

Good Friday at Home Worship

Centering Prayer

Gracious and Loving God, this is the day we name good,
this is the day we name for you.

Be with us as we sit distantly from one another,
be with us as we seek your presence, as we enter into this
story of betrayal, denial, torture and death.

Hold us tenderly, God, until new light can dawn into our hearts and minds. Amen

Centering Music Linnea Good – O God We Call/Kyrie/Where Streams run dry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrfGEBiyTwU&list=PL6KsMA-L3ey4qPoxJ5rJ2sCCvmFF8vPaC&index=87>

First Scripture Including Opening Prayer by Rev. Jeff Werner of Cawthra Park United Church

Let us open the imagination of our hearts to the embrace of a foolish God on Good Friday, when the power of God is bruised and wounded, vulnerable, humiliated, forsaken. Let us mediate and pray on Psalm 42:

As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God.

2 I thirst for you, the living God. When can I go and worship in your presence?

3 Day and night I cry, and tears are my only food; all the time my enemies ask me,
“Where is your God?”

4 My heart breaks when I remember the past,
when I went with the crowds to the house of God and led them as they walked along,
a happy crowd, singing and shouting praise to God.

5 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled?

I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise (...) my savior and my God.

6-7 Here in exile my heart is breaking, and so I turn my thoughts to him.

God has sent waves of sorrow over my soul; chaos roars at me like a flood,
like waterfalls thundering down to the Jordan
from Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar.

8 May the Lord show his constant love during the day,
so that I may have a song at night, a prayer to the God of my life.

9 To God, my defender, I say, “Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I go on suffering from the cruelty of my enemies?”

10 I am crushed by their insults, as they keep on asking me, “Where is your God?”

11 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled?

I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him,
my savior and my God.

Gathering into your presence this day through the words of an ancient lament,
Using the same words spoken in the biblical witness to the crucifixion,
We open ourselves to the truth of flesh, blood and bone, sacrificed and crucified.
We open ourselves to the cry of the gospel and the cry of your heart, O God.

Prepare us for the worst that can happen.

Prepare us to confront the fears we have for our own lives:

- How small we are,
- How powerless we feel in the face of systemic injustices,
- How alone we can be.

Prepare us to encounter the love that is with us yet, in all circumstances, in all difficulties, in ways that we only partially see, with a glory we cannot yet fully appreciate. Amen.

Gospel reading with character reflections and music

John 18:1 – 19:42

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ²Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' ⁵They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus replied, 'I am he.' Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When Jesus said to them, 'I am he', they stepped back and fell to the ground. ⁷Again he asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' ⁸Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.' ⁹This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, 'I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.' ¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. ¹¹Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

Were you there in the garden after dark?

Were you there in the garden after dark?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there in the garden after dark?

Soldier #1

When I think on those days, I sometimes can't believe we were a part of the death of an innocent man. It began like most arrests, we were simply told to go to a place and pick up someone.

Sometimes they were definitely bad apples – murderers, thieves, and sometimes they were dissenters and rabble rousers. But this Jesus, he was the gentlest person we’ve ever grabbed. He didn’t want a fuss, just kept admitting who he was. And when one of his followers just sliced the ear right off of Malchus – we all know that little sneak who works for the priests – I thought there would be a small riot. But that man, Jesus, he just reached out and touched Malchus and healed him. I couldn’t believe my eyes. Maybe it’s true what the people say about him – maybe he is more than a man after all.

¹² So the soldiers, their officer, and the temple police arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had advised the religious leaders that it was better to have one person die for the people.

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷The woman said to Peter, ‘You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ¹⁸Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing round it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

¹⁹ Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. ²⁰Jesus answered, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the people come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.’ ²²When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, ‘Is that how you answer the high priest?’ ²³Jesus answered, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?’ ²⁴Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, ‘You are not also one of his disciples, are you?’ He denied it and said, ‘I am not.’ ²⁶One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with him?’ ²⁷Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Music for reflection: Senzeni na? What have we done?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fDU1PYWT8A>

The woman guarding the gate

That was a crazy night guarding the gate to the priest’s enclave. Tensions were pretty high, with Jesus in the building, and the group of workers and soldiers and others outside were on high alert. I recognized almost everybody – that’s my job, and while I couldn’t name him, I saw one of Jesus’ followers in that crowd and I questioned him about knowing Jesus – but he denied it. I wasn’t the only one who had seen him with Jesus, but he just kept disagreeing. He finally scurried away about dawn – right after we heard the first crowing of the priest’s old rooster. Later, I saw Jesus as they brought him out – bloodied and beaten. I wish I could have stood with him, told all his accusers about how he healed my little sister, how he spoke words of love and faith. But I’m just a servant, and

unless I think somebody should be arrested, no one listens to me. I'm sorry, Jesus. You were no criminal, you were God's man.

²⁸ Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹So Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?' ³⁰They answered, 'If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.' ³¹Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.' The temple authorities replied, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death.' ³²(This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' ³⁴Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' ³⁵Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' ³⁶Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the temple authorities. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' ³⁷Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' ³⁸Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

After he had said this, he went out to the temple authorities again and told them, 'I find no case against him. ³⁹But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' ⁴⁰They shouted in reply, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas was a bandit.

Music for reflection: Senzeni na? What have we done? Version #2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DkGyhchzYk>

¹⁹Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ²And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. ³They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. ⁴Pilate 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.' ⁵So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' ⁶When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

Were you there when they shouted 'crucify'?

Were you there when they shouted 'crucify'?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they shouted 'crucify'?

Soldier #2

Like my comrade in arms said, as soldiers sometimes we can't believe what we took part in that day. We were not just assigned to arrest Jesus, but to guard him. When we were standing in Pilate's headquarters, we wanted to show our power over the weak, show our support for the powerful. So

we beat Jesus, and insulted him, and pushed a crown made of thorns so hard into his head that the blood ran down his face and onto the purple robe we'd found and put over his shoulders. He never said a word – never uttered a cry – just looked right into our eyes.

Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.'⁷The Chief Priests 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.'

⁸ Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. ⁹He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰Pilate 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?' ¹¹Jesus 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.'¹²From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Chief Priests 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.'

¹³ 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. ¹⁴Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' ¹⁵They 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.'¹⁶Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

Music for reflection: Senzeni na? What have we done? Version #3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxE2BDRDJOK>

A Chief Priest

This is not a good time to be a chief priest. This Jesus came, proclaiming a new law, said he was the King of the Jews. That's dangerous talk. We have a very tentative peace with the Romans. They let us alone to practice our faith and we obey their laws. It is uncomfortable and we long for the avenging Messiah, but it isn't this wilderness preacher. He makes me nervous. He is chipping away at what little peace we have. If he destroys this peace, he will destroy God's people. We can't risk it, no matter how the crowds love him. We just can't risk it.

So they took Jesus; ¹⁷and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'²⁰Many 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. ²¹Then the chief priests said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews", but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' ²²Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.'

Music for reflection: Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRaFdFkOVyY>

²³When 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. ²⁴So 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.'

²⁵And that is what the soldiers did.

Music for reflection: Senzeni na? What have we done? Version #4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fDU1PYWT8A>

Soldier # 1

We soldiers were caught up in the moment – dividing the spoils of our work as executioners. I can still hear the sound of the nails ripping through his flesh. The flesh of an innocent one ... what have we done?

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' ²⁹A 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. ³⁰When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, the temple authorities 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. ³²Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. ³⁵(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) ³⁶These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' ³⁷And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

Soldier #2

So our work is done, we soldiers. But I don't think any of us will ever be the same after this execution. There was something about this one that has affected us – the quiet weeping, the despair that hung in the air like a cloud. We aren't sleeping, we aren't talking. We are wondering who did we really nail to the cross?

³⁸ After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the temple authorities, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. ³⁹Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹Now 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. ⁴²And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Prayers of the People

Lord God,

we meet beneath the cross today.

We meet over distance, across time.

We assemble in our imaginations, and definitely in our hearts.

Today, on the darkest of days,

we remember that our present world faces its own darkness,

and that your people are challenged to find hope, to find security,

to find a way to a new day, to find *your way*, God.

We lift our prayers for front line workers in hospitals and care facilities
at home and around the globe.

We lift our prayers for patients, for anxious families,
for those who are already grieving a loss.

We lift our prayers for families together at home,
and those separated for safety and wellness.

We lift our prayers for those we miss seeing and holding.

God, we know you are with us in dark times, we know that you hear our prayers

even when we feel we are screaming at an empty sky – as empty as a cross after a crucifixion.

Remind us that the empty cross has special meaning for your people of resurrection,

and stay with us as we travel through the darkness to Easter's dawn.

Amen

The story has not ended, although for those who followed Jesus the world had changed beyond recognizing – their Jesus was gone, and they hid themselves away in their grief and fear.

Closing music : The Frays "Be Still and Know"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vtp-p7qFI2I>