

He came from his best throne salvation to bestow,
but people scorned, and none the longed-for Christ would know.
But, O my Friend, my Friend indeed, who at my need his life did spend!

Sometimes they strew his way, and his sweet praises sing,
resounding all the day hosannas to their king.
Then, "Crucify!", is all their breath; and for his death they thirst and cry

Here might I stay and sing, no story so divine;
never was love, dear King, never was grief like thine!
This is my friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.

Prayer of Approach

(Jenn)

God of all our days, we gather on this day of sadness and triumph, our hearts breaking and broken by the wonder of it all. And you are with us. In our waiting and our weeping, keep us willing to enter fully into the mystery and pain of this day, for by your kindness, we will find our way through it. Amen

Our Lord's Prayer

**Our Father (and Mother) who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kin(g)dom 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 kin(g)dom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn: "Were You There" (verses 1 and 3)

VU 144

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (Repeat)
Oh, oh, oh, oh! Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine? (Repeat)
Oh, oh, oh, oh! Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Before First Scripture

(Andrea and Rose Ann)

Each of the gospels contains a particular account of the first Good Friday, written from a particular perspective. John's words will be our guide today.

First Scripture: John 18:28-32, 38b-19:16

(After an inquisition by Caiaphas, the High Priest, some religious officials and an escort of Roman soldiers) took Jesus to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The religious officials replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death by which he was to die).

(After questioning Jesus inside), Pilate went out to the religious officials again and told them, "I find no case against this man. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at Passover. Do you want me to release for you the Ruler of the Jews?" They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying, "Hail, Ruler of the Jews!" and striking him on the face.

Then Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So, Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw Jesus, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The religious officials answered, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have the power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the religious officials cried out, "If you release this man you are no friend of the Emperor. Everyone who claims to be a ruler sets himself against the Emperor." When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement (or, in Hebrew, Gabbatha). Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the religious officials and gathered crowd, "Here is your Ruler!"

They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your Ruler?" The chief priests answered, "We have no ruler but the Emperor." Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Before the Congregational Reading

(Harry)

On the cross, Jesus spoke words that send a shudder through us, words of total abandonment and hopelessness. Was it really that God had abandoned him? Or was he beginning to recite the words of our Congregational Reading, Psalm 22, which starts off with that horrible feeling that many of us have had at some, or many, points in our lives. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Congregational Reading: Psalm 22 (Part One)

VU page 744

Part One (1-18)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me,
from the cry of my distress?

O my God, I cry out in the daytime, but you do not answer;
at night also, but I get no relief. R

But you are the Holy One,
enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

They called to you, and you rescued them.

In you they put their trust,
and you did not disappoint them.

But I am a worm, less than human,
an object of derision, an outcast of the people.

All those who see me laugh me to scorn,
they curl their lips and toss their heads, saying:

'You trusted in God for deliverance.
If God cares for you, let God rescue you!'

But you are the One who took me out of the womb.

You kept me safe on my mother's breast.

On you have I depended from my birth.
Even from my mother's womb,
you have been my God. R

Do not be far from me, for trouble is close at hand,
and there is no one to help me.
Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me.
They open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravenous, roaring lion.
My life pours out like water;
all my bones are out of joint;
my heart has melted like wax within my breast;
my mouth is parched as dry clay;
my tongue clings to my palate.
I lie in the dust of death.
Dogs surround me;
the wicked hem me in on every side.
They bind my hands and my feet;
I can count all my bones,
while they stand staring, gloating over me.
They divide my garments among themselves;
they cast lots for my clothing. R

Ministry of Music: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High Lloyd Larson
Joint choirs. Neil Murray, piano; Leah Mezo-Willingham, cello;
Kathleen King Martin conducting

The Quietness of Prayer: (*Unison*) (Jenn)

**God of passionate and vulnerable love, whose body, broken on a cross, rebukes us still:
free us, hold us, and forgive us, that you as victor and victim might lead us from death to life;
through Jesus, the Crucified. Amen.**

Hymn: "Were You There" (verse 2) VU 144

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? (Repeat)
Oh, oh, oh, oh! Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Second Scripture: John 19:16b-25a (Joe)

(Nails are pounded into a cross that is stood up then draped in purple cloth, with a crown of thorns looped over the top during the words "There they crucified him".)

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull (which in Hebrew is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and

put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Ruler of the Jews". Many of the local citizens read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The Ruler of the Jews', but, 'This man said, I am Ruler of the Jews'. Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that is what the soldiers did.

Hymn: "O Come and Mourn with Me Awhile"

VU 136

O come and mourn with me awhile. O come now to the Saviour's side;
O come, together let us mourn: Jesus, our love, is crucified.

Have we no tears to shed for him, while soldiers scoff and foes deride?
Ah! Look how patiently he hangs: Jesus, our love, is crucified.

Seven times he spake, seven words of love; and all three hours his silence cried
for mercy on the souls of all: Jesus, our love, is crucified.

O love of God! O sin-filled world! In this dread act your strength is tried,
and victory remains with love: Jesus, our love, is crucified.

An Invitation to Ponder the Cross

(Heather)

A public crucifixion was an occasion for people to come, stare, and watch, and be horrified. The Romans took the opportunity to make examples of those who were tortured as a deterrent to others. We might imagine that the scene was sometimes noisy and the air filled with taunts; at other times, quiet. There were some remarkably tender things that happened as well. Listen to John's words:

Third Scripture: John 19:25b-27

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son". Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother". And from that hour the disciples took her into his own home.

Ponder the Cross

(Jenn)

I invite us now to imagine ourselves at the foot of the cross for a few moments, that our hearts might be opened and widened by what we experience there. There is no rush, we will take some time. While we are pondering, we will hear a refrain sung by some of our choristers for today. The words will be on the screen. Please join in on the Refrain.

Sung response: "Spirit, Open My Heart"

MV 79

(Choir sing verses and congregation joins on refrain)

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you loved may I love in receiving and in giving. Spirit, open my heart.

Fourth Scripture: John 19:28-30

(Harry)

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said, (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty". A jar of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Ministry of Music

Were You There arr. Dan Edwards
Handbell choir; Leah Mezo-Willingham, cello
Kathleen King Martin conducting

Unison Prayer: "Grief and Love" *(Unison)*

(Andrea)

Crucified Liberator, naked God, your hand disgraced and powerless.

Grieving, we dare to hope, as we wait at the cross with your mother and your friend.

Hymn: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

VU 149

Handbell choir; Leah Mezo-Willingham, cello;
Kathleen King Martin conducting

- 1 When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.
- 2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God:
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

- 3 See from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?
- 4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small:
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Fifth Scripture: John 19:31-42 (followed by a time of silence)

(Jenn and Heather)

Since it was the Day of Preparation, the religious officials did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, especially because that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (The one who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. That one's testimony is true, and that one is aware that it is true). These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken". And again, another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced".

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of his friend among the religious officials, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so Joseph came and removed Jesus' body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish Day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Postlude: "O Sacred Head Sore Wounded"

(Leah Mezo-Willingham, cello solo)

(Lights turned out, Christ candle extinguished, service ends in silence. People can choose to leave or linger for quiet prayer)

(This service of worship is adapted from Gathering, Lent/Easter 2017, by Bob Root, Mark St. UC, Peterborough. Used with permission)

Thank you to the combined choirs of the Four United Churches in Waterloo, the First United Bell Choir, and Leah Mezo-Willingham for leading our ministry of music today.

Participants:

Rev. Rose Ann Vita, First United

Rev. Harry Disher, First United

Rev. Joe Gaspar, Parkminster United

Rev. Jenn Hind-Urquhart, Emmanuel United

Rev. Andrea Allen, Westminster United

Rev. Heather Power, Parkminster United