

GOOD FRIDAY 2017

“Meditating on the Passion of Jesus”

Thank you for taking time to worship with us. We hope you will find this time of quiet reflection and prayer helpful and nourishing.

Please stand for the hymns, sit for the readings and meditations and either sit or kneel for prayer and the times of silence.

WELCOME and BIDDING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, as we draw near to You this day under the shadow of the cross, give us a new understanding of Your sorrow over us, true repentance for our sins for which You suffered, and an ever deeper gratitude for Your redeeming love for us and for all mankind. Amen.

Introduction

Hymn 463

“My song is love unknown”

Jesus in the Garden

Narrative Mark 14:32-52

Meditation

The scene of the agony in the garden was an ancient olive farm where our blessed Lord frequently retired to pray to his Father. The time was about midnight on the eve of the first Good Friday. The paschal moon, filtering through the olive trees, spotlights this dramatic scene.

Our blessed Lord prostrates himself upon the rocky soil clutching at the very ground for support. He groans in distress and writhes in physical agony. His usual calmness deserts him as he keeps repeating the same prayer over and over again: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Great beads of sweat appear on the face of Jesus as a shattering storm engulfs his soul. Gradually, the sweat turned in crimson as his prayer increased in its intensity. Soon, his entire body perspires...a sweat of blood.

What are the causes of this internal martyrdom of our Lord? What is this "cup" which he pleads with his Father to remove? He has just witnessed a "Preview of his Passion." Picture after picture, the various sufferings of the Passion flashed through his mind. The crucifixion, stark and terrifying, loomed up before him and caused his sensitive soul to recoil in terror. Once again he pleads with his Father, "If it is possible..."

Yet Christ did not run away from the Cross and the suffering that he knew awaited. Nor did he take the easy way out. He suffered this incredible agony in reparation for our sins. The conclusion is obvious. We cannot live a "comfort-at-all-costs" philosophy of life. To follow Christ calls for an unrelenting struggle with the tendencies to sin found in the make-up of each of us.

Silence

Reading: Psalm 63:1-8

Prayer

Hymn 195 *"From heaven you came"*

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Narrative Luke 23:26-43

Meditation

The end approaches. Carrying his cross, walking through the city to the place of execution, Jesus goes. To die between two criminals, the shameful end of a ministry that did so much for so many.

Simon of Cyrene is plucked out of the crowd to carry Jesus cross, his strength is failing having been beaten and kicked half to death.

The women wail at the injustice, consumed with sorrow for what Jesus is about to suffer. "But don't weep for me" he says, "weep for yourselves" for what is coming will be unimaginable.

As the nails were driven into his wrists and ankles we might sense his pain. But what of our own pain as we remember that it was our sin that drove those nails in.

The elites sneer "He saved others, let him save himself" but of course they miss the point. In not saving himself he saved others, many countless others. In accepting and drinking from the cup his Father gave him, in embracing suffering, salvation was won.

As he hangs on the cross two men hang alongside him. One adds his voice to the jeering, the other adds his voice to the now quiet voice of Jesus disciples' – "remember me when you come into your kingdom"

Today is that day says Jesus. "Today you will join me in paradise." From the hell of the cross to paradise. From the hatred of the crowds to the love of God. From the anger of the authorities to the mercy of the creator. And all because Jesus didn't save himself, but instead saved us.

Silence

Reading: Psalm 116:1-9

Prayer

Hymn 738 *"When I survey the wondrous cross"*

The Death of Jesus

Narrative John 19:28-37

Meditation

The scriptures must be fulfilled. All must be completed. No I left un-dotted, no t left uncrossed. And then, "it is finished". The mission is accomplished, the call has been fulfilled. The cup has been fully drunk.

Death. Real death. An end. Life is extinct as Christ hangs motionless on the cross.

The climax of Gods redemptive work, the peak of the battle against sin and death is reached and all is silent, still, quiet.

Darkness comes over the land, a symbol and a sign of the great cosmic consequences of this one life ending.

An exchange is made, a price is paid, a debt is satisfied. And at such a cost. The cost of the life of God himself. The creator hangs and dies for the work of his hands. Giving up his life that the object of his love, mankind, you and I may once again know life.

Bearing a burden of guilt and of sin, that belonged to everyone but him, carrying a load which he bore no responsibility for.

He dies That we might live. The one who is without sin becoming sin for you and I. The muck and the grime that mars mankind washed clean away. Driven by love, pure love.

Silence

Reading: Psalm 57:1-5

Prayer

Hymn 374 *"Just as I am, without one plea"*

Conclusion

Prayers O Saviour of the world, by Your cross and precious blood, You have redeemed us:

Save us and help us, we humbly beseech You O Lord. Amen.

HYMN 657 *"There is a green hill far away"*