

March 29, 2024

Good Friday

**We Gather**

**Prelude:** "Go To Dark Gethsemane" Richard Redhead 1853, arr. by Cindy Berry

**Extinguishing a Lenten Candle** *written by Won Hur. Used with permission. The United Church of Canada*

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.**

*The Lenten candles are extinguished.*

**Refrain:** MV 90 "Don't Be Afraid" Words: John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Music: John L. Bell

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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 of Approach**

O Lord Jesus Christ, beloved child of the Living God, hear our prayer.

**You set your passion, cross and death before us to speak to our souls. Speak to our souls now.**

**Grant mercy and grace to our lives. Bring peace to your church and assure us of your promise of everlasting life.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, who with God the Creator and with the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever, be with us now as we remember your passion and look to the dawn of Easter morn. Amen.

**Hymn VU 108** "Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights" Words: James Gertmenian

Music: Musikalisches Handbuch, Hamburg 1690, arr. W. H. Havergal 1864

Words: Hope Publishing Company Music: Public Domain OneLicense.net A620168, CCLI 11438349

Throughout these Lenten days and nights  
we turn to walk the inward way,  
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,  
we live in hope till Easter Day.

The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,  
who found in weakness greater power,  
embraces us, though lost and flawed,  
and leads us to his Rising Hour.

We bear the silence, cross and pain  
of human burdens, human strife,  
while sisters, brothers help sustain  
our courage till the Feast of Life.

And though the road is hard and steep,  
the Spirit ever calls us on  
through Calvary's dying, dark and deep,  
until we see the coming Dawn.

So let us choose the path of One  
who wore, for us, the crown of thorn,  
and slept in death that we might wake  
to life on Resurrection Morn!

Rejoice, O sons and daughters! Sing  
and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!  
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings  
on Easter Day will rise again.

**Scripture:** John 18:1-8 The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

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. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So 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. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these people go."

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there in the garden after dark?  
Were you there in the garden after dark?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there in the garden after dark?

**Judas Iscariot:** *(He explains his actions to the congregation as a man who faces a hostile crowd.)*

You must try to see it my way. We have come here in fellowship, many times. When Caiaphas asked me to lead him and his men here, I felt uneasy, but, with due respect, what could I do? Caiaphas is the High Priest; he wants to learn of my Lord's teachings. They gave me silver to bring them here, which I thought generous. But I am worried; why are they armed? As well, only a few minutes ago, just within sight of this garden, the servant Malchus whispered to me that in truth, my Lord Jesus is an offense to Caiaphas. The priests asked if his eloquence and teachings, which are not sanctioned by their authority, always draw such a crowd as the last one.

**Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Scripture:** John 18:10-14

Then 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. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

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

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there when they seized and bound my Lord?  
Were you there when they seized and bound my Lord?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they seized and bound my Lord?

**Malchus:** (*Stricken and in pain.*)

Why did Peter attack me? I had no choice. I came because I work for Caiaphas and he ordered me to come. I have to listen and listen to Caiaphas and never disagree, no matter what I think. What would you do in my position? Why don't you understand?! You must have had a boss like that. Listen, I don't understand your teacher, this Jesus of Nazareth. He doesn't even know me, but defends me against your anger and vengeance.

Where are they taking Jesus? It will be to old Annas, Caiaphas' father in-law, who has a lot of influence with the High Priest. Caiaphas has the idea that the Romans will take the heat off the Jews if they see someone prosecuted and punished in the extreme for any dissent. He and Annas have talked for years of a scapegoat, for their own purposes, to protect the interests of the community....

*(He goes to walk away and then turns back to tell the congregation.)*

I would have lost my job you know, if I hadn't gone along with Caiaphas on this. But this Jesus, the rabbi, saved even me. This Man of Peace is a very rare bird indeed. Do you think he's one to stop spreading this Word of God's love, even under threat?

*(He looks up at the cross.)*

I am afraid he will die for his love of us all.

### **Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Scripture:** John 18:15-18, 25-27 Peter Denies Jesus, Twice

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

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." 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?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there when disciples turned their backs?  
Were you there when disciples turned their backs?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when disciples turned their backs?

**Peter:** *(To the congregation, firstly as though they are some friends standing very close to him in the crowd.)*  
The High Priest and his men are questioning Jesus, and all the time this woman keeps eyeing me. They are striking Jesus.

*(In desperation, but whispering)*

Don't. Here I am, Master. Now the Door Keeper is asking me again. Even Caiaphas is looking at me: "Aren't I one of Jesus' disciples?" NO! I'm not!

*(In despair)*

I am not 30 yards from my Lord and I can't say that one word "Yes"

*(shouts)*

NO!

They are all shouting at me at the same time.

*(Whispers)*

No, I know him not. I am not his disciple, his brother.

*(head down in shame)*

I am filled with fear. My Lord is only 30 yards away. They are striking him, and I still do nothing.

He knows my fears, my weakness. I don't hear you speaking up either?....

*(silent pause)*

You will say, when I join you later, my brothers and sisters, that I was caught in a no-win situation, that the officers of Caiaphas, the High Priest, would have killed me, along with Jesus, if I had admitted our bond. You talk as if, in the grip of such fear, I could think clearly. I betrayed my Lord.

*(looks far out over the congregation and then back to them)*

You weren't there to follow Jesus as he was led to trial. You won't have to live everyday as I shall, with this shame, this sorrow,

*(Pause)*

unless you have done as I have. Have you been 30 yards away from someone with no sanctuary, someone being beaten, someone being dragged away needing your help, and done nothing? Have you seen someone in your town, stripped of dignity and helpless, asking for your help, and have done nothing?

### **Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

#### **Scripture: John 18:19-23 The High Priest Questions Jesus**

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. 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. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." 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?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there when they struck him on the face?  
Were you there when they struck him on the face?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they struck him on the face?

**Caiaphas:** *(in an aside to the congregation, as if they are listening in on him talking the situation over with his wife)*

If this young rabbi Jesus doesn't give me, the High Priest, all due respect, the Governor will assume I do not have control of my people. The Romans don't like unrest and neither do I. If I allow such a man to go about stirring up the people, we may lose the privileges that we have bargained for and won. To all of this Jesus of Nazareth will say, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness to the evil." What is good and what is evil is a matter of sacred interpretation, and I have been elected as the authority to interpret these questions.

*(Listens)*

You say I should let Pilate decide his fate? Hmm, perhaps. Then he will respect my next list of petitions. It's too bad, but what is the fate of one man, when a nation's security or a whole way of life may be at risk?

### **Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Scripture:** John 18:28, 19:16

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.

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there when he sentenced him to die?  
Were you there when he sentenced him to die?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when he sentenced him to die?

**Pilate:** *(To the congregation, as if now they are his own men around him.)*

Where did the priests go? Why didn't they tell me who this man really is and what his crimes are? They certainly got out of here fast enough. They don't want to be seen dirtying their hands with my job as a judge, do they? Well, there has been no one but them accusing him of anything! But I've heard that his followers have called out. "Hail, King of the Jews." Well, no petty little king is going to bother the Roman Empire. So, let's see what happens when I call him that to their faces. It is almost Passover, so I'll take him to them right now. They will have to reveal themselves one way or another. Either they will stand up for their King and I'll have them once and for all, or they won't, and I'll be rid of him.

### **Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Scripture:** John 19:17-18

So, they took Jesus, and carrying the cross by himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them.

**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."

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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?

**Criminal:** *(with great effort)*

I see a man coming up the road carrying one of these killing trees, these crosses

*(pauses and then greatly disturbed, says)*

No, it can't be! It's Jesus of Nazareth. What crime has he committed?

*(Looks beyond the cross as if speaking to the other criminal)*

Don't mock him, brother, he is innocent.

*(Turns back to the cross to distract Jesus from the torture)*

Talk to me, Master; look at me, not your torturers! Speak to me!

*(silent pause) (aside)*

Now, he speaks to me a robber.

*(Pauses to listen)*

Me Rabbi? Today, in Paradise? If I can be there, in Paradise, anyone....anyone can.

Thank you, Master. God forgive me. Even in this pain, I have been afraid to let my body go.

Yet now, Master, I can die knowing you will be with me.

**Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Scripture:** John 19:23-24

When 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. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots."

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there when they cast lots for his robe?  
Were you there when they cast lots for his robe?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they cast lots for his robe?

**Soldier:** *(Said defensively, as if on trial)*

Yes, we are dividing his clothing among us, why not? I remember that as a young recruit I thought the custom was callous when the older soldiers began to draw lots for whatever the poor fellows left. I even protested that we all looked like thugs, not soldiers of the Roman Empire; but now I do it too and don't care anymore. Some say this man Jesus is a prophet, Elijah reborn. Most here believe he's no criminal. But ...orders are orders. That's what makes us professionals, isn't it? You mustn't let yourself get emotionally involved in this business. If we let ourselves care about this man or any other, we couldn't do these things to one another, could we? Nobody could! We do what is necessary to get the job done! We work to harden our hearts, for we are professionals and proud of it!

### **Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Scripture:** John 19:25-27

And 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. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**Hymn** "Were You There" Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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Were you there with his mother keeping watch?  
Were you there with his mother keeping watch?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there with his mother keeping watch?

**Mary:** *(Spoken to the congregation as her community)*

I'm his mother.

*(She turns to look at the cross in silence for a moment and then back to the congregation, and touches her heart.)*

Many of you here are mothers aren't you? Then you know what it is to be a mother, and not to be able to Help your child, even when he has a little hurt. Such a cruel and horrible way to die. Praise God; he is in pain no longer. How can I go on living? But my son has shown me the way. At the very end, as he was dying, he was still so full of love: "This is your son," he said. Just a moment before, this young man that Jesus loved as a brother, rushed over to hold me, so I wouldn't fall. Then Jesus said to him, "This is your mother."

*(Overwhelmed with emotion)*

My son could worry about me, as he was dying. So I will be taken care of until it is my time to die. But my son Jesus, they killed him. Why?! He did no wrong, ever.

### **Moment of Silent Prayer and Reflection**

**Anthem:** “When You Prayed Beneath the Trees” Words: Christopher Idle Music: Lloyd Larson

**Scripture:** John 19:28-42

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” A 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. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

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

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. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now 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. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

**Hymn** “Were You There” Words and Music: African – American Spiritual Music: arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987  
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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?

**Worship Leader:** This has been the day of the end of our hope. This Son of God, this Man of Peace has been crucified, and lies in the tomb, blocked by stone. Is there no victory over death? In the shadow of Christ’s suffering, we wait, for that is all we can do. Wait and see if God’s promise is true, that God’s love for us is indeed stronger than death.

**Closing Prayer** (*unison*)

O God, grant mercy and grace to us; roll the boulder of the world’s despair away. Through your love and the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ, give us the assurance of everlasting life. Amen.

**Hymn VU 153** “When the Son of God Was Dying” Words: The Iona Community 1988  
Music: John L. Bell Words and Music: © WGRG, The Iona Community, GIA Publications Inc.  
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When the Son of God was dying, long ago,  
some played dice and some knelt crying, lost and low.  
Cynics sneered and wagged their tongues, mockers mimicked  
funeral songs: this, while God’s own Son was dying, long ago.



Crowds which once had cried, 'Hosanna!', lost their voice:  
hell had grinned to hear Barabbas was their choice;  
Judas hung himself for blame; Peter hung his  
head in shame, while the crowds which cried, 'Hosanna!', lost their voice.

Horror, hurt and pain found home in Mary's breast  
watching torture's toll and hearing soldiers jest:  
where was God to hear her cry? Why should her own  
Jesus die? Grief and agony found home in Mary's breast.

Jesus, lay your body in this sad earth's grave;  
only one who suffers can presume to save.  
End hypocrisy and lies, through our apathy  
arise, bring us the salvation which our spirits crave.

**The Christ Candle is Extinguished**

**We Depart in Darkness and in Silence**