

April 7, 2023
Good Friday

WE CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE

Lenten Candle Liturgy

*Written by Won Hur. **Gathering**, Lent/Easter 2023, pages 66-69. Used with permission.*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.

And the Word was God.

Jesus came into our world.

He brought life, and his life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the midst of chaos, tyranny, and destruction.

On this day, his light was extinguished by the powers and principalities of this world.

We mourn his death.

We mourn that such powers crucify people again and again, even till this day.

MV 90 "Don't Be Afraid"

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger, my love is stronger than your fear.

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger and I have promised, promised to be always near.

Prayer (*unison*)

O God, we mourn when innocent people are killed. Especially, we mourn those who are being killed because they dare to speak the truth, because they defend the environment and challenge racism, and because they seek justice and peace. O God, who cries with us, stay with us through these times and through the loneliness of the night. Comfort us as we mourn, as we pray for a world to come, a world of blessing you promised to those who mourn. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Hymn 135 VU "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand:
the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land,
a home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat and the burden of the day.

Upon the cross of Jesus my eyes at times can see
the very dying form of one who suffered there for me;
and from my smitten heart, with tears, two wonders I confess,
the wonder of his glorious love, and my unworthiness.

I take, O cross, your shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face,
content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,
my sinful self my only shame, my glory all, the cross.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

Scripture: Luke 22:39-48; Matthew 27:3-5

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done." [[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]] When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?"

When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

Reflection: Greed

It wasn't just Judas who was seduced by greed – in his case, for money for Jesus' arrest. The authorities were greedy for power and control. They knew that Jesus was influencing the people, empowering them to claim their dignity and strength. The greed of the authorities for power to be hoarded and held by them alone was the seed that led to the betrayal and capturing of Jesus. As our first candle is extinguished, let us silently pray for God to remove greed that stops us from being satisfied with what we have and prevents us from sharing our power and resources with one another.

Scripture: Luke 22:54-62

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a female servant, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him, for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Reflection: Fear

Peter was afraid. It was his fear that stopped him from doing the right thing. He was afraid to take a stand and to speak the truth that Jesus was his friend. Sometimes fear gets the better of us. When an acquaintance makes a racist comment, we are afraid to speak up. When someone different moves into our neighbourhood, we are afraid it might alter the value of our home. When we continue to repeat negative patterns in our lives, it is often fear of the unknown that stops us from having the courage to change. As our second candle is extinguished, let us pray in silence for God to remove fear within us and in our world that stops us from trusting God and doing what is right.

Hymn: 119 VU "When We Are Tempted to Deny Your Son"

When we are tempted to deny your Son,
because we fear the anger of the world,
and we are few who bear the insults hurled,
your will, O God, be done.

When we are tempted to betray your Son,
because he leads us in a harder way,
and makes demands we do not want to pay,
your will, O God, be done.

When we forget the cross that held your Son,
and would avoid the burden of this life,
the cry for justice and an end to strife,
your will, O God, be done.

When doubt obscures the victory of your Son,
and faith is weak and all resolve has fled,
help us to know him risen from the dead:
your will, O God, be done.

Scripture: John 18:28-40

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. 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 Jews 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 he was to die.)

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" 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?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to 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." 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." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. 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?" They shouted in reply, "Not this man but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a rebel.

Reflection: Pride

Pilate thought he had all the right answers. He trusted not in God's truth and God's love, but in his own knowledge and his political position. His pride played a role in his participation in Jesus' death. There are times when pride blinds us from seeing truth and blocks us from understanding others and trusting God. As the next candle is extinguished, let us silently pray for God to remove pride within us and in our world that makes us feel more important than others and stops us from asking for God's help when we need it most.

Scripture: John 19:1-11a

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, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. 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, "Behold the man!" When 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." The 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." 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 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."

Reflection: Envy

The leaders of the synagogue and the Roman Empire were jealous of anyone who influenced others more than they did. The emperor was even envious of God. He wanted the people to bow down and worship him alone. But Jesus would not; he spoke of where real power and truth resides, even while knowing such words would get him killed. As our next candle is extinguished, let us silently pray for God to remove envy within us and our world – envy that keeps us from believing that the gifts God has given us personally and the resources God has placed for us to share in this world are not enough.

Hymn 145 VU "O Sacred Head" vs. 1, 3
O sacred head, sore wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down;
now scornfully surrounded
with thorns, thine only crown:
how art thou pale with anguish,
with sore abuse and scorn;
how does that visage languish,
which once was bright as morn!

What language shall I borrow
to thank thee, dearest friend,
for this thy dying sorrow,
thy pity without end?
O make me thine forever;
and, should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never
outlive my love to thee.

Scripture: Luke 23:13-25

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people, and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified, and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

Reflection: Helplessness

Pilate could have made a different choice. He could have chosen to ignore their voices. He had the right to do so. The people who had listened to Jesus on the hillside, those who had been healed by him, fed by him, and cared for by him could have spoken out. They could have shouted louder than the others; they could have come en masse and demonstrated against what was happening. But instead, they all stood helplessly in the face of this verdict. There are times when we too abdicate to feelings of helplessness. We lose sight of our voice and our power and give in to feelings of helplessness and apathy. As we extinguish the next candle, let us silently pray for God to remove helplessness within us, empowering us to believe that when we work with God we can change ourselves and can make the world a better place.

Scripture: Luke 23:32-38

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

Reflection: Anger

The soldiers were filled with anger, as those who constantly fight in war always are. They had become desensitized to pain and suffering. And the others participated in Jesus' suffering by angrily throwing insults or callously walking by. Sometimes anger gets the best of us. It blocks us from noticing the suffering of another and envelops us in a cloak of self-righteous indignation. As the next candle is extinguished, let us silently pray for God to remove anger within us and anger in our world that leads to hatred and violence.

Hymn 149 VU "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

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.

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.

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?

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.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom 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 kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Anthem

OR

Hymn 143 VU "My Song is Love Unknown"

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 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.

Scripture: Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Reflection: Forgiveness

Even in the moment of greatest pain, having been beaten, rejected, insulted, and despised, Jesus speaks a word of peace and hope. Like the man hanging beside him, we have offered our confession to Jesus this day. May we trust that the word of forgiveness, given to that criminal long ago, will speak into our hearts this day through Christ's love. In the assurance of that promise, let us join in song:

Sung Response 85 MV "Take, O Take Me As I Am"

Take, O take me as I am;

Summon out what I shall be;

Set your seal upon my heart and live in me.

Scripture: Luke 23:44-46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

Hymn 144 VU "Were You There"

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

The Christ candle is extinguished.

WE DEPART IN SILENCE

With the exception of the Lenten Candle Liturgy, the service today was written by Sue Browning, and used with permission. **Gathering**, Lent/Easter 2014, pages 77-79.