

**Cellist: Scott McKnight**  
**Soloist: Lisa Shen**  
**Organist: Diane Bestvater**  
**Presider: Ron Bestvater**  
**Scripture Readers: Margaret Fast, Joshua Cameron, Cami Cameron,**  
**Mildred Kerber, Jan Peterson, Alice Olson, Brenda Temple, Rachel Tucker**  
**and Marcel Voyer**  
**Choir Members: Alice Barth, Hans Baumfeld, Alice Olson, Jan Peterson,**  
**Albert Barth, Lisa Shen**

**GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION AT THE CROSS \***



Friday, April 2, 2021

**(Stand)**

L. Lord, have mercy.

**C: Christ, have mercy.**

L: Lord, have mercy.

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven...**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Merciful God, your Son was lifted up on the cross to draw all people to himself. Grant that we who have been born out of his wounded side, may at all times, find mercy in him, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**CHOIR: “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”**

**(Sit)**

**I JESUS PRAYS IN THE GARDEN OF THE OLIVE PRESS** Luke 22:39-53

This is a time of testing. “Keep us safe from the evil One” Jesus taught us to pray. But now he is vulnerable--the proclaimer of the nearness of God is about to be abandoned by his followers and by his Father in heaven. He is betrayed by one of his own disciples with a kiss of greeting. Another instinctively “takes the sword” without considering that he will thereby perish by the sword. Incredibly Jesus heals the wounded ear of the “servant of the high priest” when the healthy ears of his followers are clogged with the wax of insincerity.

Whenever our “soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matthew 26:38) we have a Lord who has gone before us (Hebrews 4:14-16). This soul sickness, a depressing mixture of fear and doubt, is not unknown to God, and in Jesus we have a companion. He prays and gathers strength to drink “the cup of suffering”. “Your will be done,” Jesus taught us to pray to his Father and ours.

**HYMN 347 “Go to Dark Gethsemane” (vs. 1, 2 & 3)**

**II JESUS IS BETRAYED BY JUDAS** Mark 14:43-52

The point of this textual information is that everyone knew where Joseph’s tomb was located, so that when it was later found to be empty, there was no disputing that fact. All factions agreed: the tomb was empty. The women watch Joseph (and Nicodemus too, according to John) from a distance and have made their mental map of the place so they can return there early the first day of the week when the Sabbath is over with the spices and perfumes.

Here begins the Christian practice of gathering in cemeteries. A linen shroud is used to wrap the body of Jesus. Some claim the Shroud of Turin to be that shroud. The human impulse is to hold onto some material object to authenticate the faith. But we are simply left with the challenge of faith--the “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). In faith things hoped for become realized. This is where trust comes in: God would not allow His Holy One to see corruption (Psalm 16:8-11, especially verse 10, is a favorite text for apostolic preaching--Acts 2:22-36). Especially in our “information age” we can understand that all that the God of Resurrection needs to know about us is our DNA. Jesus’ reference to such knowledge in his day was that God numbers the hairs of our head (Matthew 10:30), and so God knows more about us than we do ourselves. Count on God not to lose account of us. Our very being is in His hands. Rest in peace.

**(Stand)**

P: Behold, the life-giving cross, on which was hung the Savior of the whole world.

**C: Oh, come let us worship him. (3X)**

P: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**C: By your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.**

**CHOIR: “In the Shadow of the Cross”**

(Please be seated for silent prayer. During this time, worshipers may come to the cross to make a sign of reverence and for prayer: pausing before the cross, touching, standing or kneeling.) Please leave in silence.

\*commentary by Pr. Joel Nickel and Pr. Frank Senn (used with permission)

hang immobile, suspended from these anchors; the legs are bent so that they can't support the body's weight. Such an arrangement makes it eventually difficult to breathe.

According to Luke, Jesus surrendered his life by saying: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (breath)." You gave me life; I return it to you unspoiled but used up. Death is usually kept out of sight behind closed curtains in a hospital ward so as not to disrupt the myth of our invincibility, immortality, and manifest destiny. Others may die, but I am robust in this eternal youth culture where everyone is young, spritely, and "above average." Yet we know better. The "bell tolls for us" too.

### **CHOIR: "They Crucified My Lord"**

#### **XIV TAKING JESUS' BODY DOWN FROM THE CROSS Luke 23:50-53**

The "deposition" is mentioned only briefly. Respect must be paid to the deceased, and yet there is the pressure of time: before the sun goes down and the Sabbath begins, the body must be removed or the land will be cursed. So Joseph from the town of Arimathea, 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem, a member of the Sanhedrin, the council that condemned Jesus, who didn't agree with their verdict, is now willing to expose himself as a follower of Jesus, pulls his 'weight' and goes to the Roman governor, Pilate, and requests permission to remove the body of Jesus from the cross and place it in his own tomb. The permission is granted, and the work begins.

In our society funeral directors take care of preparing bodies for burial. In other societies family members participate in this ritual. Maybe it is an experience we all ought to have. The nails must be extracted from the hands and feet and the body must be carefully lowered. How long does it take before rigor mortis sets in? The body must be wrapped and laid on a slab. But the rest of the anointing with myrrh and aloes will have to wait because the sun is low on the horizon. Soon it will be dark, and the Sabbath will begin. There will be no hike to the tomb tomorrow. It will be a day of quiet resignation in the face of death. Holy Saturday is a day of rest, but this Sabbath will not be a day of joy.

### **HYMN: 351 "O Sacred Head"**

#### **XV JESUS' BODY IS PLACED IN THE TOMB Luke 23:54-56**

Jesus is a figure whose presence brings about the exposure of secret thoughts, doubts, plots and selfishness. He warned his disciples about hypocrisy: "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known...proclaimed from rooftops" (Luke 12:2-3). Paul knows the principle: "everything exposed by the light becomes visible" (Ephesians 5:13). Beware! The road to hell is paved by unexamined assumptions and prejudices. Mark records an interesting detail about the "Gethsemane stalker" whose 'linen garment' was seized and who ran away from the garden naked with his failure and fear exposed (Mk. 14:51-52--is this 'Mark's signature'?). But the exposure of Jesus' compassion trumps all our negatives. In the darkness of the garden the light of Christ shines forth: Judas is exposed but not condemned, the temple cop's ear is healed, and the willingness of Jesus to be led away captive is a sign that he will not use violence to eradicate violence (John 18:8-9, 11).

*L Let us pray. O God, your Son chose the path which led to pain before joy and the cross before glory. Plant his cross in our hearts, so that in its power and love we may come at last to joy and glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*C Amen.*

*L Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,*

*C have mercy and hear us.*

#### **III JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN Matthew 26:59-68**

False witnesses testified that Jesus sought to destroy the Jerusalem Temple, a slanderous, mistaken accusation explained by John 2:18-22. But Jesus does not speak in his own defense. He is for the most part silent at his trials in the face of false accusations (see Isaiah 53:7) knowing that the sentence had already been decided. The religious court ultimately did not accept the fact that Jesus was the Messiah.

But the crucial question is addressed to us: can you say with your lips that Jesus is the Messiah and Lord? (Romans 10:9). What might that mean? To the question, "are you the Christ/Messiah?" Jesus gives his testimony: "I AM (the literal meaning of YHWH), and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Those words are blasphemous, the high priest decides, and rends his garment as a sign of his outrage. He should have instead torn his heart and not his garment.

Who is really on trial? If we were on trial concerning our faith in Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

#### **IV PETER DISOWNS JESUS** Matthew 26:69-75

Peter “the rock” is bold enough to follow the arresting officers as far as the courtyard of the High Priest. He can’t go into hiding just yet like his brothers. But his ‘cover’ is soon blown: he speaks with a Galilean twang and was noticed in the Jesus retinue. And so the only option left is denial: “I don’t know the man!”

Courage doesn’t come easy. Peter will later learn to be bold, to go into the temple precincts and assert: “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:34). And at ‘crunch time’ “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), which is what Walter Brueggemann calls an “emancipated imagination” no longer subservient to the dominant power apparatus which ultimately uses the threat of death to control its population. Where will we get our courage from to identify with Jesus in a world hostile to the faith?

*L Let us pray. Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you. Grant that our love may not grow cold in your service, and that we may not fail or deny you in the hour of trial; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever.*

**C Amen.**

*L Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,*

**C have mercy and hear us.**

#### **V JESUS IS JUDGED BY PILATE** Matthew 27:1-2, 11-26

“Legion” was the ‘name’ of the demon-possessed man of Gerasa (Luke 8:26-33), and the oppressed people of Palestine saw the Roman Legions as an oppressive, evil power. But now it suits the mob’s purpose to align themselves with this power to condemn Jesus. Pilate’s offer to substitute the notorious Barabbas doesn’t work. There is plenty of irony here, for “Bar-abba” means “son of the father”. There is a textual alternate reading that even suggests he was called “Jesus Barabbas.” The one person who was a threat to public safety was released while the Messiah, the “prince of

**Hymn: 616 “Jesus Remember Me”**

#### **XII JESUS’ CONCERN FOR HIS MOTHER** John 19:25-27

At the beginning Simeon had warned her: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too!” (Luke 2:34-35). Mary “ponders” it all in her heart, often wondering about the mystery of her own son, who even had a stern word about her (Luke 8:19-21). Now the ‘sword’ of sorrow pierces her heart.

Jesus in his dying hour is not without acute perception; he reads the situation carefully and commends Mary into the care of the beloved disciple, whom we identify as John. Tradition has it that John takes Mary with him in his move to Ephesus where a temple transformed into a church was named for her. John publishes his gospel and Mary is proclaimed “*Theotokos*”, “Mother of God.” Now, simply, they are introduced and given responsibility: “Woman, behold your son.” And, “Disciple, behold your mother.” Care for each other.

Mary the God-bearer is the symbol of the Church. The beloved disciple is asked to take care of her. It is the commission given to all pastors who stand in the stead of their Lord and Savior.

*L Let us pray. O blessed Lord, at your passion a sword pierced the loving heart of your mother, as Simeon foretold. As you commissioned your beloved disciple to care for her, so empower us to care for the sorrowing and extend to them the healing fruits of your suffering; for we pray in your Holy Name.*

**C Amen.**

*L Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,*

**C have mercy and hear us.**

#### **XIII JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS** Luke 23:44-47

The autopsy isn’t pretty. It was a contest to see which extreme bodily invasion got him first--the loss of blood, the shock to the nervous system, the impact on the heart, the excruciation pain, the slow death by suffocation with lungs no longer able to fill with oxygen. The nails were actually struck between the wrist bones so that the body can deadily business, the lash of wind and threatening sky as the whole creation responds in anguish. They post his inscription above his head--this identity intended to mock

him, a spectacle for all to see: JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS. INRI. This is what happens to all those who oppose Roman rule and claim to know the kingdom of heaven--pain and death on earth!

But from Jesus' lips comes a petition: "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." With integrity Jesus practices his own teaching: "forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Some heard the man and sneered: 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!'" Even to his last breath, Jesus is tempted and tested as the crowd cries out, "Come down off that cross and we'll believe in you!" What kind of a 'savior' can't even save himself? The temptation to prove our critics wrong in the short term is strong. But sometimes you just have ignore the taunts, because bigger issues are at stake.

### **Organ & Cello Duet: "Ah, Dearest Jesus"**

#### **XI JESUS AND THE REPENTANT THIEF Luke 23:39-43**

Three criminals are being crucified for their crimes of treason against the state. Only slaves and non-citizens could be crucified. These three count for nothing and it seems as if God "hides his face" from them. Yet out of this darkness comes repentance and a promise. One thief joins the mocking contempt of the mob: "Save yourself and us!" But the other thief "fears God" and faces reality: "we are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man, Jesus, has done nothing wrong." And then the soul searching plea: "Jesus, remember me! Remember me when you come into your kingdom!" His plea is also ours.

Jesus' response blows open heaven's gates: "Amen! Today you will be with me in paradise!" The Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world, starting with this repentant thief. Indeed tax collectors, thieves and prostitutes go into the Kingdom of God before the self-righteous (Matthew 21:31-32) because they repent of their sins. The self-righteous think they need no repentance. Doctor Jesus comes for the sick and offers healing for their wounds and promise for their despair. Today!

In this devotion following the way of the cross we remember Jesus. More importantly, we ask Jesus to remember us. peace", was condemned. And the irony continues when the mob watches Pilate wash his hands, claiming to be innocent of this man's blood. Can he really wash away

responsibility? The mob's response: "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" is ironically a request for the sprinkling of blood in the cleansing and redemption rituals of the Old Testament (Matthew 27:25—Leviticus 14-16). If we had been in that mob, would we have gotten caught up in their blood lust?

### **HYMN: 349 "Ah, Holy Jesus"**

#### **VI. JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS, SCOURGED & MOCKED Matthew 27:27-33**

"Ecce homo!" shouts Pilate. "Behold the man!" (John 19:5). He stands before you mocked--wearing a crown of thorns and purple robe--"King Jesus." This tactic too doesn't work ("give the people what they want"). Jesus is shown to be powerless and no threat to civil order. And scourging him fails to satisfy the mob's blood lust. Even though he knows the criminal charge is baseless, Pilate "hands him over" to the mob. "To hand over" ('paradidomi' in Greek is 'traditore' in Latin, which gives us both the word 'tradition' and 'traitor' in English). It's the same verb used to describe Pilate's "handing over" Jesus to be crucified and St. Paul's description of "handing over" the Christian tradition "that Christ died for our sins...that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day...and that he appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve, then to 500..." (1 Corinthians 15:3).

The purpose of the mockery and scourging is to dehumanize the victim, thereby relieving the mind of inhibition and aversion and the conscience of guilt. Jesus is portrayed as less than human, so it is easier to kill him...a lamb to be slaughtered or a goat to be cast out. Such are the lynchings in every culture, every nation. Scapegoats are necessary for self-righteousness to flourish--let someone else carry our sins, our guilt, our mistakes--so that our myth of innocence is maintained at all costs. Jesus is the scapegoat driven from the city on the Day of Atonement, symbolically carrying the sins of the people out into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22).

### **HYMN: 353 "Were you there?" (vs. 1, 2, & 3)**

#### **VII JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS John 19:17**

"Cross bearing" has become part of our universal language about faithfulness under duress, unrequited effort borne quietly, and surviving imposed trials whose

consequences are undeserved. Jesus walks the way of the cross willingly even though it is imposed, understanding this as part of his obedience to his Father's will (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:7-9). This act is transposed into the broader meaning of discipleship, for Jesus invites his disciples to "pick up your cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23-24). That requires us to leave a lot of baggage behind. Paul knows the loss of his achievements under the Law for the sake of knowing the cross of Jesus (Phil. 3:7-11). "Putting our hand to the plow, we can't look back" or we won't plow a straight furrow nor walk in Jesus' footsteps (Lk. 9:62). In walking the way of the cross we discover painfully that suffering can be redemptive.

### **CHOIR: "O Lamb of God Most Holy"**

#### **VIII SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS** Luke 23:26

As part of his advice on how to live with your oppressor, Jesus taught his followers to "walk the extra mile" (Matthew 5:41), a reference to the practice of Roman soldiers who would conscript civilians on the spot and force them to carry their burdens one mile. Roman law forbade any further distance, hoping in practice to avoid abuse of this law of servitude. Jesus lets his followers know that in the face of this insult, this reminder of captivity in their own land, they could gain the upper, moral hand by walking that extra mile. Simon of Cyrene (a city in Libya, North Africa) is one of those innocent bystanders, a 'passover tourist' in town for the week, conscripted by a soldier and compelled to help Jesus carry his cross out to Golgotha, the place of execution, the "place of the skull." This experience changed Simon forever along all the miles he travelled. We surmise that he became a Christian, that his sons, Rufus and Alexander mentioned by Mark the evangelist, were known by the church in Rome where Mark (possibly) published his gospel (Mark 15:21; Romans 16:13). We are 'fellow travelers' with Jesus. We get known by the company we keep.

*L Let us pray. Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.*

**C Amen.**

*L Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,*

**C have mercy and hear us.**

#### **IX JESUS ENCOUNTERS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM** Luke 23:27-31

Jesus always had trouble with professional mourners--those whose profession was to weep and wail so that everyone had someone to cry at their funeral. He chases the mourners out of Jairus' house and then takes his dead daughter by the hand (Luke 8:52-56) and wakes her from sleep. 'Mourning in general' as an outgrowth of hopelessness is not tolerated by Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus promised: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:5), because the world is a broken place filled with holocausts, atrocities, war, famine, pestilence and plague. The women of Jerusalem don't fully understand. They don't understand their own dire situation. They should be weeping for themselves.

For whom or for what do we weep? If we are convinced "there is nothing I can do" about it, then we should cease our hypocritical weeping! Cheap emotionalism as a substitute for compassionate action is useless. For what do we give thanks? Failure to acknowledge the Giver of every good gift leads to ingratitude, covetousness, selfishness and materialism. Do not weep over the loss of material goods, but rather over the loss of faith. If we are going to mourn, we must know the depth of pathos which comes at the hands of sin and evil. Death is our "last enemy."

*L Let us pray. Teach your church, O Lord, to mourn the sins of which it is guilty, and to repent and forsake them; that, by your pardoning grace, the results of our iniquities may not be visited upon our children and our children's children; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**C Amen.**

*L Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,*

**C have mercy and hear us.**

#### **X JESUS IS CRUCIFIED** Luke 23:32-39

The scene is chaotic. They strip Jesus naked. His clothes are raffled off with a roll of dice (another example of state sponsored gaming). Bereft of any shred of human dignity they position him to be nailed. Even in our imagination the scene is tactile: the sound of hammers against nails pounded through flesh and bone into wood, the screams of pain and the gasps of onlookers, the bustle of executioners about their