

## Good Friday

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Leader: Welcome to everyone.

### Hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross (STF 287)

Leader: Let us pray.  
Gracious and eternal God, look with mercy on this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### Hymn: There is a green hill far away (STF 284)

**1. There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.**

**2. We may not know, we cannot tell,  
What pains he had to bear,  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.**

**3. There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin.  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven and let us in.**

**4. Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved!  
And we must love him too,  
And trust in his redeeming blood,  
And try his works to do.**

### *THE PROCLAMATION OF THE CROSS*

Hear the Reproaches of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

**All: Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal:  
have mercy on us.**

I delivered you from the hand of Pharaoh,  
but you delivered me up to be crucified.

My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!  
My presence was with you in the pillar of cloud,  
but you could not watch with me one hour.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!  
I opened the sea to lead you out from slavery,  
but you opened my side with a spear.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

**All: Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal:  
have mercy on us.**

I sustained you with manna in the wilderness,  
but you shared my bread and deserted me.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!  
I saved you from thirst with water from the rock,  
but in my thirst you gave me vinegar to drink.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!  
I struck down your enemies before you,  
but you struck my head with a reed.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

**All: Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal:  
have mercy on us.**

I planted you as my fairest vine,  
but you yielded only bitterness.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!  
I gave you a royal sceptre,  
but you gave me a crown of thorns.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!  
I raised you to the height of majesty,  
but you have raised me high on a cross.  
My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

**All: Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal:  
have mercy on us.**

*Silence*

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

**All: We praise and adore you, O Christ: by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us.**

Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, to receive all power and wealth, wisdom and might, honour and glory and praise!

**All: We praise and adore you, O Christ: by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us.**

You are worthy, O Christ, for you were slain, and by your blood you purchased for God saints from every tribe and language, people and nation; you have made them a royal house, to serve God as priests, and they shall reign upon earth.

**All: We praise and adore you, O Christ: by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us.**

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

**All: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn: Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice (STF 274)

**Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice;  
you became nothing, poured out to death.  
Many times I've wondered at your gift of life,  
and I'm in that place once again,  
I'm in that place once again.**

***And once again I look upon the cross where you died.***

***I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside.***

***Once again I thank you,  
once again I pour out my life.***

**Now you are exalted to the highest place,  
King of the heavens, where one day I'll bow.  
But for now I marvel at this saving grace,  
and I'm full of praise once again,**

**I'm full of praise once again.**

**And once again...**

A reading from the Gospel of John

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.' The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.' From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.' When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew *Gabbatha*. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.' Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

*The Crucifixion of Jesus*

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called

Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews", but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.'

And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

#### *Jesus' Side Is Pierced*

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, especially because that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood

and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

#### *The Burial of Jesus*

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

#### Reflection

As some of you will know, my longest appointment as a Methodist Minister, so far, was between 1998 and 2011 in the East End of London. Like Coventry, it was an area that was heavily bombed during the Second World War. My own dad who is 95 in a few weeks served in the RAF during those dreadful years and his memories of those years has become clearer as he has aged. Some people have been making comparisons with times of war during our present experiences as a result of the Covid-19 virus. Over the years in speaking with older people who remember the war time and the destruction and loss of life caused by the bombing, in every case we ended up speaking about forgiveness and how to forgive. To a person those with Christian faith said that it was their experience that forgiveness of such terrible things is only possible because of God's loving forgiveness shown to us in Jesus who died on a cross to show us the futility of human destruction of the world and its people. In 1807 the UK Parliament agreed to the Act to abolish slavery.

Back in 2007 a replica of the slave ship 'Zong' travelled up the Thames and moored near the place it left from loaded with goods to trade for slaves in Ghana. It was a salutary reminder just how close such events are to home. The ship then travelled full of slaves to the Caribbean and on the way, having got lost, the captain ordered over a hundred men, women and children thrown overboard to their deaths because he was worried that there may not be enough water for the crew and all the slaves on board. Even today in our Methodist congregations in East London the majority of the people are direct descendants from those enslaved or from countries in Africa where the slaves were taken from their communities, never to return. People still come from the Caribbean and from Africa to live and work in the UK.

Forgiveness can be very confusing. It's straightforward when you're being forgiven for something you've done, when you knew what you were doing. But how can you be forgiven for something when you've not known what you were doing?

Most of the time forgiveness is not straightforward, because mostly we are not straightforward. The forgiveness or the guilt that bothers us most is not the one where we are clearly guilty, but the one where it's confused. It's hard to get a handle on it. We're in there, and so are others. We knew what we were doing, but we also had no idea. We were partly wrong and partly right.

Then forgiveness has to be very big – bigger than just dealing with guilt. It's wrapped up with compassion and truth. The truth is that we are human beings – sometimes doing wrong, but sometimes just being immature, or living from a lack of knowledge and sensitivity. We're limited. Forgiveness gives us something. It gives us space in which to see ourselves, in which to accept ourselves – not just in our guilt, but in the grey confusion between guilt and not knowing, or in just being confronted with our human frailty. Big forgiveness like that makes sense especially where our guilt is confused and we can't do the arithmetic or explain ourselves. Big forgiveness embraces us with love if we're willing not to push it away with fear or explanations - or the panic which shuts up shop and builds concrete walls.

Forgiveness is the opposite of murder or the will to murder and to hate. Forgiveness is the opposite of tarring criminals as always killers, as always burglars, as always molesters, and never giving them a second chance. Forgiveness is the opposite of writing people off. Forgiveness is not pretending guilt does not exist, nor is it telling lies about the truth to be kind.

Forgiveness is a fearful and awesome gift, because to look it in the eye we need to own our own truth, our own guilt, our own confusion, and not run away. People can hate the love which sees the truth and offers forgiveness, because it exposes the lie, unmask the disguise, and dismantles the structures by which people deceive themselves and others. Drive it away, deny it, crucify it! The greatest love can evoke the greatest hate – Good Friday is its symbol.

On the other side of forgiveness is the promise of paradise – or at least a new beginning. Hope is born of love, when we stop panicking about being human, when we stop grabbing for the fruit of the tree of knowledge so that we can defend ourselves by explanations and avoid our vulnerability. But love keeps visiting the garden, your garden, my garden. There is a tree there where love met its death, but also a bit of open space for new life to emerge. If we don't hide in the leaves, he will meet each of us and we will know the story – the story as our story. When they "crucified my Lord" – we were there. Amen.

Video song: Mary's Song: John 19.25 "Near the cross stood his mother"

**I look to the hillside, the skies have turned grey,  
This place is deserted, where love was betrayed,  
The life you gave freely was taken from me  
today.**

**I see it so clearly, the look on your face,  
The sadness and sorrow, the pain you  
embraced,  
And now it's all over, the silence enfolds the  
day.**

***Tell me, why did it have to be done,  
When my feelings of love are so strong,  
Could it be there's a reason for taking the life of  
my son?***

The noises still echo around in my head,  
The shouts and the jeering, the crowds as they  
fled,  
But now its all over and I'm on my own again.  
I gratefully bore you, I watched as you grew,  
I listened and wondered at all that you knew,  
But this is the hardest of all that I've learnt from  
you.

*Tell me, why did it have to be done,  
When my feelings of love are so strong,  
Could it be there's a reason for taking the life of  
my son?*

*Tell me, why did it have to be done,  
When my feelings of love are so strong,  
Could it be there's a reason for taking the life of  
my son?*

Prayers of Intercession

God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn  
the world, but that, through him, the world might  
be saved. Let us therefore pray to our heavenly  
Father for people everywhere according to their  
need.

For the Church of God throughout the world, for  
those preparing for Baptism, and for all who  
suffer for the sake of Christ, that God will confirm  
his people in faith, strengthen them in love, and  
preserve them in peace; let us pray to the Lord

*Silence*

Leader: Lord in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayers.**

For the nations of the world and their leaders, for  
our own country and those who govern us, and  
for all who work for reconciliation, that by God's  
help we may live in justice, peace and freedom;  
let us pray to the Lord

*Silence*

Leader: Lord in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayers.**

For God's covenant people, Israel, whom he  
called to be his own and for all who seek to live  
by the light of God's truth, that, with them, God  
will grant us grace to live in faithfulness and to  
grow in the love of his name; let us pray to the  
Lord

*Silence*

Leader: Lord in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayers.**

For all who lack faith and for those who are  
hostile to it, that God will open their hearts to the  
truth and lead them to faith and obedience; let us  
pray to the Lord

*Silence*

Leader: Lord in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayers.**

For all who suffer: for victims of violence,  
injustice and abuse, for the lonely, the bereaved,  
and those without hope, for the sick, the dying,  
and all who care for them, that, in his mercy, God  
will sustain them with the knowledge of his  
presence; let us pray to the Lord

*Silence*

Leader: Lord in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayers.**

Remembering those who have died, all whose  
lives have ended in loneliness, and all who have  
offered their lives for the sake of others, and  
remembering the saints and martyrs of every  
generation, that we also, inspired by their  
example, may have grace to glorify Christ; let us  
pray to the Lord

*Silence*

Leader: Lord in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayers.**

Almighty and everlasting God, whose Son Jesus  
Christ is the resurrection and the life: set his  
passion, cross and death between your  
judgement and our souls, now  
and in the hour of our death, and bring us, with  
the whole creation, to the light and glory of your  
kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your Name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial**

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn: From heaven you came (STF 272)

From heaven you came, helpless babe,  
Entered our world, your glory veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give your life that we might live.

*Refrain:*

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

*Refrain*

Come, see his hands and his feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice,  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered.

*Refrain*

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone him;  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.

*Refrain*

*The Blessing*

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**