

Good Friday – April 2, 2021

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC piano

CALL TO WORSHIP

Today is one of the blackest days of the Christian year:

a day when the lights are dimmed

and the sky feels overcast even if it isn't;

a sad day when it feels as if a heavy veil is drawn over heart and mind.

Although the sun rose that fateful morning,

the whole world turned grey for the One

who found himself without friend or helper,

faced with drinking a cup he'd prayed would be turned away from him,

knowing that life was about to be drained out of him.

Loving God, you invite us to accompany Jesus through this dark and grey day: to be witnesses to his suffering,

to keep silence before his cry of dereliction.

In our imaginations, help us trudge through Jerusalem,

until we come to the place of the cross.

Help us not to turn our faces away.

On grey days like today it is hard to see clearly,

difficult to understand things that aren't clear.

Help us to be present to the sacred story as it is retold,

and to the inexplicable mystery that is unfolding.

INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE

The readings taken from Mark's Gospel will be interspersed with prayers, brief reflections, songs and times of silence. I invite you to remain seated throughout, although please put on a mask when singing.

There will also be symbols used during the service to help us imagine the various scenes. I invite you to find your place in the story, perhaps in places weeping with Jesus and in other places denying him.

The story that Mark presents is very stark and at times brutal. We see Jesus in his most vulnerable humanity, but are also invited to ponder God's hidden hand at

work and the cost for God of losing God's beloved Son.

Our readings will pick up the story following the arrest of Jesus, which is where our Maundy Thursday service concluded.

At the conclusion of the service there will be no benediction and you are invited to leave in silence in your own time.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God,

on this solemn day we gather to remember the suffering of Jesus,
how he was despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted,
wounded for our transgressions.

We come today to ponder the depth of Jesus' love for us,
and the promise of restored relationship with you,
made possible through his suffering and death.

We also come to ponder Jesus' call to follow him
– even into the dark places of our world.

Show us how we may overcome evil with good,
suffering with wholeness,
and oppression with justice.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

SONG Ride on, ride on (verses 1, 2, 3, 6; to tune of TiS 348)

FIRST READING (Trial before High Priest) (Adele Allen)

[Symbol of the gavel]

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands." ' But even on this point their testimony did not agree.

Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?'

But he was silent and did not answer.

Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?'

Jesus said, 'I am; and "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power", and "coming with the clouds of heaven." '

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?'

Hit the lectern with the gavel

All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, 'Prophecy!'

The temple guards also took him over and beat him.

REFLECTION

Many religious leaders and most politicians love power.

They fight long and hard to keep it if their power is threatened.

The lure of power also affects all of us as followers of Jesus. We recall the request of James and John to hold the key positions of power in Jesus' kingdom, and the antidote according to Jesus, which is to choose to serve others, following the example of Jesus.

PRAYER

Let us pray ...

God of truth,

Help us to recognise areas in our life where we cling to self-serving power rather than to serve others.

SONG TiS 256 From heaven you came

SECOND READING (Peter's Denial) (Don Marsham)

Symbol of rooster (place on table)

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.'

But he denied it, saying, 'I don't know or understand what you are talking about.' And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed (**sound**).

The servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again he denied it.

Then after a little while the bystanders said to Peter, 'Certainly you're one of them; for you are a Galilean.'

But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, 'I do not know this man you are talking about.' At that moment the cock crowed for the second time (**sound**). Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God,

We are shocked by the betrayal of Peter, yet we recognise the same frailties in ourselves.

We continue to struggle with rejecting you in our daily lives and in our interactions with others,

though we yearn to trust you fully.

(Period of silence)

We confess the times where we have abandoned you to avoid personal pain or embarrassment,
though we long to trust you fully.

(Period of silence)

We confess that like Peter there are times we disown you and instead seek to protect ourselves,
though we desire to walk in your ways.

(Period of silence)

Help us to lay down everything which separates us from your love
so that we might have renewed life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Paul writes:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:
that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures,
that he was buried,
and was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:

'Your sins are forgiven.'

Thanks be to God.

SONG TIS 357 When his time was over

THIRD READING (Trial before Pilate) (David and Lyn Collett)

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Governor Pilate.

Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'

Hang the symbolic sign 'King of the Jews' on the cross

Jesus answered him, 'You say so.'

Then the chief priests accused him of many things.

Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.'

But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the Passover festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.

Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?'

They shouted back, 'Crucify him!'

Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?'

But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!'

So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

REFLECTION

Neither the chief priests nor Pilate emerge with enhanced reputations in Mark's account. Pilate is presented as a weak and people-pleasing leader and the chief priests responded with calculated venom when they felt threatened. Both are culpable for their actions.

As the gospel message made its way into the Greco-Roman world, the early Christian community appears to want to exonerate Pilate and lay the blame for Jesus' death firmly at the feet of the Jewish leaders ... but this has led to dreadful persecution of Jews by Christians down through the centuries.

Another key actor in the unfolding drama, though hidden, is God. Why does God remain silent? How can God allow such cruelty and injustice to happen? Where is God's love and compassion?

MUSICAL INTERLUDE 2min 30s excerpt from Adagio for strings (Barber)

Mp3 file downloaded from orange-freesounds.com

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FOURTH READING (Mocking) (Amanda and Geoff Coombes)

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him.

Symbol of a crown of thorns is placed on the cross

And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

REFLECTION

The opening verse of Mark’s Gospel identified Jesus as the Messiah or King, a conclusion that the leader of the disciples, Peter, eventually realizes halfway through the story.

It is deeply ironic, then, that Jesus is given a crown and a purple robe to wear and is mocked for being a **false** king when readers of this Gospel know that Jesus is indeed the **true** Messiah and King.

It takes eyes of faith to see Jesus as he truly is. Lord, open our eyes to see.

HYMN TIS 356 Here hangs a man discarded (to tune of Tis 339)

FIFTH READING (Crucifixion) (Sue & Alan McKenzie)

Symbols of dice and nails [place on table during the prayer]

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; he was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of the skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting dice to decide

what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

PRAYER

Here are dice, Lord, to remind us that you lost everything for us.

Help us to see the needs around us.

Help us to be generous with our lives as well as with our belongings.

(short period of silence)

Here are nails, Lord, to remind us of your forgiveness given even to those who nailed you to the cross.

Help us to forgive those who hurt us as generously as you forgave them.

Amen.

REFLECTIVE MUSIC Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

SIXTH READING (Death of Jesus) (Helen Marsham)

Symbol – extinguish the Christ candle

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means,

When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

The Christ candle is extinguished. A time of silence is held.

Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

REFLECTION

The opening line of Psalm 22 – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? – is a cry that Jesus shares with many down through history who have felt abandoned by God in their hour of need.

We asked earlier, why does God remain silent and hidden?

In the psalm, the afflicted person is ultimately saved and goes on to sing God's praise. But not Jesus. Not this time.

... yet we are told that the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, which appears to be a divine response to Jesus' death. This may be a sign of grief. Or is it Mark's understated way of saying that Jesus' death has now opened up a new way of knowing God?

SONG Here is love

SEVENTH READING (Burial of Jesus) (Peter)

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock.

Symbol of the burial shroud is placed over the arms of the cross

Joseph then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

REFLECTION

We place a flower at the foot of the cross.

It is not a symbol of grief or death, nor is it part of a funeral wreath.

It is a symbol of **hope**.

The story is not yet over.

It is indeed a black Friday today ... but Sunday is coming.

This small beautiful flower will stay here as a symbol of hope
until we return.

We will finish by listening to a song about death and about hope.

The words reflect an intriguing passage from Job chapter 14 which reads:

There is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again.
Though its roots grow old in the earth
and its stump dies in the ground,
yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth new branches like a young plant.
But mortals die and are laid low;
humans lie down and do not rise again. ...
If mortals die, will they live again?

YOUTUBE SONG Wood hath hope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNR8X40cQ6o>



Wood hath hope.
When it's cut, it grows green again
and its boughs sprout clean again.
Wood hath hope.
Root and stock
although old and withered up
and all sunk in earth corrupt
will revive.
Leaves return,
water pure brings life to them
and the tree lives young again.
Wood hath hope.

But for flesh waits death
to strip the soul
and breathe life out, behold.
All things end.



Mortal life's
like a
dried up river bed;
we sleep, lay down our heads
to rise no more.



But, ah strange thought ...
If a man could rise again,
called home to a loving land
he would have hope.



We would have hope.
Like a tree, we'd grow green again
and our boughs sprout clean again.
We would have hope.