

***Call to Worship**

Voice 1: The Last Week of Jesus' Life, when time stood still,

People: when events rushed by, out of control,

Voice 1: the more they praised his power

People: the more they feared his power

Voice 1: the more they lifted up his name

People: the more they sought to crush him.

Voice 1: And now it's Friday, and we stand at the foot of the cross.

***Introit: Don't be afraid (MV 90) <https://www.sixmaddens.org/?p=2078>**

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,

my love is stronger than your fear.

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,

and I have promised, promised to be always near.

***Opening Prayer:**

Voice 1: Lamb of God, grant us the courage and honesty,

People: to walk with You on this journey to the cross,

Voice 1: in these hardest of days,

People: this holiest of weeks.

Voice 1: Lamb of God, from your broken, open heart,

People: love pours out, love beyond measure.

Voice 1: calm our hearts, that we might hold your pain,

People: and come to know the deep sacrifice of Your life.

Voice 1: And hear us now as we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil,

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

For ever and ever. Amen

Scripture: Mark 15:22-25, 33-39

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.'

Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Reflection:

Long ago now, in my early seminary days, one of my beloved professors, Father Gérald Caron, would tell us of his long years spent in Africa. I leaned in to hear the stories of a land and a people and music, their traditions and expressions, that he clearly loved.

One in particular has stayed with me...perhaps you have heard me use it at a funeral, so today seems a good day for it:

It is said in Africa, that when someone dies, a star falls out of the sky, to signify that one who was standing, has now fallen down. The loss of a single life is so profound so as to affect not only earth, but the very heavens themselves.

And so today, a star has fallen from our sky: our Bright Morning Star, the one called Jesus. He who was born under the star of Bethlehem, is now dead just outside Jerusalem. Crucified.

And in all of the stories that the gospel writers tell, it is indeed as if all Creation groans in lament acknowledging the loss of this one life:

... though barely noon, the skies peel to black... and darkness descends over everything for hours;

And when Jesus breathes his last, ragged breath, the very earth shakes and rocks are split, scattered.

And so too are the people.... Shaken and scattered about like shifting sand, like cleaved rocks, like sheep without a shepherd,

hardly knowing where or how to stand at such a time as this.

Those who had loved him best...where are they?

Where are the disciples?

Scattered.

Huddled away.

Because the world has become a frightening place.

One they do not recognize.

The natural move is to hide away, isn't it? To wait for it all to blow over. To shield our eyes.

To retreat into ourselves, and shut out all that distresses us. It has been a hard journey these last days with Jesus.

But if we raise our eyes, just a little, just enough, we can see that there were those present, standing by, helping.

Like John, the beloved disciple, who was standing close to Jesus' mother Mary, close enough to hear Jesus say, through cracked lips and parched throat "Behold your mother, Behold your son, making them into a new family.

And there is Joseph, the one from Arimathea, who will take down Jesus' body, and lay it in his own family tomb.

And over there are the women, who followed all the way from Galilee, who are near enough and watching, and who will follow still, so they will know where to bring the burial spices.

Amidst the pain of that Friday, amidst the pain of any Friday, it can be near to impossible to lift our eyes. But if we do, we are offering our witness; our witness to the hardest things of this world,

To know them and name them,
And then to say: but even so, here are the helpers,
And here, here even when the sky peels back and the earth rumbles, and the stars fall, here still is
Jesus, who came that we might know God, and who offered himself, in love, for us all.
Amen.

A Prayer For Good Friday

We entered Jerusalem in celebration O God- just days ago.
It seemed that great promise was handed out along with the palms. We tucked that bundle in our
hearts and continued on our journey.
But our journey has brought us here, to the foot of the cross..
In the terrible grief,
Our promises were dropped. And with them our hope.
Beneath the cross, the ground is strewn with broken plans and promises,
And kneeling pilgrims,
For we do not know what to do when the sky peels back to purple;
When our tears drench the earth,
And we grieve for all that is lost
Give us confidence O God,
That we can make our way still,
That we can follow still in the ways of Jesus:
To seek justice and resist evil,
To be your people in whatever incarnation you may will.
And so we kneel amidst our dropped dreams, and dashed hopes, and we remember that you still
hold our hearts. Amen.

The Litany of the Diminishing Light

Voice 1: Jesus' Death was a long time coming.

People: He was alone even among throngs of adoring fans.

Voice 1: He was still alone at the end, and felt the abandonment of everyone. Everyone.

People: How much courage must it have taken, for Jesus to stay the course?

Voice 1: It is finished. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to
the end.

[The Christ Candle is Extinguished]

Choral Blessing: (VU 144)

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

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

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

https://www.hopepublishing.com/W2697_WHAT_WONDROUS_LOVE_IS_THIS/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fvFfPqiO4 When I Survey The Wondrous Cross

[Prayer for Good Friday was influenced by the writings of Ann Weems]