrayal, and lies are still with us, are still within us. It hurts when we are on the receiving end as you were and are. It hurts even worse, it seems, when rejection, betrayal, and lies come from us and are hurled at those we love and at others whom you love. Why are such things so much a part of our vocabulary and so deep in our hearts? Our self-righteousness slaps you; oh, can it be? Yes, it is true. Between each cry of “crucify,” dear Jesus, hear our tearful attempts at confession. We love you. Amen.

### **3. Caesar Is Our King**

Savior, we confess to you that when your teachings clash with commonly held wisdom concerning current events, we often go the way of Caesar. In that moment and in that response, one can only say that Caesar is our king. It feels good and is distasteful at the same time. Forgive us when we ask you to renounce your throne so that we might act in a way that you would not own. Our worlds clash. Our dual citizenship gets entangled and intertwined. We would not say, “We have no king but Caesar,” but we do, too often, say, “Caesar is our king.” Hear our prayer, Master, and again assume the throne of our hearts. Amen.

### **4. Black-Skinned Simon**

Savior, we confess that we are guilty of treating people like animals—not all people, just some. We cage them. We corral them. We place heavy burdens on their backs. We use them. We take comfort in treating them humanely. But, we are reminded during this heavy season that you count yourself among the oppressed, the abused, the discounted, and the poor. Born in a stable, executed with thieves, we know you as the Lamb of God, a title that places you with the marginalized of the world. You ask us to come to you as children who are vulnerable and without prestige. We acknowledge that that is where many live. We will join you there. Receive us. In the name of the Lamb. Amen.

## **5. Daughters of Jerusalem, Weep**

Savior, our world is full of abuse, human trafficking, and slavery. The abuse of children is a plague in our midst. Addiction waits in ambush for our children to enter their teenage years. We weep in helplessness. Women and children are pulled back and forth in the tug-of-wars of abortion, health care, welfare, and even theology. We weep in frustration. Yet, there is light in advocacy. But the darkness overwhelms. Christ, have mercy. We dare to pray in this darkness that we might be bearers of light. We weep. Let us weep toward justice and healing. Give us courage: courage in the darkness and courage in the light, should it come. Amen.

## **6. What Was That He Said**

Savior, the concept is so foreign to us we can hardly hear the word or understand it. Yet, when we see it, we are stunned. Forgiveness requires great strength, but is often counted as weakness. Help us hear you. Help us believe you. We are surrounded by violence and insensitivity. We turn to revenge and punishment to sooth our souls. But there is no soothing. Bravado replaces prayer. Fear is our motivation. Shouting is our conversation. Yet we hear your persistent whisper. Let us hear it as our hope. Let us hear it as a lesson. Let us learn of forgiveness. In your name we pray. Amen.

## **7. Only God Knows**

Savior, my pain is so deep, only you and I know the depth of it. My pain is something that you and I hold in common. It is a place of private conversation for us; a place of prayer. Somehow it seems almost holy when I know you experience it with me. It has become a point of grace. But it is pain. Would you still be with me if the pain was removed? I know you would, but it's hard to imagine life without the pain. As I bow before you, as I worship you, along with my other offerings I offer you this pain. It is my deepest, most present possession. In your name I pray. Amen.

## **8. This Mid-Day Night**

Savior, we pray for all, indeed for ourselves, who experience depression, anxiety, guilt, grief or bullying that blocks the sun even at noon on the brightest day. Hear the silent cries. Dry the persistent tears that are so hard to hide. Be with those whose spirit leaves them in times of inner darkness. You know this darkness. Will you join us as companion, if not comfort; as a candle, if not cure? Is there life in death? Is there sun above the clouds? Is there one more dawn? Our questions are our expressions of hope. Hear them, for we pray in your name. Amen.

## **9. No Crying He Makes**

Savior, because of the depth of our rejoicing in your resurrected life, we can feel alone when we face death. We confess that death still stings. To embrace your death is to experience a coldness that is empty, haunting, and frightening. Must we come to this place, to this level of knowing, even once a year? Yet, it is true that your death accompanies us to the caskets in our life. You slept where our loved ones sleep in those moments. We revisit your death so that we might know the reality of your dying; so that we might recognize even your cold presence. Let your silence absorb the crying we make. We pray in your name. Amen.