

Howick Presbyterian Good Friday Service @ home

9:30am, 10th April 2020

Good morning everyone and welcome to our Good Friday service in our homes. I don't think we've ever had Easter services like this. Maybe your home feels a bit like a tomb, and you're longing to break forth!

May the peace of God be with you on this Holy day.

This morning we will reflect on four moments in the Easter story:

The Garden of Gethsemane

Peter's Denial

Trial by Pilate

The Crucifixion

With each part of the story we will ask the question, "What is Good Friday telling us about God, and what is it telling us about ourselves?"

Let us pray.

Gracious God, on this day we gather to remember the suffering death of Jesus.

**We come overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us,
and his commitment to defeat evil,
even when that meant his own suffering and his own death.**

Today we pause to remember your sacrificial love
That shone light into the darkness
That bore life from such emptiness
That revealed hope out of devastation
That spoke truth through incrimination
That released freedom in spite of imprisonment
And brought us forgiveness.

Amen.

HYMN: Light of the World - Here I am to worship

Light of the world
 You stepped down into darkness
 Opened my eyes, let me see
 Beauty that made this heart adore You
 Hope of a life spent with You

*Here I am to worship
 Here I am to bow down
 Here I am to say that You're my God
 You're altogether lovely
 Altogether worthy
 Altogether wonderful to me*

King of all days
 Oh so highly exalted
 Glorious in heaven above
 Humbly You came to the earth You created
 All for love's sake became poor
 I'll never know how much it cost
 To see my sin upon that cross

Kids story telling of Good Friday - Jesus Storybook Bible

Reading 1 "The Garden" Luke 22:39-53

³⁹Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." ⁴¹He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴²"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." ⁴³An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.^[a]

⁴⁵When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶"Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

⁴⁷While 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, ⁴⁸but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

49When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" 50And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

51But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

52Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? 53Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns."

REFLECTION

Later on that night Jesus and his disciples go the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

Jesus is distressed - so much so that he is sweating drops of blood.

And he asks God, "My Father, if it is possible; take this cup of suffering away from me. But not what I want, but what you want." He cries a prayer of anguish - and as he prays it again he is clearly preparing to die.

Here we see Jesus struggling with doubt and uncertainty, and freely being able to express this to his Father.

And though God doesn't remove the cup, he sends an angel to strengthen Jesus.

And as Judas arrives, with the religious leaders, elders and officers of the temple guard, Jesus is ready. As they arrest him, the disciples draw their swords - one of them striking a mans ear - but Jesus says "No. This is not what this is about." He heals the man. That's what this is about.

I don't how God allows people to suffer the way they do in the world today. I have tried to answer that question so many times, each time insufficiently.

All I know is God does not leave suffering to us. He comes and he suffers too. He becomes the underdog - the forsaken one - the tortured one. The victim of injustice. A victim of a ruling Empire.

We are not alone as we navigate life's difficult times. Our Lord has been there too, and shares them with us now.

As we wait for the day that is our resurrection Sunday, we pray for strength to walk the road before us.

Dear God,

Strengthen me, by all you suffered, to bear pain and sorrow and separation and loneliness. Strengthen me, by the endurance of your agony, to endure temptation. Strengthen me when I am attracted or frightened away from our Father's will, when I am bored and tepid and apathetic.

Strengthen me not just to undergo passively but to bear with trust and courage and humility and love. Let me make of my suffering a real sharing in your passion's satisfaction.

Strengthen me not only for myself but for others; for the strength of each one is the strength of all.

Strengthen me to see the entire reality of this life I share with you, its conflict with sin and its essential character of reparation and sacrifice, its communion with your whole mystical body, its dependence upon, and its fulfilment in, the Father's love.

Strengthen me to will with your humility, to give myself in sacrifice with your humble love, to suffer with and for your whole body in trustful humble love of our Father.

Passion of Christ strengthen me with the love and the life that is in the sacrament and sacrifice of your passion. Make me live by and live in your Eucharist.

HYMN - The Servant King

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*

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

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

Reading 2 "Peters Denial" Luke 22:54-62

⁵⁴Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."

⁵⁷But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

*⁵⁸A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."
"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.*

⁵⁹About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

⁶⁰Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹The 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." ⁶²And he went outside and wept bitterly.

REFLECTION

Jesus' friends have deserted him. Of the 12, only one of them will make it to the cross to be with Jesus in his final suffering.

They are full of doubt. Fear. Uncertainty.

One will betray him, then regret it and take his life.

One says he will stay true, but falters.

The events of Easter point to all our weaknesses. Not only the evil we are capable of, as we crucify an innocent man. But also our fears. The way we run away.

Time and time we read of the disciples doubt. They were often uncertain. None of them were confident as Jesus was arrested that he was going to be fine.

Would it be true? Would he rise again? Was it all true? Have they been deceived?

None of them went to the tomb on the Sunday, confidently believing he was alive. Instead the men hid, and the women bought burial spices.

Through the experience of the doubting, deserting and fearful disciples, we are invited to be honest before God - those of us who struggle with the same things.

For some to have the courage and freedom to admit, "I don't know if I believe it."

And you won't know how to explain why, in that moment when the whisper rose out of your mouth like Jesus from the grave, you felt more alive and awake and resurrected than you have in ages because at least it was out, at least it was said, at least it wasn't buried in your chest anymore, clawing for freedom.

If this is you today, thank you for being here, for this story is your story. God want's your honesty - God can cope with your honesty. God understands your struggle. You are in the company of Jesus closest friends.

And may you know that sometimes, just showing up - burial spices in hand - is all it takes to witness a miracle.

So today we remember the posture of the disciples in this time, and we identify with what it says about us as people.

Let's pray - God thank you for your understanding and mercy. For believing in us, when we struggle to believe in you. For never giving up on us. We seek your face - our crucified and risen Lord. Amen.

Reading 3 "Trial by Pilate" Mark 15:1-15

¹Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

²"Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

³The chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

⁵But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

⁶Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. ⁷A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. ⁸The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

⁹"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, ¹⁰knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. ¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

¹²"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

¹³"Crucify him!" they shouted.

¹⁴"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

¹⁵Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

REFLECTION

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son".....

And the world shouted "Crucify him!"

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son".....

And the world mocked him and spat on him.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son".....

And the world falsely accused him, and sentenced him in a mockery of a trial.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son".....

And the world hung him on a tree.

Even Pontius Pilate, the cruel Roman Governor, is uneasy about what is happening. Who is this man? And what is this “truth” he speaks of?

Did Pilate realise that the events of next hours would forever change the world? Did he know that his actions would be retold for centuries after?

He didn’t understand it, but somehow he had a part to play in what would be one of the most significant moments in human history.

There our Lord stood, broken, beaten, rejected, having his fate thrown around like a rag doll before a hoard of wild animals.

He who had already given so much, who had loved so much, now the victim of beasts shouting, laughing, mocking.

What could be worse than torture, but torture combined with evil mockery. Our Lord’s pain was not only felt by the lead whip, the beatings, and suffocation on a cross. It was the face of evil and mockery that accompanied it.

Our God knows what it means to suffer.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we pray for those locked in circumstances beyond their control.

Restrained by oppressors, and seeing no end to their captivity.

For those who are victims of false trials, of injustice, of cruelty.

We pause and think of them now. (silence)

We thank you that in the cross of Christ, we have a God who identifies with our human condition and suffering.

We thank you that because you were also fully God, you conquered sin and death, and redeemed humanity to yourself.

For those who suffer today, we pray:

May they discover hope, buried in the deepest suffering, through Jesus Christ

Who shared the weakness and despair of human life,

Yet even gave death a new outcome, and brought resurrection from a closed tomb.

Amen.

HYMN: How deep the Father's love for us

How deep the Father's love for us
 How vast beyond all measure
 That He should give His only Son
 To make a wretch His treasure
 How great the pain of searing loss
 The Father turns His face away
 As wounds which mar the Chosen One
 Bring many souls to glory

Behold the man upon a cross
 My sin upon His shoulders
 Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
 Call out among the scoffers
 It was my sin that held Him there
 Until it was accomplished
 His dying breath has brought me life
 I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything
 No gifts, no power, no wisdom
 But I will boast in Jesus Christ
 His death and resurrection
 Why should I gain from His reward?
 I cannot give an answer
 But this I know with all my heart
 His wounds have paid my ransom

Reading 4 "The Cross" - Luke 23: 26-47

²⁶As 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. ²⁷A large number of people followed him, including women who

mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'" ³⁰Then

"they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"

and to the hills, "Cover us!" ^[a] ³¹For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." ^[b] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵The 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."

³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar

³⁷and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

³⁸There was a written notice above him, which read: |sc THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ^[c]

⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

⁴⁷The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."

REFLECTION

What does the cross tell us about God?

And what might the cross tell us about ourselves?

About humanity, and our social and religious institutions?

What does it mean when political and religious leaders come together to mock and torture and kill God's messenger - God's beloved child?

Is this the only way religions and governments maintain order? By threatening people with pain and shame if they don't do as they say?

And is this how they unify people - by turning people into a mob that comes together in its shared hatred of the latest failure, loser rebel, criminal, outcast - or prophet?

The Romans talked about their "Peace through Victory" - and the religious leaders boasted of their holiness and justice, but it was all a sham, a fraud, a con game.

What kind of people have we become?

One minute the crowds are welcoming Jesus, the next they are shouting "Crucify him!"

The disciples have scattered, unwilling to risk identifying themselves with him.

At the cross Jesus is mocked, spat upon, laughed at, tortured, in front of his own mother.

He had been unfairly judged, in a mockery of a trial. This perfect man, who did no wrong.

At the cross is a picture of humanity at its worst.

BUT IT IS ALSO A PICTURE OF GOD AT HIS LOVING, SELF GIVING BEST.

Jesus could have come down from the cross, and destroyed his enemies. That's the kind of messiah many of the people wanted.

But instead he chooses another path.

God is not revealed in killing and conquest; in violence and hate.

God is revealed in this crucified man - giving of himself to the very last breath.

He could have fought violence with violence, hate with hate. But he had a different strategy.

"Father forgive them for they don't know what they doing."

Not choosing violence, but choosing love and forgiveness.

"The insistence of the first Christians was that through this resurrected Jesus, God has made peace with the world. Not through weapons of war but through a naked, bleeding man hanging dead on a Roman execution stake. For them,

Jesus was another way, a better way, a way that made the world better through sacrificial love, not coercive violence.”

Maybe part of why Jesus had to go to cross was that there was no other way to see just how messed up we are.

And there was no greater way of seeing just how much God loves us.

The cross shows us the best of God and some of the worst of humanity too.

The cross shows us what God is really like, and what we are really like.

So if God is like that, and we are like that - then things need to change.

The call of Jesus to repent is to move from one way of living to another.

From the way of violence, corruption, power, envy, greed, selfishness, hate...

To the way of peace, love, forgiveness, servant hood, generosity.

What is God inviting you to move from?

Let us pray:

God, we confess that we are a people driven to use violence, intimidation and fear to control other people.

We find ourselves loving you one day, and denying you the next.

We welcome you into our lives with shouts of Hosanna, and send you from our hearts believing you to be dead.

At the foot of the cross we are confronted by just how evil we can be.

And we confronted by you and your response to your suffering and humiliation.

Won't you fight back? Show them who is boss?

Why do you ask God to forgive them? Us?

We don't deserve it.

Why do you stay on that cross?

Because of love.

So we sit at the foot of your cross, and look up at our crucified Lord, and we pray that we too may learn something about what love truly is.

CLOSING HYMN: When I Survey

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 offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

We have come to the end of our journey today, but we have not come to end of the story. For Sunday is coming.

Please join us on Sunday morning, as we ask ⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory?”

Where, O death, is your sting?”

As we celebrate the truth that “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Closing Blessing

Jesus, In his willingness to make us righteous,
he poured himself out to death,
even death on a cross,

and so, in response to such love and sacrifice,
we commit ourselves as his disciples
to overcome evil with good,
suffering with wholeness,
and oppression with justice.
Thank you that we can now walk in the light of your life,
Hope, truth, freedom and forgiveness,
This day and everyday.

Amen.

Sources:

The Worship Source Book

Re:Worship Prayer Online

“We make the road by Walking” - Brian McLaren, Rachel Held Evans
Jesus want to save Christians - Bell