



Good Friday

*Forster / Tuncurry Uniting Church
9th April, 2020*

Centering Music "How Deep The Father's Love"

(track No 23 on CD and Jumpshare or " How Deep The Fathers Love")

Call to Worship

And so the time has come.
The hour is here.
All that the prophets had foretold,
everything that Jesus had talked of is about to take place.
The wheels are in motion
The Father's will is to be done!

Bible Reading John 18: 1- 14

Reflection

We stood with the crowd as Jesus rode into the city. We cheered and proclaimed him.
Now we stand with him in the garden as soldiers come to make the arrest. Silent !
Helpless!

This is our teacher, our master, our friend who is being taken away!
What is happening affects us, we are the reason this is happening,
it is for us,
it is because of us.

Hymn "In the Same Night"

(track No 28 on CD and Jumpshare or " Be Still My Soul")

- 1 In the same night in which he was betrayed,
the supper ended, and the dark come down,
there in that lonely garden Jesus prayed,
as lights and torches through the garden came:
so Judas ends what love of self began,
and with a kiss betrays the Son of Man.

- 2 The hour is come: the power of darkness reigns.
See, like a lamb, the Lord is led away.
Of twelve disciples only one remains
to wait the dawning of the final day:
alone before his captors Jesus stands,
while in the courtyard Peter warms his hands.

- 3 Turn, Lord, and look: for many a cock has crowed;
we too betray, forsake you, or deny.
For us, like Peter, bitter tears have flowed,
lost in the dark, no language but a cry;
a cry of weakness, failure and despair:
Lord, in your mercy, stoop to hear our prayer.

Timothy Dudley Smith 1926 -

Bible Reading John 18: 15- 27 (Peter)

Reflection

Peter stands by the fire, isolated from his friends and from Christ. Put on the spot about his allegiance to Christ, and with none of the other disciples there to lend support, (there's no safety in numbers), that little voice in Peter's head, the one that speaks of self-preservation and consequences, wins the day.

Alone we stand with non church people. A joke is made, Jesus' name rubbed in the dirt, or sworn, the church abused and held up for scorn, those who faithfully live out their calling, tarred with the same brush as those who don't.

Does our own little voice win the day also? We may not deny, but our silence is just as damning.

Reflection

The religious leaders had kept an eye on Jesus, they had received reports of his words and deeds. His ways challenged their power and their place in the order of things. They had to get rid of this thorn in their side.

We read the stories of Jesus, we hear of others faith and trust. We see lives changed and grace dispensed, we even hear God's still small voice ourselves. All of this should be sufficient for us to commit to the way of Christ, but in various ways and with a multitude of excuses, we resist.

Our present life is comfortable, we fill it in with the things we want, in our own time, with choices of our making. This Messiah and his upside down kingdom, his demand that he wants our whole life, is too radical, too challenging. Perhaps we'll give him a bit of our time, our money, and if we close our hearts and minds to everything else we can also be rid of him.

Prayer of Lament

On this day of sadness,
Come near to us, O God.
Open our hearts once more to this story of your pain,
Teach us again of your sorrow and sacrifice.

For you know pain and rejection, loss and isolation
And in this knowing, you are with us.

With us when the tears will not stop,
When death and destruction surround us.
When fear in uncertainty bleeds dry the reservoirs of our hope
And panic replaces logical thinking

The world is a frightening place,
Droughts and fires,
Floods and viruses
Unemployment and economic collapse
All give rise to despair in the things of this world, the god's we have created.

Let our hope in you, the foundation of our faith, be realized
Hear our cries and our pleas.
In the cross, the tomb and the resurrection we see your desire for us to be lifted up,
restored, re-united with you
Come to our aid O God.

Amen

Bible Reading

Matthew 27: 11 - 26

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over.

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 the Messiah?" 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, "His blood is on us and on our children!"

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Reflection

The fickleness of the crowd; less than a week ago shouting hosanna as he entered Jerusalem, now disappointed in who Jesus turned out to be, not the leader of a rebellion,

*So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged Cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.*

2 Oh that old rugged Cross, so despised by the world,
has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
to bear it to dark Calvary.

So I'll cherish.....

3 To the old rugged Cross I will ever be true,
its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away
where His glory for ever I'll share.

So I'll cherish.....

George Bennard

Reflection

A man who got dragged into carrying Christ's cross and a group of men who stayed detached.

Both Simon and the soldiers were forced to play their roles in this story. I sense if Simon wasn't conscripted to help, he would have been happy to stand at the side of the road, watching this man struggle in carrying his cross. The soldiers certainly weren't concerned about alleviating the pain of those whose future was to be crucified. It was their job, and any help was wasted as death awaited all who were condemned to Golgotha. Neither brought empathy or joy, let alone compassion to the one who was suffering.



When we see before us the suffering and the hurt of others, how do we respond, stand by the roadside and not get involved?

Someone else will help, there are agencies for that, or the government.

Consider such help useless, a waste of time, as the future holds no hope. All that awaits is addiction or relapse, ingrained apathy or generational poverty?

Bible Reading - Luke 23: 32-33, 39 - 43

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

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? 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, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Reflection

Polar views of Jesus. He does that you know;

"who is not for me is against me"

the sheep and the goats,

light and darkness,

life and death.

A tale of two men.

One could see nothing more than a tall poppy brought down to size. A man whose actions didn't live up to his words.

The other saw. He saw himself for what he was and he saw Jesus for what he was. The way, the truth, and the life.

Who do we see?

Hymn "From Heaven You Came" Verses 1, 2, 3

(track No 34 on CD and Jumpshare " TIS 256 The Servant King")

1. From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served, but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

2. There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours', he said.

This is our God, the Servant King ...

3. Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, the Servant King ...

Bible Reading John 19: 25 - 30

Reflection

It was love which took Jesus to the cross. Love for a fallen humanity, a fallen you and I. And even as his earthly life was ebbing away, it is love that we see being displayed by this crucified Saviour. Love was the message of his ministry, it is the core of who Christ is.

His instruction to those he loved was that they should look after each other. How pertinent is this instruction for us today. In the uncertainty as to how life is to be lived during this pandemic and the fear that an unknown future holds for us we are reminded more than ever by Jesus' words to look after each other. We hear words like staying connected and community and we know that such concepts, as important as they were before the virus, are life saving to us all now.

"Here are your congregation members, your families, your neighbours, your community, - care for them."

That is how we will get through this, with the love of, and for, each other.

It was between two criminals, in front of those who stood before him, that Jesus died. We feel the depth of this death, a death that was filled with so much anguish. For here we see the son of God, a man who's relationship with his heavenly father had been closer than anyone else has ever had, now feeling deserted. The source of all his power, his comfort, his truth, his guidance, no longer there. It was to the depths of death that Christ descended.

Hymn: " When I Survey The Wondrous Cross "

(track No 38 on CD and Jumpshare TIS 342" When I Survey the Wondrous Cross")

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.

Isaac Watts 1674–1748

Bible Reading: John 19: 31 - 42 (Burial)

Prayer of Confession

Were you there?

Encouraging, welcoming, applauding one moment, but shouting, "crucify him, crucify him!" the next.

Were you there?

Using your power over one at a disadvantage, unwilling to listen to your heart and your conscience, reluctant to let a good man go free.

Were you there?

Hammering in the nails, just doing your job; trying to isolate your feelings from your work, sensitive to your own lack of integrity.

Were you there?

Looking up and seeing someone you love suffer, but unable to help; wishing fervently that you had told this dear one that you loved him; recognizing his worth, yet not confident enough to declare it.

We were there, we were there.

Time of silent reflection...

Hymn "Were You There" Verse 1

(track No 39 on CD and Jumpshare TIS 345 " Were You There")

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble:
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Reflection

And so it has ended, a day like no other. Darkness and despair fills the hearts of the disciples, it fills our hearts. Jesus Christ is dead!

The picture of Christ on the cross is burnt into our minds, an image which will stay with us forever.

We know why he went through this, we know why he suffered, it was for us, it was for our sin, all that we have done wrong, all those steps we have taken away from the God who created us. We know he had to, we know it was his father's will, but that doesn't diminish our guilt, it doesn't make it any easier; it just makes the picture more vivid, the scars more personal, the emptiness deeper.

The betrayal, suffering, pain, and death of Jesus is a powerful reminder of his humanity. We have heard the story once more, we have been there and again it has pierced our hearts and our spirit.

Now we must wait; isolated in our homes but part of a community of believers spread across this planet who wait with us, hoping that crucifixion is not the last word and that Christ, the man on the cross, the son of God, now in a tomb still loves us.

Amen.

There's a place where mercy reigns and never dies

where streams of grace flow deep and wide

Where all the love I've ever found

Comes like a flood, flowing down

At the cross;

It's here I surrender my life and stand in awe of you,
crucified Christ

Your love runs red
my sins are washed white,
all I owe to you, Jesus

There's a place where sin and shame are powerless
Where my heart has peace and forgiveness with God

Here, my hope is found
Here, you saved my life
Here, on holy ground I bow down

At the cross.

Adapted from "At The Cross" by Chris Tomlin

