



The Cost of Love

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*On this most sacred day, it would be appropriate to find a **black** cloth or scarf to decorate your worship space.*

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

Gathering

This morning we remember the events of Jesus' trial and death.

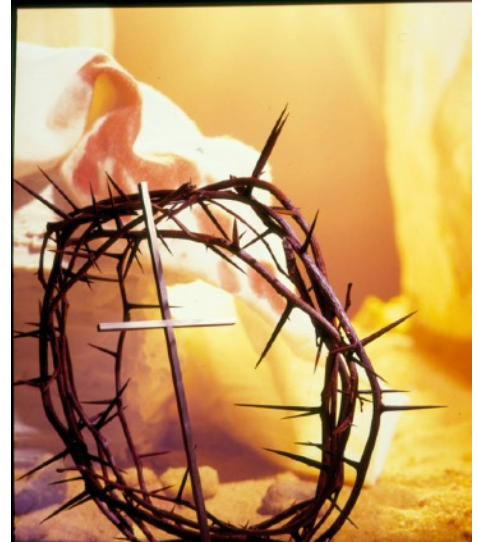
It is, at times, a confronting story.

But we remember we never take this journey alone.

Light Candle

We light this candle...

Light the candle



And turn towards the one who is the Light of the World, Jesus the Christ.

We seek the light.

We celebrate the light.

We allow ourselves to be drawn to the light.

We wonder at what the light will reveal to us today.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, God our Creator, breathed life into this land and its peoples.

The land we gather on,

the land we live, work, play and worship on,

has been cared for since time immemorial by the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal Nation. It has never been ceded.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We commit ourselves to building relationships with those who carry the sacred stories today.

And we commit ourselves to pursuing justice for their communities, so that our reconciled life reflects the way of God here in this place.

Call to Worship

We gather on this Good Friday at the foot of the cross which calls us on, not in shame, not in fear

but more deeply into the costly journey towards life.

There is wounding,

there is weeping.

In Jesus Christ, God is not separated from that.

D. McRae-McMahon

What makes this day good?
If you have ever believed that love inevitably leads to betrayal,
this day says it doesn't.
If you have ever believed that some people are unlovable, irredeemable,
this day says they aren't.
If you have ever believed that there is a limit to forgiveness,
this day says there isn't.
If you have ever believed you aren't worth saving,
this day says you are.
If you have ever believed that you don't deserve freedom,
this day says you do.
If you have ever believed that fear, anger, hate and despair will always win,
this day says they won't.
And this day is good for you.

Cheryl Lawrie, Hold This Space Pocket Liturgies, 2008, Proost, p.118-9

Prayer

Our Jesus,
Holy One among us,
we honour you today,
the day we tell of your dying.
You came with good news of Holy kinship to reconcile, to heal, and make whole,
all life, for full life, for all,
and we, humanity,
we are afraid.

And fear – power, greed,
the legalistic need to be correct –
fear put you on a cross.

Today we tell of your dying,
and let us not forget the ways we put you on that cross day after day after day:
state-sanctioned assaults on human being, dignity, freedom;
small acts of violent inaction when Earth, women, children, marginalised minorities, First
Nations peoples, are being harmed.

May we not turn away from the cross today,
nor from its echoes every day.

Our Jesus,
give us courage to mourn;
give us strength to grieve;
give us the wisdom to die with you,
dying to death, so that on a new day
in good time
we may rise again into new life with you.

For today, our Jesus, Holy One among us,
we pause, we see, we honour you,
as we tell, as we enter, your death. Amen

Rev Dr Sarah Agnew, storyteller and minister at Christ Church, Wayville
<https://uniting.church/prayers-holy-week/>

Sing - Who Is This Man? (Tune: Londonderry Air)

Who is this man, who gathered people to
him,
and touched their lives along each dusty
way;
who spoke to all with passion and with
peacefulness
And valued all their ordinary days?
Who is this man, who at the long day's
ending,
would draw apart to wait on God and pray,
and, in that mystery that knows no ending,
would find God's wisdom and would know
God's words to say?

Who is this man, who gave to women
dignity
in partnership of worth and equal grace,
who listened to the stories that they told
him,
and honoured each whatever was their
place?
Who let them choose to come and join his
company,
and learned with them God's love for every
race,
who showed to each the courage of their
nature
to care and tend each lonely and suffering
face?

Who is this man, who spoke to men of
gentleness
and showed them all the children at his
side,
who taught of love and justice for all
people,
and took a towel and washed away their
pride?
In him they saw the strength of truth and
mercy,
and how he trusted God to be his guide;
knew how he led them through
misunderstanding,
and then forgave them when they ran
away to hide.

Who is this man, who calls us now to
follow,
a shadow presence asking us to be
companions of the way through this life's
journey,
to live in truth, to set our tired world free?
So let us find each other now in
partnership,
with ears to hear and eyes awake to see,
that we might grow in grace and
understanding
and walk beside that man who comes from
Galilee.

© Mary Pearson.

Prayer of Illumination

As Jesus gave of his all,
we walk in remembrance with him today,
and even though the sadness and sorrow,
the shock and horror,
are palpable,
yet we gather at the foot of the cross.

We listen once more to the story of betrayal, wounding, death and grief.
And we will not turn away.

May our emotions stir our commitment, reinforce our faith,
and encourage our witness to the self-giving and transformative love you revealed for us
all. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 46, Resources for Good Friday 2023, p.71, adapted

Listening for God's Voice

Today we hear the story of Jesus' arrest, trial and death from the gospel attributed to Mark. It is thought to be the first of the gospels to be written down.

It is a long reading - so the images on the screen will reflect the part being read, and we will break it up with some music.

We pick up the story in the evening, as Jesus and his disciples leave their Passover meal and head out into the night...

Reading: Mark 14:26-52

²⁶ When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters; for it is written,

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered."

²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' ²⁹ Peter said to him, 'Even though all become deserters, I will not.' ³⁰ Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' ³¹ But he said vehemently, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And all of them said the same.

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' ³³ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴ And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' ³⁵ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'

³⁷ He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? ³⁸ Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

⁴³ Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' ⁴⁵ So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. ⁴⁶ Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? ⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.'

⁵⁰ All of them deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, ⁵² but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

Sing - Were You There (TIS 345, v.1)

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?

Based on an African-American spiritual

Reading: Mark 14:53-72

⁵³ They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. ⁵⁴Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. ⁵⁶For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, ⁵⁸“We heard him say, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.” ’ ⁵⁹But even on this point their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, ‘Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’ ⁶¹But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ ⁶²Jesus said, ‘I am; and “you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power”, and “coming with the clouds of heaven.” ’

⁶³Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘Why do we still need witnesses? ⁶⁴You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?’ All of them condemned him as deserving death. ⁶⁵Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’ The guards also took him over and beat him.

⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.’ ⁶⁸But he denied it, saying, ‘I do not know or understand what you are talking about.’ And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. ⁶⁹And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, ‘This man is one of them.’ ⁷⁰But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, ‘Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.’ ⁷¹But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, ‘I do not know this man you are talking about.’ ⁷²At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.

Sing - Were You There (TIS 345, v.2)

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Reading: Mark 15:1-24

15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ²Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ He answered him, ‘You say so.’ ³Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴Pilate asked him again, ‘Have you no

answer? See how many charges they bring against you.’⁵ But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked.
⁷ Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection.
⁸ So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom.
⁹ Then he answered them, ‘Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?’
¹⁰ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over.
¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.
¹² Pilate spoke to them again, ‘Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’
¹³ They shouted back, ‘Crucify him!’
¹⁴ Pilate asked them, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’
¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort.
¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him.
¹⁸ And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’
¹⁹ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him.
²⁰ After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.
²² Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull).
²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.
²⁴ And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

Sing - Were You There (TIS 345, v.3)

Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Reading: Mark 15:25-39

²⁵ It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him.
²⁶ The inscription of the charge against him read, ‘The King of the Jews.’
²⁷ And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.
²⁹ Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days,
³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!’
³¹ In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself.
³² Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.’ Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.
³⁴ At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’
³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘Listen, he is calling for Elijah.’
³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.’
³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.
³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.
³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’

Sing - Were You There (TIS 345, v.4)

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Jesus Last Words

Each of the gospel accounts of Jesus' death is a little different.
Each writer, recalls different details, including the detail of what Jesus may have said in the last moments of his life, hanging from the cross.
I want to invite you now, with the aid of the images on the screen, to reflect with me on these words of Jesus recorded across the gospel accounts.

Father... forgive them... for they do not know what they do. (Luke 23:34)

We never really do know the full extent of our actions.
Forgive us
just as we forgive others - our family, our friends, our neighbours,
even our enemies or people we don't like very much.

Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise. (Luke 23:43)

Today - Jesus is with us.
God's reign has come.
God's reign welcomes all who will participate
no matter our past
no matter the questionable things we might have done
Will you be a part of it?

Dear woman, here is your son. And here is your mother. (John 19:26-27)

We are all entrusted into the love and care of those around us.
we are created to live in community with others.
Who cares for you?
Are there people around us who are overlooked or isolated or lonely?
Who are you entrusted to care for?

I am thirsty. (John 19:28)

What do you thirst for?
Or perhaps we have become afraid to drink, afraid to grow, afraid of being loved...?
Take this moment, to drink deeply of the Living Waters.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mark 15:34, Matthew 27:46)

Abandoned.
Forgotten.
Perhaps that is how you feel sometimes?
Perhaps that is how people in the Ukraine, in Gaza feel -
and people who are caught in seemingly unchanging systems that perpetuate violence
and trauma.

It is finished. (John 19:30)

The work is done.
And yet...

Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. (Luke 23:46)

Into your hands...

Where does your spirit reside today?

In the hands of our Creator?

Or have we been distracted by the world's temptations?

Into your hands, O God, ...

Extinguish the candle

This candle burns throughout the year, whenever we gather for worship.

It reassures us, it draws us, it is a symbol for us of the light of Christ that shines in the darkness offering hope.

Today, it is extinguished - as we remember that for the love, the grace, the mercy he showed, Jesus died.

Silence

The artist, Scott Erickson, says this about these last words of Jesus:

These seven recorded short statements are representative of the core values of [the crucified Christ].

That in the end you think about your loved ones.

That we long for a restored reality.

That even in the midst of injustice, forgiveness is the foundation of The Kingdom of Heaven.

That it's normal to feel forsaken.

That all things eventually end... and most likely before their time.

That we eventually trust fall into arms of Benevolence. ¹

Reading: Mark 15:40-47

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

⁴² When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

¹ https://thecorners.substack.com/p/jesus-last-words?utm_source=profile&utm_medium=reader2

Sing - Were You There (TIS 345, v.5)

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Responding

Reflection

Many of us listen to this story hoping, perhaps even praying, that we will never be asked to offer our lives in this literal sense, as Jesus did.

Our trembling, as we have been singing, is more often from our fear of being asked to do or to give too much than it is in response to the immensity of what we are witnesses to, and of what it means that someone would give all of themselves, even the breath they breathe, for the sake of showing us what love is all about.

And our reality, here in beautiful, safe, Kiama and Jamberoo, is that it is highly unlikely that we will ever have to.

But to love in the way of Jesus is costly:

it costs us our comfort;

it costs us our safety;

it means taking risks;

it means letting go of the things we think are important -

like money and security,

like our plans and routines,

like our assumptions about the way we think the world should be,

like, perhaps even, our reputation;

it means, perhaps, taking the blows for the sake of what's right.

For this cross is what love is.

This is the way of Jesus.

This is the paradoxical path towards the realm of God.

And our hope, our assurance, is that life will come again;

that life in all its fullness is known through death.

But death for us, is not so much "once for all" like it was for Jesus.

Death for us is in every moment of every day when we choose life,

when we choose to die to the things that cause pain and brokenness

and choose, instead to embrace the values, the life to which God calls us and that Jesus embodied.

And so this is the choice we make.

We choose to live in ways that reflect God's intention for the world.

We choose to love our neighbour and our enemies.

We choose to engage with people we might otherwise avoid.

We choose to stop when we see someone in need and offer help.

We choose to break from our usual routine to offer a meal, a drink, a listening ear, a word of comfort.

We choose to take a deep breath and speak out when we see injustice.

We choose to spend time writing a letter to our parliamentary representatives.

We choose to turn up to a protest or a prayer meeting - or both.

We choose to visit someone who is lonely or in hospital.
We choose to spend time in prayer, reflection, reading, learning, discerning the way of God when we have no clue what to do next.
We choose goodness in the face of evil.
We choose light in darkness.
We choose love in the midst of hate.
We choose life, in the assurance that death does not get the last word.

Sing - A Man of Ancient Time and Place (tune: TIS 654)

We sing a song that speaks of the costly love of Jesus. The words are contemporary, the tune will be familiar.

A man of ancient time and place
with foreign speech and foreign face,
reveals the glory, power and grace
of costly, unexpected love.

he bears the fruit and plants the seed
of costly, unexpected love.

A rabbi, schooled in Moses' Law,
a male, amending Herod's flaw,
arouses wonder, rage and awe
with costly, unexpected love.

The cost we barely can surmise
when, lifted up before our eyes,
the face of God we recognise
in crucified, unfathomed love.

By teasing word and healing deed,
a leper touched, an outcast freed,

May faith and hope within us grow,
the way of Christ to tell and show,
and may the Spirit breathe and blow
in costly, unexpected love.

Brian Wren

Prayer for Others

In the silence, Holy Friend,
we meet close to your cross this day.
In our churches, gathered in a moment of time.
In our homes, taking time to worship and reflect.
We come together as family, as friends, as people who are somehow drawn to your story
and who long to find in it a word of hope.
We are made welcome - for you know how hard this day is.
You reach into our pain and say,
'My friends, you are loved'.
We keep silent a while to let that promise settle in us.
Comforting God, sometimes words fail us,
as we look upon the world and see what we, and others, are doing to it.
There is so much that is unnecessary-
violence, war, poverty, abuse, and hunger.
There are too many who live in darkness, in despair, in pain.
Many people are crucified
by the circumstances of life,
brought on by the inappropriateness of actions perpetrated by those who do not care
enough.
We keep silence with people who are robbed of a sense of belonging in our society,
people who are victims,
people suffering poor health at home or in hospital,
people permanently anxious and fearful,
people in mourning and people with no one to turn to.
Silence

Loving God, you reach into our pain and say, 'My friends, you are loved'.
We keep silent a while longer to let that promise settle in us.

God of Good Friday,
we recognise our complicity in the death of Jesus;
who walked in complete faithfulness with you.
The world was not ready to accept the offer of grace.
Instead, he was placed on the cross.
But you, God, were not done.
In his death you revealed a different path.
May we have the strength,
as we go from this place,
to take hold of the promise that, in Christ,
you have reconciled us to yourself and to each other.
May your grace and your peace reign over all this day
in the name of the Crucified One,
Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 46, Resources for Good Friday 2023, p.72

Sending

Our walk through Holy Week concludes here at Christ's Cross...
The cries of hosanna,
which became the cries of crucify,
are replaced with the wails of a grieving mother
and the shock of friends and followers...
We sit still.
We leave in silence.
And we wait.
We wait in the uncertainty of death.
And we will gather in hope on Sunday morning.

Sing - When I Survey The Wondrous Cross (TIS 342)

We close with a hymn that has stood the test of time, inviting us to gaze upon the cross of Jesus and ask what it asks of us...

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.

*Words: Isaac Watts
Public Domain*

Rev Kath Merrifield
29 March 2024