

GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Preparation

SENTENCE OF SCRIPTURE

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53: 4

OPENING PRAYER

Merciful God,
You gave your Son to suffer the shame of the cross.
Save us from hardness of heart,
That, seeing him who died for us,
We may repent, confess our sins,
And receive your overflowing love,
In Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Ministry of the Word

I

JESUS IS CONDEMNED

Matthew 27: 11-14, 22-25, 26b

Jesus stood before the Roman governor, who questioned him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked. "So you say," answered Jesus. He said nothing in response to the accusations of the chief priests and elders. Pilate said to him, "Don't you hear all these things they accuse you of?" Jesus refused to answer a single word, with the result that the Governor was greatly surprised. "What shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?" Pilate asked them. "Crucify him!" they all answered. Pilate asked, "What crime has he committed?" Then they started shouting at the top of their voices: "Crucify him!" When Pilate saw that it was no use to go on, but that a riot might break out, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!" He had Jesus whipped, he handed him over to be crucified.

Meditation

Why doesn't Jesus say anything?
Why doesn't he proclaim who he is?
Why doesn't he confront the disbelief of the crowds and the arrogant cowardice of the powers that be?
But he says nothing.
Surely there are others who will speak up for him?
Where are the lepers who were healed?
Where are the blind who can now see?
Where are all the people who ate the bread and fish on the hillside?
Where are those who followed Jesus so easily when they thought he would become King of the Jews?

Yet no one speaks.
No voice in the crowd comes to Jesus' defence.
Jesus stands alone.
Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, the power of Rome.
Weakness stands before strength.
And yet, Pilate, the ruthless enforcer for the Empire is not really in control here.
He cannot make Jesus confess.
He cannot quiet the crowds.
For all his power, he cannot find the courage to do what is right.
So he does what is safe.
He yields to the crowds for the sake of order.
Pilate washes his hands – a symbol of his lack of courage and strength and power – his lack of commitment to do what is right and just.
The One who stands before governor in chains, bruised from the beatings, spit on his face, is the person with real strength.
Pilate washes his hands and abandons Jesus,
but Jesus does not wash his hands of the Father's will or of us.
He is determined to love you and me
regardless of the cost.

Response

God did not spare his own Son,
but gave him up for us all.

Romans 8:32

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
we are ashamed to admit
how often we wash our hands of you.
Give us the courage to follow you,
even when all others reject you.
Help us to be determined and firm in our conviction
that following your will and showing love to all
is more important than any other treasure that we have in this life.
Grant that the way of the cross
may be for us the way of life and peace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Silence

II ***JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS AND MOCKED***

Matthew 27: 27-31

Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace, and the whole company gathered around him. stripped off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. They made a crown out of thorny branches and placed it on his head, and put a stick in his right hand; then they knelt before him and made fun of him. "Long live the King of the Jews!" they said. spat on him, and took the stick and hit him over the head. When they had finished making fun of him, they took the robe off and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Meditation

I cringe at the pain of the thorns.
But I am wounded far more deeply at the humiliation and degradation Jesus suffered.
Stripped naked for all to stare at.
A crown of thorns thrust on his head.
A stick in his hand and a scarlet robe on his shoulders.
Soldiers bowing in mockery – spitting, hitting and whipping.
How cruel people can be towards their fellow human beings.
We hear of men, women and children suffering and dying at the hands of others, even those who claim to love them.
How unkind can we be to the people around us?
We like to think that we are ready to follow Jesus who offers us peace and love.
But are we?
Are we willing to let love and peace control us and lead us to live as people who truly want to serve others, even though it may not always be easy or convenient?
There in Pilate's courtyard we see a true servant.
He was willing to endure anything, no complaints, no protesting his innocence, no cursing, simply accepting the cross for us.
Enduring all things for us.
The thorns, the whip, the mockery, the nails, the cruel death – he did it all for us. He loves us even though it is our sin that caused him so much pain.

Response

Because of our sins he was wounded,
beaten because of the evil we did. *Isaiah 53: 5*

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus,
for allowing yourself to be tried and condemned and scourged.
For the joy of bringing salvation to all people
and because of your great love for us,
you endured the shame and pain. **Amen.**

Silence

III ***SIMON CARRIES THE CROSS***

Luke 23: 26

The soldiers led Jesus away, and as they were going, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon who was coming into the city from the country. They seized him, put the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Meditation

I can only imagine the awful weight of the cross Jesus carried.
It is not just the weight of beams of wood that pressed down on him;
it is also the weight of the burden that he carried for those whom he loved.
He came to offer them life, and yet they return only death.
So we see Jesus fall from the crushing weight of pain and grief.
His physical strength is failing.

The soldiers must have recognized this as well,
because they forced a man from the crowd
to help Jesus carry the cross the rest of the way
to the place where he will be crucified.
Simon from Cyrene was just a bystander
passing through on his way into town from the countryside.
And yet he bears the weight of the cross to save Jesus' strength.
I would like to think that if I had been there
I would have rushed from the crowd and volunteered to carry that cross for Jesus.
But would I have had the courage to face the Roman soldiers
and risk being forced to walk with Jesus and his cross?
Would I have really been so eager to share his cross
or would I have tried to be invisible in the crowd?
When the soldiers were looking around for someone to press into service,
would I have looked away and pretended not to notice what was happening?
It's easy to pretend not to see the needs, the grief, and the suffering around me every day.
It's easy to pretend not to hear the cries for help
that come in many forms from those among whom I walk every day.
It is easy to convince myself that I am too busy,
or too tired,
or have too much on my plate already
to get involved in the lives of others.
There are simply too many who need too much.
And yet, I remember something that Jesus said,
something about taking up my own cross and following him.
Jesus said something about becoming a servant of all,
of putting myself last and others first.
Is this what it means to be a servant?
Is Jesus showing me what it means to be that kind of servant?
Is this man from Cyrene modelling for me the path of discipleship?

Response

Those who do not carry their cross and follow me
cannot be my disciples.

Luke 14:27

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
your Son came not to be served,
but to serve.

Forgive us for becoming so preoccupied with ourselves
that we have become deaf and blind to the grief and suffering of those around us.
Constantly remind us that we cannot love you
without loving others as well.

Help us to always remember that to be a follower of yours
means that we share in the burdens of others.
Lord, show us someone whose cross we may help carry. **Amen.**

Silence

IV
JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Luke 23: 27-31

A large crowd of people followed him; among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Women of Jerusalem! Don't cry for me, but for yourselves and your children. For the days are coming when people will say, 'How lucky are the women who never had children, who never bore babies, who never nursed them!' Then will be the time when people will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Hide us!' For if such things as these are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Meditation

As Jesus struggles along the road toward that awful place of death,
a group of women among the crowd following Jesus
were crying, wailing, already grieving Jesus approaching death.
So now, as Jesus bears the most unimaginable pain of body and heart, he shows incredible love and mercy.

He is about to die and is suffering unbelievable pain,
and yet he is more concerned with others
than with his own suffering and impending death.

He stops to speak with them;
to warn them of the pain and suffering
that they and the whole nation of Israel will experience
because of their rejection of their Messiah.

Do I ever stop in the midst of my own troubles like you did Lord Jesus to express concern and to care for others?

Am I so caught up in living out my own life
that I lose sight of what is happening in the lives of those around me?

Response

Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs of joy.

Psalm 126: 5

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
forgive me for not fully embracing your sacrifice for me,
for not living every moment of my life in a way that glorifies you
and tells others that you are my Lord and Saviour.
Forgive me for being so caught up in my own troubles
and my own busyness of life
that I forget to stop and encourage and care for others.
Help me to never lose sight of who you are,
what you have done for me,
and how that means I should act toward
others who are around me. **Amen.**

Silence

V
JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES

John 19: 23-25

After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe, which was made of one piece of woven cloth without any seams in it. The soldiers said to one another, "Let's not tear it; let's throw dice to see who will get it." This happened in order to make the scripture come true: "They divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe." And this is what the soldiers did.

Meditation

Jesus is forced to suffer the worst of human indignity.
He stands alone as the soldiers strip from him the last thing
that he possesses, and play games to see who will claim it.
They thought Jesus was no different to the hundreds of other criminals they crucify.
Yet...he is. He is completely different.
Just yesterday, Jesus removed his cloak and laid it aside to wash his disciples' feet.
Now he's allowing others to strip off his clothes.
He could have stopped it, stopped their gambling, stopped them stripping him.
He could have stopped it all with a breath, with a word!
Yet, he doesn't.
He allows them to publicly disgrace and ridicule him.
He is left with nothing, nothing, not even human decency.
He gave away everything to be utterly humiliated, stripped naked, for us?
For me and you? Why?
We have nothing of worth to give him.
We can't pay him back for this.
Where is our gratitude for this?
Why does he allow himself to be so humiliated –
because of his total commitment to you and me.
He lays aside everything for us.

Response

People stare and gloat over me.
They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.
Psalm 22: 17b-18

Prayer

Father,
we thank you
that Jesus willingly allowed himself to be humiliated
because of his deep commitment to each of us.
He stretched out his arms of love
on the hard wood of the cross
so that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace.
So clothe us in your Spirit that we,
reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know you
to the knowledge and love of Jesus
and all that he endured for us;
for the honour of your name. **Amen.**

Silence

VI *JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS*

Mark 15: 25-32

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. notice of the accusation against him said: "The King of the Jews." They also crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left. passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "Aha! You were going to tear down the Temple and build it back up in three days! come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law made fun of Jesus, saying to one another, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Let us see the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him!"

Meditation

The last awful step in the journey of death is about to be taken.

Jesus is laid on the ground, his arms spread out,
so his wrists are on the ends of the cross bar.

A spike is driven through each of his wrist bones.

The pain is excruciating.

Jesus' body is hoisted into place,
its weight pressing on his rib cage and lungs,
making it almost impossible to breathe.

A spike is driven through his feet.

With painful effort the condemned can push up on the spike in his feet to catch his breath,
but to do so only prolongs the agony.

I want to rage at the injustice of this;

the cruelty of the Romans;

the hypocrisy of the High Priest and religious leaders;

the cowardice of the disciples;

the treachery of Judas;

the fickleness of the crowds;

Don't they remember that Jesus only spoke of love and even of loving our enemies?

How could they be so cruel to the most perfect human who had ever lived?

And yet, would we have done differently?

Are the guilty ones those who were actually there that day and condemned him and hammered in the nails?

Or is it human sin that drives in the nails? .

I want to pretend that I had no part in Jesus' indignity and death.

But I was there.

Jesus, you are here, dying, because of my sin.

I was there. It was I who drove the nails.

Response

He was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities.

Isaiah 53: 5

Prayer

Lord, remind us of the deathly cost of sin.
Forgive us for those things we have done
that are displeasing to you.
Forgive us for not allowing you to deal with the darkness
that we harbour in the hidden recesses of our hearts.
Forgive us for fooling ourselves into believing
that we are more righteous than we are,
that we are better than others,
and that we have no need to repent.
Forgive us for those things we should have done,
but found excuses not to do.
Give us grace to humble ourselves before you,
so that our sins may be laid bare
and we may know your forgiveness.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Silence

VII JESUS DIES

Mark 15: 33-34, 37-39

At noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?" a loud cry Jesus died. The curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The army officer who was standing there in front of the cross saw how Jesus had died. "This man was really the Son of God!" he said.

Meditation

It is dark in the middle of the day.
It seems that the heavens and the earth are grieving,
telling us that something is horribly wrong.
Jesus, I hear you cry out in lament from the Psalms
and know that it is the cry of human pain and desolation.
Everyone has forsaken you,
but there is one who still hears your prayer - one you address as my God.
The earth shakes.
The curtain in the temple is torn right down the middle.
The Holy of Holies is exposed for all to see.
What does it mean?
Who are you?
There is even a Roman who thinks that you are the son of God.
But you are dead. It's too late. What have we done?
Is there any hope?
Yet you never stopped loving us even in death.
You died because of human sin, because of us.
Sin is never the final word.
God can redeem the worst that human beings can do.
But this?
What can come of this?
What can God do with such a final ending?
We hope, and wait

Response

He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross! *Philippians 2: 8b*

Prayer

O God, you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,
to suffer death on the cross for our redemption,
and to deliver us from the power of the enemy
by his glorious resurrection.
May we die to sin each day,
so that we may live forever with him
who died and rose again for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Silence

VIII **JESUS IS BURIED**

Matthew 27: 57-60

When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea arrived; his name was Joseph, and he also was a disciple of Jesus. He went into the presence of Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate gave orders for the body to be given to Joseph.

So Joseph took it, wrapped it in a new linen sheet, and placed it in his own tomb, which he had just recently dug out of solid rock. Then he rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Meditation

Like every human being,
Jesus was born with nothing and dies naked and alone.
The hysterical clamour of the passion is now quiet.
His bruised and blood stained body,
marked with the wounds of nails and spear,
is hastily washed and wrapped in a clean linen shroud
and laid in the coldness of the stone tomb.
Now an anonymous corpse, seemingly like any other,
he is buried as he was born, in obscurity –
no funeral procession, no elaborate mourning.
Vaguely the words of promise and resurrection,
spoken to the disciples in these last days,
stir in their memories, and puzzle them,
as they try to piece together what Christ's death has meant.
However, we know how the story ends.
We know that this is not the final 'Amen' over Jesus of Nazareth.
In just a few short hours,
he will emerge from the cold dark tomb victorious over sin and death.
His agony has been worth it.

Response

You will not abandon me to the grave,
nor let your Holy One see decay.

Psalm 16: 10

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God,
you rested in the tomb on the Sabbath day,
and so sanctified the grave
to be a bed of hope for your people.
Lead us to sorrow for our sins,
which were the cause of your suffering and death,
and grant that when our bodies lie in the dust
we may rise and live with you.
Amen.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

LITANY FOR GOOD FRIDAY

O crucified Jesus,
Son of the Father,
conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
eternal Word of God,
we worship you.

O crucified Jesus,
holy temple of God,
dwelling place of the Most High,
gate of heaven,
burning flame of love,
we worship you.

O crucified Jesus,
sanctuary of justice and love,
full of kindness,
source of all faithfulness,
we worship you.

O crucified Jesus,
ruler of every heart,
in you are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
in you dwells all the fullness of the Godhead,
we worship you.

Jesus, lamb of God,
have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.
Jesu, redeemer of the world,
grant us peace.

COLLECT

Almighty Father,
look with mercy on this your family
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed
and given up into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death upon the cross;
who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven:
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

DISMISSAL

CLOSING PRAYER

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which you have won for us, for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us. O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

BLESSING

Christ draw us to himself and grant that we find in His cross
a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope,
and the assurance of sins forgiven:
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Silence is kept.