

New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario
Good Friday, April 10, 2020
Rev. Mark McLennan

In the spirit of full disclosure, I want to say that, for me, Good Friday is one of the most important and meaningful days of the Christian year.

I always seek inspiration on this day – in worship, in music, in the thoughts of others.

This year, in the midst of these challenging days, I have gathered some meditations and prayers to offer for your consideration.

I hope you find them useful and thought-provoking as you ponder this day in Jesus' life.

Blessings,
Rev. Mark

Prayer for Assurance of Grace

God of Passion, on this day of betrayal and death, we remember those times we have been part of the crowd seeking our best interest over what is right and good.

God of Fidelity, on this day of fear and denial, we remember those times when we choose the path of safety over loyalty to your Way.

God of Constant Presence, on this day of despair and loss, we remember the ways we have wandered away from your presence, only to complain that we are abandoned.

God of the Cross, for all the ways we have missed the mark, all the ways we have come up short, forgive us.

Through your Grace bring us back into relationship.

Help us find the path again.

ASSURANCE

Even in the face of betrayal and rebellion, even in the face of death and denial, even in the face of fear and despair, God's Grace knows no bounds.

We ARE forgiven, we ARE called back into relationship, we ARE set back on the path that leads to the Realm of God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

God, who are you? ~ written by Cheryl Lawrie.

What was it about Jesus that was so confusing for governments and for ordinary people?

Pilate couldn't make sense of Jesus and half the time we can't either.

We want a God who comes in might and power to take all before him and yet we get Jesus: unmistakably human and vulnerable, trouble-maker, peace-lover, political subversive always on the side of love, not power human, even to the point of death.

We keep asking the question, 'God, who are you?' in the hope we'll get a different answer. And God just keeps coming back with this one.

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Meditation - Nigel Varndell

It was the Romans who killed you, who nailed you to a cross to punish you for thinking differently. Murdered for daring to challenge the might of Imperial Rome. Murdered for daring to suggest that the world should be different, that it could be rearranged for once, not to make the powerful comfortable, but deeply uncomfortable.

Or,
maybe it was the religious leaders who wanted you dead? For challenging their deeply and sincerely held religious truths, for shaking things up and rocking the boat, for daring to suggest that just because we have always done it like this, we always must? We cannot challenge the guardians of tradition, where would we be without it? Better surely to let one man die...

No!
It was the crowd! It was their fault. It must have been the crowd who gathered and cried "Crucify!" who are the ones who killed you. What they need, you see, is a scapegoat, someone for the Romans to blame, so that they won't come looking for anyone else.

Or
maybe it was me?

Maybe you should pity me – me, for on this Good Friday, I will stand with the Romans, because I, who have everything, don't really want anything to change. I will stand with the religious leaders, and make sure that my traditions are honoured, no matter who they exclude. I will stand with the crowd, who already know who is to blame for all that goes wrong.

And I will cry "Crucify"

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Prayer for Good Friday

God of mystery and wonder, because we know the ending of the story, it's tempting for us to ignore the darkness of this day. It's tempting for us to go about our business as usual. It's tempting for us to move too quickly to the dawn of light on Easter morning.

But give us courage and strength on this day to live for a while in the darkness, to set aside comfort and pleasure, to feel the darkness in which so many of your children dwell, the darkness into which your son Jesus entered.

As we reflect on the frailty of Christ, remind us of the frailty of all life. As we cringe at the suffering of Christ, make us mindful of suffering throughout the world. As we witness the death of Christ, bring us back full circle to the beginning of Lent, to the wisdom of Ash Wednesday: the awareness of our mortality and the mortality of those we love.

Gracious God, deep in the human heart is an unquenchable trust that life does not end with death. Like a seed which is buried in order to bring forth life, Christ goes to the tomb to usher in new life. We

trust that we too will be raised to new life, in this world, here and now, and in the mystery of what lies beyond physical death. We trust that the whole world will be born anew, that your kingdom is coming as a new heaven and a new earth.

On this day of darkness, it is for this kingdom that we boldly pray. **Our Father... AMEN**

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Song of the Winding Sheet ~ written by Jan L. Richardson

We never would have wished it to come to this, yet we call these moments holy as we hold you.

Holy the tending, holy the winding, holy the leaving, as in the living.

Holy the silence, holy the stillness, holy the turning and returning to earth.

Blessed is the One who came in the name,

blessed is the One who laid himself down,

blessed is the One emptied for us,

blessed is the One wearing the shroud.

Holy the waiting, holy the grieving, holy the shadows and gathering night

Holy the darkness, holy the hours, holy the hope, turning toward light.

Benediction

"Crucify him," they scream, and crucify him they do.

Pierce his side and watch him bleed. Make certain he is dead.

They murder an innocent man on the cross.

We murder him with our sins.

We walk away from here with stained hands and bruised hearts.

But it does not matter who did it.

It is Friday. He is dead.

Jesus is dead. God is dead.

Did we get what we really wanted?

BENEDICTION

Now Jesus, may God bless you and keep you, May the very face of God shine upon you, and be gracious to you, May God's presence embrace you and give you eternal peace. Amen.