

Friday 2nd April 2021 – Good Friday

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

You may like to be still or listen to a calming piece of music as we gather in worship. If you have a candle you may wish to light it now.

Holy God, as we come to worship you, help us to remember, that though apart, we belong to your church, your people, your world, we are not alone. Draw us together by your Spirit as we worship. Amen.

Hymn: My song is love unknown (StF 277)

<https://youtu.be/KTZgZU4shMw>

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.

O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?

He came from his blest throne,
salvation to bestow;
but they made strange, 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.

Why, what has my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst him rise.

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he
to suffering goes,
that he his foes
from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,
my Lord on earth might have;
in death, no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.

What may I say?
Heaven was his home;
but mine the tomb
wherein he lay.

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.

Samuel Crossman (c. 1624-1683)

Let us pray together,

Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ
endured the cross for our sake.
Remove from us all coldness and cowardice
of heart, and give us courage
to take up our cross and follow him;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(Methodist Worship Book, *Collect for Good Friday*, p.538)

Today's Gospel Reading: John 18:1-19:42

(You may wish to read this passage from John's Gospel all at once or throughout the day as you reflect on the events of Good Friday).

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

18 After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ²Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas

brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' ⁵They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus replied, 'I am he.' Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When Jesus said to them, 'I am he', they stepped back and fell to the ground. ⁷Again he asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' ⁸Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.'⁹This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, 'I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.' ¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

Jesus before the High Priest

12 So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Peter Denies Jesus

15 Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷The woman said to

Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.'¹⁸ Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing round it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

19 Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.²⁰ Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.'²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.'²² When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?'²³ Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?'²⁴ Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, 'You are not also one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.'²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with him?'²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Jesus before Pilate

28 Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas 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.²⁹ So Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against

this man?'³⁰ They answered, 'If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.'³¹ Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.' The Jews replied, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death.'³² (This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'³⁴ Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?'³⁵ Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?'³⁶ Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.'³⁷ Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'³⁸ Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

Jesus Sentenced to Death

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, 'I find no case against him.'³⁹ But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?'⁴⁰ They shouted in reply, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas was a bandit.

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.² And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe.³ They kept

coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. ⁴Pilate 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.' ⁵So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' ⁶When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.' ⁷The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

⁸ Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. ⁹He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰Pilate therefore said to him, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' ¹¹Jesus 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.' ¹²From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.'

¹³ 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. ¹⁴Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' ¹⁵They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the

emperor.' ¹⁶Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

So they took Jesus; ¹⁷and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' ²⁰Many of the Jews 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. ²¹Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews"', but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews." ²²Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' ²³When 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. ²⁴So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves,

and for my clothing they cast lots.'

²⁵And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. ²⁸After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' ²⁹A jar full

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. ³⁰When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus' Side Is Pierced

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews 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. ³²Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. ³⁵(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) ³⁶These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' ³⁷And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸ After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. ³⁹Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹Now 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. ⁴²And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Time to Reflect – Jesus is condemned to death

Imagine yourself in the midst of the crowd beginning to shout for Jesus' crucifixion as you read and reflect:

Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...That had been the cry of the crowd as he entered Jerusalem, celebrating, triumphal, excited, hopeful. How could so much change in so little time? (The crowd shouts Crucify him)

Yet some whispered that Jesus had known and even said that he would be put to death. Arrested in a garden, beaten, blind-folded, brought before the religious authorities and all the might of the Roman Empire. He stood before Pilate, who asked what crime he had committed. Had his crime been loving too much? Or healing the sick? Or telling stories that changed people's lives? Had his crime been welcoming the stranger or eating with the unpopular? Or was it his criticism of the established order? His popularity? Annoying the religious authorities? Threatening the status quo? (*Crucify him*)

"Why, what evil has he done?" – the question on Pilate's lips that none could answer. How could these things be punishable by agonising nails through flesh, robbing him of all humanity, to face the death of a criminal? And yet the cry began to be heard... (*Crucify him*).

What had Jesus done that was deserving of death? Nothing. (*Crucify him*) Yet Barabbas,

a murderer, a criminal, a dangerous man, goes free? (*Crucify him*).

I wonder what our place in that crowd would have been? (*Crucify him*)

Would we have shouted crucify him along with them? Would we have been drawn into the hype, the frenzy, the fear? Looking for a scapegoat, someone to blame? Would we have been frightened of speaking against this injustice? (*Crucify him*)

I wonder how do we respond to the injustices of our world today? When we encounter poverty, discrimination, division, hurt, homelessness, hunger, how do we respond? How will we respond? Will we collude with the crowd or will we speak out in the name of love?

Take a time to sit quietly. You may wish to listen to a piece of quiet music or simply be still.

A time of prayer

In our time of prayer there is an opportunity to bring before God the things on our hearts and minds using the following themes:

Holy God, we come to you today with our prayers:

We pray for our world...

We pray for the Church...

We pray for all those striving for justice...

We pray for those suffering with COVID-19 and its effects...

We pray for those grieving the loss of loved ones...

We pray for those we know and love who need our prayers...

We offer all our prayers in and through the name of our living Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Jesus, remember me (StF 777)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g6Q-uSV714>

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

Taize Community

(If you have a lit candle, extinguish it at this point and spend a few moments in quiet reflection)

Closing Prayer

Holy God, as we stand at the foot of the cross of your Son, help us to see and know your love for us fully expressed here.

Crucified Christ, we draw near with awe to this holy place of Calvary; here you transformed evil into the victory of love, and violence into the victory of peace. On this painful and mysterious day, accept our thanks for the cost of all you endured, and give us the courage to stay with you until it is finished.

We wait, we watch for the hope that defies despair, the life that defies death, the beginning that defies the end. Amen.

Original Materials by Rev Miriam Moul
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