

## ***worship@home for Good Friday***

We all approach Good Friday with mixed emotions. Even the name of the day can be confusing and confronting. What is 'good' about this day? The answer to that question depends very much on your perspective. Today we invite you to hear and reflect on three statements that Jesus makes from the cross.

Let us worship our Holy God.

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### CALL TO WORSHIP (based on Isaiah 53)

He was despised and rejected by others;  
**a man of suffering and acquainted with grief.**

He was wounded for our transgressions  
**and by his bruises we are healed.**

By a perversion of justice he was taken away;  
**he was cut off from the land of the living.**

But see, my servant shall prosper;  
**he shall be exalted and lifted up.**

### A LAMENT FOR GOOD FRIDAY

During these days, the threat of Covid-19 seems to always lie before us. Rather than be depressed by the endless statistics, I invite you to join me in praying for our world during this pandemic. The prayer is modelled on the many laments found in the book of Psalms. Add your own prayers to the people we uphold before God.

Hear our cry, Almighty God, even as we remember the suffering and death of Jesus.  
Listen to our prayer and our cries for our world.

How long will we have to hide in our homes from this invisible enemy?  
Where will it strike next? And whom? And what if...?  
Our screens relay a continuous escalation of suffering and death around the world.  
Fear and anxiety abound.

Yet we are the privileged ones with safe homes to withdraw to and plenty of food.  
Many in neighbouring countries are not so fortunate.  
We plead for them and their safety.

For those who feel forsaken and torn away from loved ones,  
**Lord hear our cry.**

For those who are mourning the ones who have died due to this sickness,  
**Lord hear our cry.**

For the health workers, emergency workers and scientists grappling with this virus,  
**Lord hear our cry.**

For those in government and in hospitals making difficult decisions,  
**Lord hear our cry.**

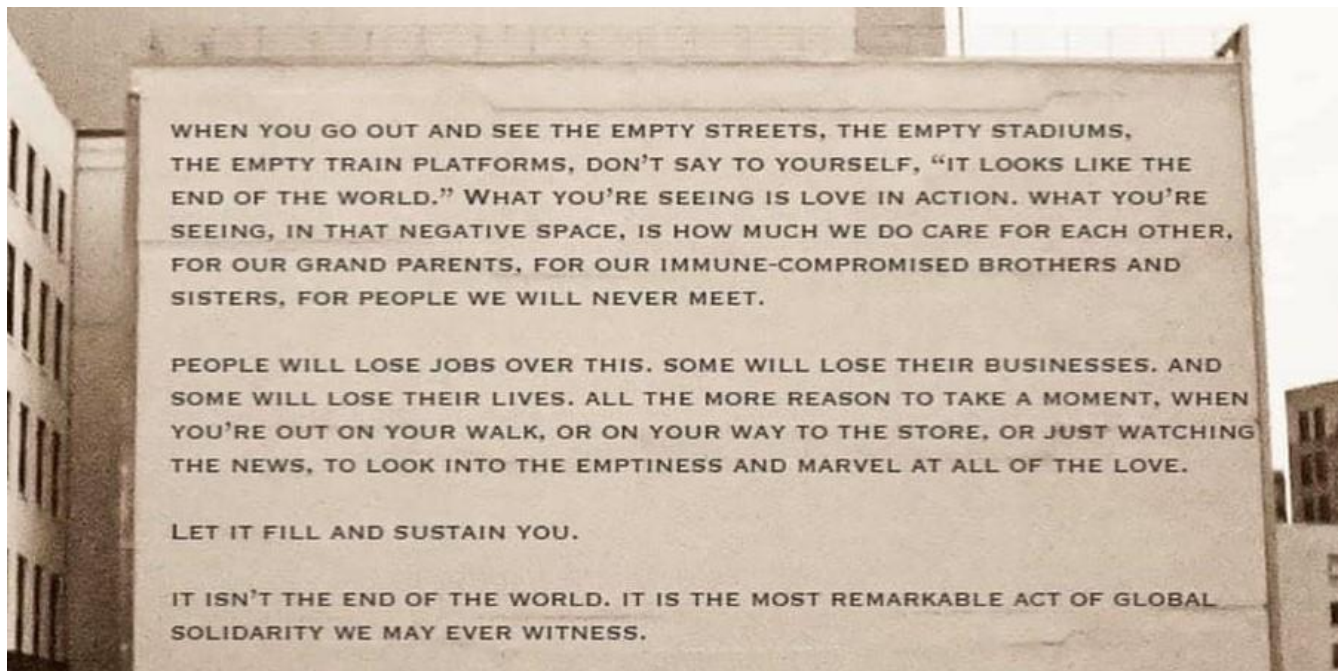
For the most vulnerable in our society who feel so alone and helpless,  
**Lord hear our cry.**

Creator God, your word promises that one day  
you will liberate creation from its bondage to decay and death.  
One day you will make all things new again.

We long for that day.

But today, from the depths of our confusion, we cry out to you.  
We beseech you not to turn your face away.

Rescue us, God of compassion and grace.  
Help us to be still and wait for you. Amen.



#### READING 1 (Luke 23:33-34) (Reflection by Rev Dr Peter Mallen, Croydon & Croydon North)

When they came to the place called "The Skull", they nailed Jesus to the cross there, and the two criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said "Forgive them, Father! They do not know what they are doing."

The word Golgotha means 'skull' and was the Roman killing place, the prominent place near the main road out of Jerusalem, with maximum exposure to the passing foot traffic, so that people might see these grisly executions and think twice before acting against Rome.

- If we found ourselves in such an undeserved and extreme position, how would we respond? Would we be angry? Would we have regrets?

Jesus chooses to respond with care and love for the other – even for enemies – ‘Father, forgive them’. Forgiveness demonstrates the loving and compassionate heart of God. The Lord’s Prayer asks us to continually seek God’s forgiveness (‘Forgive us our sins’) but also requires us to forgive others (‘just as we forgive those who sin against us’). Jesus demonstrates this second aspect from the cross.

- How do we let go of perceived and actual wrongs done to us?  
Where does this power to forgive others come from?

SONG        Were you there when they crucified my Lord

Listen to this moving song by clicking here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRaFdFkOVyY>

READING 2 (Luke 23:39-43) (Reflection by Rev Lucas Taylor, Ringwood UCA)

One of the criminals hanging there threw insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" The other one, however, rebuked him, saying: "Don't you fear God? Here we are all under the same sentence. Ours, however, is only right, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong." And he said to Jesus, "Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!" Jesus said to him, "I tell you this: today you will be in Paradise with me."

We are living in strange days. Once in a century kind of days.

We naturally have fear and anxiety of what is to come.

Perhaps even naturally we may seek or wish for escape from these present circumstances.

- As our world responds to this unprecedented health emergency, what is being revealed which has in fact always been true?

When the time comes for us to return to life as normal, let's be careful about which parts of “normal” are worth rushing back to.

- Does the 'life as normal' we long to return to uphold and honour the dignity and worth of each person as much as is now being revealed to us that it should?  
How do we value nurses, delivery drivers, food handlers, artists, musicians ... the elderly, the sick, the imprisoned?

As Jesus hung on a cross – his fate inescapable – he was able to see and uphold the humanity, the worth, the value, the dignity of another whom the normal-of-the-day had rejected and condemned.

SONG        Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom

Listen to this Taize song by clicking here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6tVReXsioM>

### READING 3 (Luke 23:46) (Reflection by Rev Brendan Byrne, Heathmont UCA)

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"  
And having said this he breathed his last.

Jesus' death on the cross is the culmination – though not the conclusion – of the events of Holy Week. It is in the moment of Jesus' death on the cross that God expresses to the fullest extent God's solidarity with suffering and broken humanity. When we feel most fragile and most alone in the world, God goes directly to the place we all shy away from and declares: *I am here. You are not alone. You need not be afraid.*

In giving up his human life, Jesus recognises the presence of God even in the depths of his despair, and releases himself in trust and hopefulness to the gift of God's solidarity. This gift is contained within the overarching grace of God, which, in its apparent weakness, absorbs the strength of evil and overcomes it.

### A GOOD FRIDAY PRAYER (by Christine Jerrett)



St John's cross, Iona Abbey, Scotland

Gracious God,  
you give us all good things: life and love;  
daily bread and water that quenches our thirst;  
friends and faith.

Most of all, in your Son, Jesus,  
you meet us with a love that will never let us go;  
you utter words of mercy and forgiveness  
that override the hurts,  
and heal our brokenness;  
you offer new beginnings  
where we had expected only dead ends.

We give you thanks and praise  
for the mystery of your suffering love  
that gives us life.

We give you thanks and praise  
that you know our weakness  
and hear our prayers.

We give you thanks and praise  
that all our dying and living  
is held in your good keeping.

Now we know:  
all is grace  
all is gift.