

CC, Merlin, SA, SL, TS & DSM United Churches

Good Friday – April 18th, 2025 @ DSM - Tilbury

Prelude: - by JC Leeson

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Talbotstreet.ca and Southbuxton.ca

Introduction to Good Friday:

Is Good Friday about trying to overcome distance, or is it about acknowledging the distances between us? On this day, we feel a long way from God. We think we've resolved that childhood question, "What's good about Good Friday?" but our answers still seem inadequate. This day doesn't feel good to us. It feels a long way from good. I suppose that is part of the point.

We gather this day in dim lighting to remember that even the sun refused to shine over this death. Our music is slow and weighty, carrying the hammer blow of crucifixion and the desolation of the abandonment at the cross. We set a mood, not to manipulate emotions, but to express what is in our hearts and heads as we contemplate this day, this event, this gift.

Worship this day is about standing in silence at the foot of the cross. Too many words get in the way of the weight, the meaning, the moment of this day. Today we will tell the story. We will not explain the story. Listen to the story and bow in awe of the sacrifice, tremble at the suffering, weep for the necessity, for the hard-heartedness that made this death a part of the result, the antidote. But don't say too much. Just listen.

Today we are reminded that this is not just a historical observance. Crucifixions continue; innocents dying painful deaths still goes on. We weep for them like we weep for Jesus' death. We weep for the hardness of heart that believes that violence is a solution to the world's problems. We bring all this brokenness and hurt with us as we gather for worship today. We bring our doubts and our pains as well as the inclination to recoil from this gruesome death. We offer them up, these burdens, to the one who already carries the weight of the world on his bruised and bloody back. We hear his whispered prayer, asking for forgiveness for all of us, because, indeed, we do not know what we are doing.

Listen to the story. And spend some time in silence. And then depart to a Saturday of in-between time, while we wait for Easter.

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: On this Holy Friday, we follow Jesus through a sham trial and up the hill to Golgotha, all the while questioning: My God, my God, where are you?

People: **We follow the women who held vigil at the foot of the cross, all the while despairing: My God, my God, where are you?**

Eric: We come near to Jesus as soldiers mock him, all the while crying out: My God, my God, where are you?

People: **We sit in grief and dismay, once again confronted with the horrible reality of sin and evil in our world that people just like us would crucify Love Incarnate. And all the while, God sits with us, saying: My child, my child, I am here.**

Eric: Come, let us worship God who, even on this day, is never far from us.

People: **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: VU 348 "O Love, How Deep"

O love, how deep, how broad, how high!
It fills the heart with ecstasy,
that God, in Jesus Christ, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake.

God sent no angel to our race
of higher or of lower place,
but wore the robe of human frame,
and freely to this lost world came.

Prayer of Confession:

People: Ever-present God, on this Good Friday, our whole world is engulfed in shadows as we remember the story of Jesus' death. We confess that we want to push the fast-forward button on this familiar story because it hurts so much. It hurts to think of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. It hurts to imagine Jesus abandoned and suffering on the cross with only a faithful few watching him breathe his last breath. It hurts to watch your light overtaken by the shadows of the world. But we must find our place in this crucifixion story and feel the pain that is there: The pain of the world, of faithless decisions; of betrayal; of injustice. Jesus entered that pain out of faithfulness to you and to us, to witness to the Truth that is Justice, Wholeness, and Love. We confess, we are afraid to enter this pain with Jesus. Strengthen us with your courage; offer glimpses of hope in the shadows of death; let us know you are present with us here in this moment of pain; now as always.

Assurance of Pardon:

Eric: Beloved followers of Jesus, it is okay to feel hurt and uncomfortable as you enter into this story and imagine your place in it. Know that God meets you in the story, with forgiveness as well as conviction; With comfort as well as challenge; with courage as well as love.

People: **Amen.**

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 22

Suffering and Praise

My God, my God, why have you deserted me? Why are you so far away? Won't you listen to my groans and come to my rescue?

I cry out day and night, but you don't answer, and I can never rest.

Yet you are the holy God, ruling from your throne and praised by Israel.

Our ancestors trusted you, and you rescued them.

When they cried out for help, you saved them, and you did not let them down when they depended on you.

But I am merely a worm, far less than human, and I am hated and rejected by people everywhere.

Everyone who sees me makes fun and sneers.

They shake their heads, and say, "Trust the Lord! If you are his favorite, let him protect you and keep you safe."

You, Lord, brought me safely through birth, and you protected me when I was a baby at my mother's breast.

From the day I was born, I have been in your care, and from the time of my birth, you have been my God.

Don't stay far off when I am in trouble with no one to help me.

Enemies are all around like a herd of wild bulls. Powerful bulls are everywhere.

My enemies are like lions roaring and attacking with jaws open wide.

I have no more strength than a few drops of water. All my bones are out of joint; my heart is like melted wax.

My strength has dried up like a broken clay pot, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You, God, have left me to die in the dirt.

Brutal enemies attack me like a pack of dogs, tearing at my hands and my feet.

I can count all my bones, and my enemies just stare and sneer at me.

They took my clothes and gambled for them.

Don't stay far away, Lord! My strength comes from you, so hurry and help.

Rescue me from enemy swords and save me from those dogs.

Don't let lions eat me.

You rescued me from the horns of wild bulls, and when your people meet, I will praise you, Lord.

All who worship the Lord, now praise him! You belong to Jacob's family and to the people of Israel, so fear and honor the Lord!

The Lord doesn't hate or despise the helpless in all of their troubles. When I cried out, he listened and did not turn away.

When your people meet, you will fill my heart with your praises, Lord, and everyone will see me keep my promises to you.

The poor will eat and be full, and all who worship you will be thankful and live in hope.

Everyone on this earth will remember you, Lord.

People all over the world will turn and worship you, because you are in control, the ruler of all nations.

All who are rich and have more than enough will bow down to you, Lord.

Even those who are dying and almost in the grave will come and bow down.

In the future, everyone will worship and learn about you, our Lord.

People not yet born will be told, "The Lord has saved us!" **

Bible in a Minute: Psalm 22

Children's Story:

Children's Song: B 56 "God Will Take Care of You"

Be not dismayed whatever betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

*God will take care of you,
Through every day, over all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.*

Through days of toil when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.

*God will take care of you,
Through every day, over all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.*

All you may need He will provide,
God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you.

*God will take care of you,
Through every day, over all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.*

No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you.

*God will take care of you,
Through every day, over all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.*

Gospel Reading: John 18: 1 - 27 (Paraphrase)

Jesus, having prayed this prayer, left with his disciples and crossed over the brook Kidron at a place where there was a garden. He and his disciples entered it. Judas, his betrayer, knew the place because Jesus and his disciples went there often. So Judas led the way to the garden, and the Roman soldiers and police sent by the high priests and Pharisees followed. They arrived there with lanterns and torches and swords. Jesus, knowing by now everything that was imploding on him, went out and met them. He said, "Who are you after?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said, "That's me." The soldiers recoiled, totally taken aback. Judas, his betrayer, stood out like a sore thumb. Jesus asked again, "Who are you after?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." "I told you," said Jesus, "that's me. I'm the one. So if it's me you're after, let these others go."

Reflection Hymn: VU 348 "O Love, How Deep"

For us he was baptized, and bore
a holy fast, and hungered sore;
for us temptations sharply knew;
for us the tempter overthrew.

Just then Simon Peter, who was carrying a sword, pulled it from its sheath and struck the Chief Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. Malchus was the servant's name. Jesus ordered Peter, "Put back your sword. Do you think for a minute I'm not going to drink this cup the Father gave me?" Then the Roman soldiers under their commander, joined by the Jewish police, seized Jesus and tied him up. They took him first to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the Chief Priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it was to their advantage that one man die for the people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. That other disciple was known to the Chief Priest, and so he went in with Jesus to the Chief Priest's courtyard. Peter had to stay outside. Then the other disciple went out, spoke to the doorkeeper, and got Peter in. The young woman who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, "Aren't you one of this man's disciples?" Peter said, "No, I'm not." The servants and police had made a fire because of the cold and were huddled there warming themselves. Peter stood with them, trying to get warm.

Reflection Hymn: VU 348 "O Love, How Deep"

For us he prayed, for us he taught,
for us great daily works were wrought,
by words and signs, and actions, thus
still seeking not himself, but us.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered, "I've spoken openly in public. I've taught regularly in meeting places and the Temple, where the Jews all come together. Everything has been out in the open. I've said nothing in secret. So why are you treating me like a traitor? Question those who have been listening to me. They know well what I have said. My teachings have all been aboveboard." When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face, saying, "How dare you speak to the Chief Priest like that!" Jesus replied, "If I've said something wrong, prove it. But if I've spoken the plain truth, why this slapping around?" Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was back at the fire, still trying to get warm. The others there said to him, "Aren't you one of his disciples?" He denied it, "Not me." One of the Chief Priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" Again, Peter denied it. Just then a rooster crowed. (Rooster Crows)

Reflection Hymn: VU 133 “Go Now to Gethsemane”

Go now to Gethsemane,
you that feel the tempter's power;
your Redeemer's conflict see;
watch with him one bitter hour;
turn not from his grief away:
learn from him to watch and pray.

Gospel Reading: John 18: 28 - 40

They led Jesus then from Caiaphas to the Roman governor's palace. It was early morning. They themselves didn't enter the palace because they didn't want to be disqualified from eating the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and spoke. "What charge do you bring against this man?" They said, "If he hadn't been doing something evil, do you think we'd be here bothering you?" Pilate said, "You take him. Judge him by your law." The Jews said, "We're not allowed to kill anyone." Pilate went back into the palace and called for Jesus. He said, "Are you the 'King of the Jews'?" Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you this about me?" Pilate said, "Do I look like a Jew? Your people and your high priests turned you over to me. What did you do?" "My kingdom," said Jesus, "doesn't consist of what you see around you. If it did, my followers would fight so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But I'm not that kind of king, not the world's kind of king." Then Pilate said, "So, are you a king or not?" Jesus answered, "You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice." Pilate said, "What is truth?" Then he went back out to the Jews and told them, "I find nothing wrong in this man. It's your custom that I pardon one prisoner at Passover. Do you want me to pardon the 'King of the Jews'?" They shouted back, "Not this one, but Barabbas!" Barabbas was a Jewish freedom fighter. **

Reflection Hymn: VU 133 “Go Now to Gethsemane”

See him at the judgement hall,
beaten, bound, reviled, arraigned;
see him meekly bearing all;
love to all his soul sustained.
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss:
learn from Christ to bear the cross.

Gospel Reading: John 19:

So Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. The soldiers, having braided a crown from thorns, set it on his head, threw a purple robe over him, and approached him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they greeted him with slaps in the face. Pilate went back out again and said to them, "I present him to you, but I want you to know that I do not find him guilty of any crime." Just then Jesus came out wearing the thorn crown and purple robe. Pilate announced, "Here he is: the Man." When the high priests and police saw him, they shouted in a frenzy, "Crucify! Crucify!" Pilate told them, "You take him. You crucify him. I find nothing wrong with him." The Jews answered, "We have a law, and by that law he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God." When Pilate heard this, he became even more scared. He went back into the palace and said to Jesus, "Where did you come from?"

Jesus gave no answer. Pilate said, "You won't talk? Don't you know that I have the authority to pardon you, and the authority to—crucify you?" Jesus said, "You haven't a shred of authority over me except what has been given you from heaven. That's why the one who betrayed me to you has committed a far greater fault."

Reflection Hymn: VU 348 "O Love, How Deep"

For us to wicked foes betrayed,
scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed,
he bore the shameful cross and death;
for us at length gave up his breath.

At this, Pilate tried his best to pardon him, but the Jews shouted him down: "If you pardon this man, you're no friend of Caesar's. Anyone setting himself up as 'king' defies Caesar." When Pilate heard those words, he led Jesus outside. He sat down at the judgment seat in the area designated Stone Court. It was the preparation day for Passover. The hour was noon. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king." They shouted back, "Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!" Pilate said, "I am to crucify your king?" The high priests answered, "We have no king except Caesar." Pilate caved in to their demand. He turned him over to be crucified.

Reflection Hymn: VU 135 "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand:
the shadow of a mighty rock
within a weary land,
a home within the wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat
and the burden of the day.

Gospel Reading: John 19:

They took Jesus away. Carrying his cross, (carry in Cross) Jesus went out to the place called Golgotha, where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, Jesus in the middle.
(Pounding of nails)

Pilate wrote a sign and had it placed on the cross. It read: "Jesus the Nazarene, The King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read the sign because the place where Jesus was crucified was right next to the city. It was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The Jewish high priests objected. "Don't write," they said to Pilate, "'The King of the Jews.' Make it, 'This man said, 'I am the King of the Jews.''" Pilate said, "What I've written, I've written."

Reflection Hymn: VU 135 "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

Upon the cross of Jesus
my eyes at times can see
the very dying form of one
who suffered there for me;

and from my smitten heart, with tears,
two wonders I confess,
the wonder of his glorious love,
and my unworthiness.

Gospel Reading: John 19:

When they crucified him, the Roman soldiers took his clothes and divided them up four ways, to each soldier a fourth. But his robe was seamless, a single piece of weaving, so they said to each other, "Let's not tear it up. Let's throw dice to see who gets it." This confirmed the Scripture that said, "They divided up my clothes among them and threw dice for my coat." While the soldiers were looking after themselves, Jesus' mother, his aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her. He said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother.

Jesus, seeing that everything had been completed so that the Scripture record might also be complete, then said, "I'm thirsty." A jug of sour wine was standing by. Someone put a sponge soaked with the wine on a javelin and lifted it to his mouth. After he took the wine, Jesus said, "It's done ... complete." Bowing his head, he offered up his spirit.

Reflection Hymn: VU 133 "Go Now to Gethsemane"

Calvary's mournful mountain view;
there the Lord of glory see,
made a sacrifice for you,
dying on the accursed tree.
'It is finished,' hear his cry:
trust in Christ and learn to die.

Gospel Reading: John 19:

Then the Jews, since it was the day of Sabbath preparation, and so the bodies wouldn't stay on the crosses over the Sabbath, petitioned Pilate that their legs be broken to speed death, and the bodies taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man crucified with Jesus, and then the other. When they got to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. One of the soldiers stabbed him in the side with his spear. Blood and water gushed out. The eyewitness to these things has presented an accurate report. He saw it himself and is telling the truth so that you, also, will believe. These things that happened confirmed the Scripture, "Not a bone in his body was broken," and the other Scripture that reads, "They will stare at the one they pierced."

Reflection Hymn: VU 135 "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

I take, O cross, your shadow
for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
the sunshine of his face,
content to let the world go by,
to know no gain nor loss,

my sinful self my only shame,
my glory all, the cross.

Gospel Reading: John 19:

After all this, Joseph of Arimathea petitioned Pilate to take the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission. So Joseph came and took the body. Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus at night, came now in broad daylight carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. They took Jesus' body and, following the Jewish burial custom, wrapped it in linen with the spices. There was a garden near the place he was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been placed. So, because it was Sabbath preparation for the Jews and the tomb was convenient, they placed Jesus in it. **

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Closing Hymn: B 256 "The Old Rugged Cross"

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the Dearest and Best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown.*

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown*

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see,
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown*

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true;
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;

Then He'll call me someday to my home far away,
Where His glory forever I'll share.

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it someday for a crown*

Blessing:

Eric: As the echoes of "It is finished" still ring in our hearts, go now in the assurance that God's steadfast love never fails, this day and every day, now and forever more. Our service continues Sunday morning at Pardoville at 6 am.

Chorus: B 56 Chorus

*God will take care of you,
Through every day, over all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.*

No Amen's Today!

Postlude: – JC Leeson