

CLEANING THE ALTAR

Linda Eades

In the quietness of our hearts, we know that we cannot ignore the reality of our self-destructive behavior. The world bears the scars of our greed, arrogance, and brutality. We are broken, divided, and infected with a blindness we cannot cure and often refuse to see. We look for convenient answers, reach for technology to save us or pointing fingers at one another, but little changes and the ugliness remains. Before the Cross our crimes are laid bare, now plain for all to see. By His blood *our* debt was paid, with His broken body *our* punishment He endured, with His death our *judgement* paid.

It is hard to comprehend it all, but we cannot ignore the sacrifice He made to give us a fresh start and new life. He is the bridge we must cross, but will we accept His gift, will we cross it?

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Have mercy on us, O God, in your great love.

What Wondrous love is this?

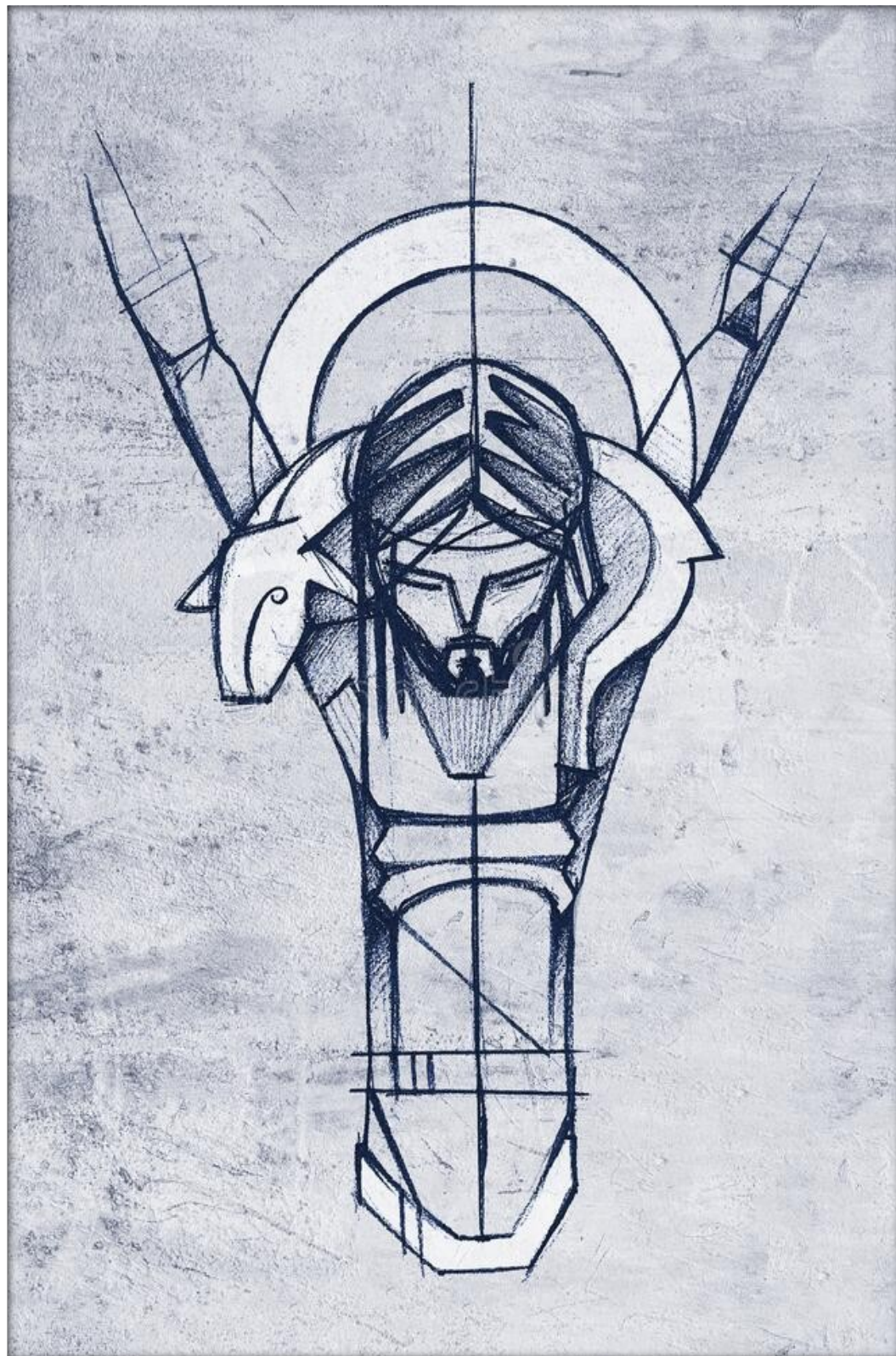
"It is Finished."

"When I Survey the Wonderful Cross" 298

✙ You may stay as long as you wish in silent contemplation.

Prayer partners are available to pray with you & for you. ✙

A special "Thank You" to all those who shared their time and talents to make this service so meaningful!





Good Friday

Prelude

Via Dolorosa

Call to Worship

Mary Thomas

My Friends, why do you seem lost and confused, like sheep without a shepherd. Why have you come and who are you looking for?

We have come because they have crucified our Lord.

Crucified Him? Who could do such a barbaric thing?

The mob, with Pilate's approval, cheered by the crowd, and encouraged by our leaders as we watched silently in horror.

Were you not with them? Did I not hear you join their cries?

"Crucify Him!" you shouted every time you turned a blind eye to suffering and injustice.

"Crucify Him!" you shouted every time you ignored God's Word and abandoned His laws,

"Crucify Him!" you shouted when you were consumed with evil thoughts of pride and envy.

Yes, I was there. Like sheep, we all have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him, the innocent sufferer, the punishment we all deserve.

Let us draw together in our grief and confront the darkness in our world, in our homes and in our lives. Let us pray

Opening Prayer

Chris Arveson

Hymn

"Were you There?"

UMH 288

Psalm 22

Susan Allen

Hymn

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"

UMH 286

Before Pilate (Luke 23)

Randall Isom

Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king." So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" You have said so," Jesus replied.

What possible crime has this man committed?

Crucify Him!

But I have found him guilty of nothing.

Crucify Him!

He is not a revolutionary.

Crucify Him!

He has no military or political power.

Crucify Him!

He is a danger to no one.

Crucify Him!

What has this man done to you?

Crucify Him!

If I whip him, will that satisfy you?

Crucify Him!

Does human pain and suffering mean nothing to you?

Crucify Him!

Fine! He is yours! Do as you wish. I wash my hands of his blood.

Meditation

Rev. Don Stilgenbauer

Prayer of Confession

Martha Wilkenson

Gracious God, in the dark of night, we gather to mourn the death of Jesus. He was despised and rejected, yet he was wounded for our crimes. We are overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us, even when it meant his own suffering and his own death. In his willingness to make us clean, he poured himself out to death, even death on a cross. In response to such love and sacrifice, we commit ourselves as his disciples to overcome evil with good, suffering with sacrifice, and oppression with justice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

Holy God,
we come into this dark and heavy moment with trembling hearts. It is easier to look back and blame others, to point to history, to distance ourselves from the cruelty of this day.

But we cannot escape the truth—we are here too,
participating in these cruel moments.

In our silence, when we should have spoken.

In our comfort, when others were suffering.

In our indifference to the hurting, the poor, the vulnerable.

In our fear of losing our status, control, or approval, we
watched.

We have turned away. We chose convenience over courage,
apathy over action, self-preservation over sacrificial love.

And still, You carry the cross that was meant for us.

Lord Jesus, this is not just another story from history—it is
ours.

We feel the weight of it. We cannot look away. You bear our
strips, you suffer our pain, you paid our price.

Break our hearts, if they can still be broken.

Strip away our excuses. Confront us with the cost of our sin—
not to condemn, but to awaken us.

As we stand at the foot of the cross, let us see clearly, grieve
honestly, and begin again. Have mercy on us, Lord.

Amen.

Meditation on 3.25.16

¹² I am forgotten as though I were dead;
I have become like broken pottery. Psalm 31

Grief, worry, fear, anxiety, doubt, death. All expressions of the human experience.

All basic human emotions. All describe how we feel when we know something is not as it should be. Life is out of control and all the plans we've made, all the dreams we had and all the things we believe would always be there have somehow disappeared. We feel lost yet don't know where to turn. Darkness closes in.

There are times in everyone's life, although we often live in denial of it, that we feel broken, that nothing is as it was before. St. John of the Cross once called it **the Dark night of soul**. Our heart is torn apart and we lie awake at night, tormented by a thousand nightmares of what could be.

This is such a night.

Imagine all your hopes for a better life, slowly dying before your eyes. Imagine sitting by the hospital bed watching a parent, spouse, child slowly succumb to death.

We have gathered here tonight not to rush through these moments like a short speed bump on our way to Easter, but as a necessary, unavoidably detour.

I do not understand, Good Friday, I mean not really. Oh sure I understand justice and punishment and all that, but I want to avoid pain as much as the next person.

We must come **honestly**. We must be honest with the pain we experience in life if the events that are to follow are to have any meaning whatsoever. We must be honest about the presence of evil, the seduction of wealth and our need for power. We both need this night and we loathe it at the same time.

We must come **humbly**. There is no place for pride here. There is no one here who can claim to be more honorable, more refined, more righteous when we look at the what has taken place today. What can we say, what price can we pay to undo the hurt we have caused others.

We must come **hopefully**. The events of today seem to suck the air right out of the room. How can we talk about hope, faith and love when all we cared for and cared about is dead. Simply, I don't know. But I am reminded of the prophet Isaiah. But tonight we are reminded of the old testament prophet Isaiah 55:8-9

“For **my** thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your **ways my ways**,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways** higher than your **ways** and **my** thoughts than your thoughts.”

Tonight I feel like I have become like broken pottery. Useless. The world seems so dark.

Psalm 22^[a]

For the director of music. To the tune of “The Doe of the Morning.” A psalm of David.

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.^[b]

³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.^[c]

⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

⁸ "He trusts in the Lord," they say,
"let the Lord rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."

⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's
breast.

¹⁰ From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

¹³ Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.

¹⁵ My mouth^[d] is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce^[e] my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

¹⁹ But you, Lord, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

²⁰ Deliver me from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.

²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

²² I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.

²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

²⁴ For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.

²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the
great assembly;
before those who fear you^[f] I will fulfill my vows.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the Lord will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,

²⁸ for dominion belongs to the Lord
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before

him—

those who cannot keep themselves alive.

³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!