



Pioneer Pastoral Charge  
Friday April 10, 2020  
Good Friday  
Lenten Lament

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

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***Welcome.***

*Due to Social Gathering restrictions to keep our communities safe during the COVID19 Virus pandemic, we are unable to gather to share in these stories of Holy Week in person. We are instead, invited to join this story telling online, or to consider the reflection questions provided as we prepare ourselves for Easter.*

***Remembering the Holy in the stories***

◆Lent is a time within the Christian church when we slow down and consider how we live our faith.

Within this season, we return to stories of our faith history to help us understand our faith in the present. We hear the decisions, the challenges, the consequences of choosing to follow the example of Jesus or choosing not to follow.

We are challenged to recognise when we haven't chosen our words or our actions with wisdom, compassion and courage.

◆On Good Friday, God's Friday, we revisit the story of God's greatest lesson of love.

Within the memories and story shared today,

Listen: for what was possible and what was missed.

Lament: for human frailty that can break a world into pieces

Learn:so that we don't repeat errors that cost lives and souls

Love: as God would have us love.

### ***Invitation to the journey***

Good Friday is not a good day at all. But if we return to its Anglo Saxon roots of being called God's Friday, we might realize that this is the day when God most exemplified steadfast love for us. When God's son showed us the courage and faith it takes to give ourselves to God. Let us enter into this sacred story together and revisit the roots of our faith.

### **♪VU#152 There is a Green Hill Far Away verses 1 & 4**

There is a green hill far away,  
outside a city wall,  
where the dear Lord was crucified,  
who died to save us all.

O dearly, dearly has he loved,  
and we must love him too,  
and trust in his redeeming blood,  
and try his works to do.

Today we remember that  
the carpenter's hands were nailed to a cross,  
Jesus became the Christ, The Chosen One,  
crowned with thorns, wearing the purple robe of mockery,  
for the sake of love for all people.

**Imprisoned on a tree,  
his integrity, his courage, his faith was to set us free.  
Today is God's Friday**

### ***Garden of Gethsemane***

### **♪ VU#133 Go to Dark Gethsemane Verse 1**

Go to dark Gethsemane,  
you that feel the tempter's power;  
your Redeemer's conflict see;  
watch with him one bitter hour;  
turn not from his grief away:  
learn from him to watch and pray.

Jesus and his friends went to the Mount of Olives, to the Garden of Gethsemane.

### **Luke 22:40-48, 54a**

On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them.

“Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” Then seizing him, they lead him away and took him into the house of the high priest.

### ***Reflection***

Jesus was afraid. He knew that, because he had challenged the political power of both the church and the state, his life was in danger. There was no regret that he had made enemies, because he knew that living God’s Way of truth was worth it. But in his humanness, knowing that pain and suffering were coming, he was scared.

He couldn’t rely on his friends to get him through this... they gave way to exhaustion and fell asleep. So he prayed. He asked God to get him out of the coming consequences – even knowing it wouldn’t happen.

But God was there. An angel came, a holy messenger, bringing God's strength to make it through. And Jesus accepted God's strength, saying "Let God's will be done". God was there.

Have you been in the Garden of Gethsemane? Feeling alone and afraid? Have you known that you were about to be held to account for your own words and actions? Can you accept God's strength, accept the consequences and find new life afterward? Can you let go of your fears and let God support you? God is there for each one of us.

## **♪Were you there when he knelt and prayed to God?**

### ***Peter denies Jesus three times***

At the Passover meal they shared, Jesus foretold that Peter would deny him three times. Peter said – No Way – I will follow you to prison or death – I will never deny you.

### **Luke 22: 54b-62**

Peter followed at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said,

"This man was with him."

But Peter denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

A little later someone else saw him and said,

"You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

About an hour later another asserted,

"Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!"

Just as he was speaking the rooster crowed.

The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.

Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."

And Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

## ***Reflection***

Peter was scared. He really had believed that he had the courage to stand with Jesus. But when he was surrounded by a crowd of angry people who could turn on him in a moment, his courage disappeared. In a state of panic, self preservation took over. To save his own skin, he denied any involvement with Jesus. Jesus recognized that this would happen and yet he didn't get angry. When Peter realized what he had done, he wept, acknowledging his error – knowing that in his heart he didn't mean the hurt his words had caused. Jesus didn't stop loving Peter, he forgave him.

God knows that, in our humanness, in times of stress, we do and say things that hurt others and ourselves, we look after ourselves first. Have there been times in your life when your words have hurt others? Have you realized later, that even if it wasn't your intent others have been wounded by your actions? When in our life, have we had to swallow our pride and say I'm sorry, when in hindsight we know we missed the mark? When, as Peter did, we admit our mistakes and begin to learn from them, God gives us strength to forgive and to be forgiven. As God was with Peter and Jesus, God is there for each one of us.

## **♪Were you there when the rooster crowed three times?**

### ***Pilate***

Jesus was beaten and dragged from one place to the next: from prison, to the high Priests, to the Governor Pontius Pilate, To King Herod, and back to Pilate again.

### **Matthew 27: 11-26, Mark 16-20**

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus said, "You say so."

But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.

Then Pilate said to him,

“Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?”

But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, to the great amazement of the governor.

Now it was the governor’s custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them,

“Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? “

For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him

While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message:

“Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him. “

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

“Which of the two do you want me to release to you? “asked the governor.

“Barabbas, “they answered.

“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?”

Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder “Crucify him!”

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd.

“I am innocent of this man’s blood.” he said.

“It is your responsibility!”

All the people answered,

“Let his blood be on us and on our children!”

So he released Barabbas to them:

And after flogging Jesus he handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away into the courtyard of the palace known as the governor's headquarters, and they called together the whole company of soldiers.

They dressed him up in a purple robe and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him.

They saluted him, "Hey! King of the Jews!" 19 Again and again, they struck his head with a stick. They spit on him and knelt before him to honor him.

When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

### ***Reflection***

Pilate knew that the charges against Jesus couldn't be proven. But to let him go would be political suicide. While the State and the Church were still separate entities at this time, Rome was aware that the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Church, had a lot of control over the people. If Pilate let him go, then the church could make life very uncomfortable for him. If he lost control of the citizens in his area, he could lose his job or his life. There was no legal reason for him to deal with Jesus. Jesus was the victim of lies and vicious gossip, emanating from people who were afraid that their power and position were being threatened by him.

The Sanhedrin violated the rules of the Torah (that they were supposed to uphold) by not seeking truth, but only requesting testimony that incriminated Jesus. Neither Pilate nor the Sanhedrin wanted to be held responsible for Jesus death, but they didn't want him alive either – he made the people question their motives. Pilates hand washing was hypocritical; he was more interested in declaring his own innocence than doing his job. This action did not free him of responsibility – his action of standing to the side, his handing of an innocent man to a crowd of angry people made him responsible. The people were pulled along by the high energy of the crowd, caught in a swirling madness. They

mocked Jesus, they hurt him – all in an effort to justify to themselves that what they knew to be wrong was right.

We still see examples of Jesus being Crucified. Innocent people, who bear the brunt of misused power and position. People whose lives are turned upside down because others didn't stand up for them. People who have done nothing wrong who are punished or killed. We know of officials who break their own rules, who manipulate facts to serve their own purposes. They lie to save their own place, and in doing so condemn others to death.

But the truth will come out. The reality is that saying “we didn't do it” is just words. If we stand by and let injustice happen – we are responsible. If we allow others to be hurt and humiliated to enhance our own power and do nothing to stop it – we are responsible. If we allow ourselves to be pulled into the swirling power of negativity, of condemning without truth, of being afraid to examine our own motives – we are responsible.

In the midst of this horror and violence, Jesus stood strong. Strong in the faith that he knew and was supported by God. Strong in knowledge that he had lived God's truth, and shared God's word. Surrounded by the love and strength of God, to withstand everything in the name of truth. We call Jesus our example. Where have we stood strong and solid, sticking to our principles, shouting out against injustice, giving up of ourselves for the benefit of others... willing to lean on the strength and love offered by God to see us through?

**♪Were you there when they sentenced him to death?**

***Crucified***



### **Luke 23:26, 32-43**

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called Golgotha, the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left.

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One”

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.””

Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

### ***Reflection***

Even through the pain and horror, as the crowd continued to feed on its own energy and taunted him, Jesus didn't think of himself. He recognized manipulation in the demand that he save himself to prove who he was. He recognized desperation as some asked for a miracle to let them off the hook for their behaviour. He asked God to forgive his tormentors. What courage. What faith. What compassion.

One of the two men who were crucified with him, voiced what everyone already knew...Jesus had done nothing wrong. The criminal looked to Jesus and recognized that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Even knowing that he had deserved the punishment he was receiving for his sins, he asked Jesus for forgiveness, for compassion... and Jesus gave it to him. Jesus knew, even through all of this, that God was there, wrapped around him, just a breath away.

We are asked to forgive those who trespass around us. Trespasses against us and those we perpetrate on others can dramatically impact our lives and our relationship with God. If we refuse to forgive if we refuse to acknowledge our sins, how can we expect God's forgiveness to be effective in our lives.

Do we have the courage to be the lone voice, living fully our faith through unthinkable challenges? Do we know that God is there with us and within us, waiting for us to recognize what is right in front of us?

### ♪VU#148 Jesus Remember Me

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom  
Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom

**Luke 23: 44-46, Mark 15:39**

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two

Jesus called out with a loud voice,  
“Father into your hands I commit my spirit.”  
When he had said this, he breathed his last.

The centurion, who had stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, said, “Surely this man was the Son of God”

### ***Reflection***

With his last breath, Jesus gave himself up to God. And God was there. Just as the cock crowed to re-focus Peter, the sun went out, the temple curtain was torn in two and the crowd realized their responsibility and their grief for their own actions.

What would it take for us to take responsibility for our actions? Today we find ourselves challenged to do just that: to act responsibly for the health and welfare of our neighbours. Are we ready to give up our old life and move into the unknown new life ahead, not worrying about ourselves, but willing to live with God? God is there, waiting for us.

♫VU#144 **Were you there when they crucified My Lord?**

### ***Laid in the tomb***

#### **Mark 15:42-47**

It was preparation day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had

already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

### ***Reflection***

And they waited...

They did what they could before Sabbath began. After the Sabbath, they would return at sunrise on the third day, to carry perfumes and spices to honour him in the rituals as their own...

In the aftermath of what had occurred... the people would go back to their houses, follow their Sabbath rituals, pray and reflect upon their role, and wonder what they had done, what they should have done.

♪ ***MV#66 Senzeni Na? What Have We Done?***

### **Easter Service**

**Easter Sunday (April 12):11:00 a.m.**

Online (links available via email)

#### **Acknowledgements**

This service was gathered together from pieces in the following resources..

Seasons of the Spirit: Congregational Life.

Celebrate God's Presence.

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The Whole People of God

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