



Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church

140 Guildwood Parkway, Scarborough, Ontario
M1E 1P4

Worship for Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church, Good Friday, April 10, 2010

Dear Friends;

Even though this day, the day of the Saviour's death, is a dark one in the life of the church, it is still a day in which we long to be together standing at the foot of the cross, reliving the terrible events that conspired to end his life. Through this copy of our Good Friday worship, may we gather to remember what Jesus suffered for us, seek to enter into his suffering with him, and so to be assured of the depth of the love of God for us. May God be with you.

Rev. Bob Smith

Opening Hymn

Book of Praise – 238 "Beneath the cross of Jesus"

YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g82KP4XXRRE> ← click this link

- video with only on-screen lyrics

Prayers of Adoration and Confession, Lord's Prayer

We confess to you, merciful God, on this dark day,
that we have betrayed and denied you,
forgotten and doubted you.

When our faith is tested,
we wonder where you are.

When we see injustice in the world,
we often stand by,
turn our backs,
and ignore the cries of others.

We confess that again and again we deny you and betray you with our silence,
when we fail to proclaim your Good News,
when we fail to live out your teachings,
and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Forgive us, O God, and help us truly to repent.

Help us to remember your sacrifice,
your love,
and to know Your forgiveness.
Forgive us, we pray.

We pray these things in the name of the One who lived,
who was crucified,
and who lives again,
Jesus the Messiah,
who taught us to pray, saying together:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy 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 forever. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon and the Peace

Friends in Christ,
hear God's word of acceptance and forgiveness to you

Even in the face of betrayal and rebellion,
even in the face of death and denial,
even in the face of fear and despair,
God's grace knows no bounds.

We are forgiven,
we are called back into relationship with God,
we are set back on the path
that proclaims and builds up the reign of God.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
(Response: And also with you.)

Scripture

[John 19:1–16](#) ← this links to on-line text of the NRSV bible

[Click here](#) for additional scripture readings from today's lectionary. Links courtesy of the [Revised Common Lectionary](#), a project of the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Sermon

We come to this dark day of Good Friday
while we, our families, our congregation,
our city, our country, the world
all suffer under the darkness of a killing virus.

We come at a moment when big issues are at stake,
where sometimes it seems as if our own personal concerns
fade into trivialities,
while we hear more dire predictions,
more infection counts,
more death statistics.

The stakes are big,
and we look to our leaders to give us information and guidance,
encouragement and empathy, we hope,
and some kind of plan that will lead us through this mess.

And we have come to be good judges
of the kind of information we are being given –
Is it authentic?
Does it give us hope?
Can we trust this person?

In the trial which Jesus faces today,
there is a leader, Pilate,
called to make a decision on which so much hangs,
and every eye is on him.

Pilate finds himself
in between a rock and a hard place.
He's in charge,
he gets paid the big bucks to keep peace in the land,
but it also means he must decide.

Is the man Jesus guilty?

It began just like any other day at the office –
some poor trouble-maker is brought before him,
find some pretext for a death-sentence
sign the decree,
and then, who's next on the docket?

But there is something different about this man,
the way he carries himself,
his serenity, even as the soldiers get rough with him,
his refusal to grovel.

By John's account, in chapter 18 and 19 of his Gospel,
Judas sets this final chapter into motion,
guiding Roman soldiers and chief priests
who collude in Jesus' arrest,
and bring him before the high priests.

First Annas and Caiaphas question him.
have him roughed up a little
and then turn him over to Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate supposedly has all the power here,
with all of the imperial authority of Rome behind him.

But the remarkable thing about the dance that follows
is that Pilate emerges as the **weakest** of the characters,
unable to decide what to do
not having the moral courage to take a stand.

He is like a negotiator trying to broker a deal
between two sides
each of which refuses to give in,
and who instead become more entrenched in their positions.
He moves back and forth between Jesus and his accusers
trying to get someone else to make the decision for him –
in a shocking step,
he even gives the bloodthirsty crowd
a say in the matter.

His seat of judgement is in the praetorium, the governor's residence,
where he questions Jesus.

But repeatedly he has to go outside
to speak with the religious authorities.

They refuse to come in
in order to maintain their ritual purity for the Passover.

There's an irony for you –
that they are preoccupied
with their proper eating of the Passover lamb,
while conniving and being complicit
in the conviction and death of the true lamb of God.

It's right up there with the cry
from the crowd of faithful, that,
"We have no king but Caesar."

Repeatedly Pilate protests to the chief priests
that the prisoner is innocent,
and even if he isn't
his crime lies in their jurisdiction,
not Rome's.

The religious leaders want him killed for blasphemy –
Jesus claimed to be the Son of God –
but it is when they conveniently point out
that releasing Jesus would signal infidelity to Caesar,
Pilate caves in,
allowing the execution to proceed:
"he handed him over to be crucified."

Inside the protection of his Praetorium,
Pilate is impressed with Jesus
and believes he has committed no crime,
but outside,
he is at the mercy of others
who manipulate him for their own purposes.

For all Pilate's authority,
and all his bluster –
*"Don't you realize that I have the power
to release or to crucify you?"* –
in spite of it all, he is powerless
You almost get the sense that Pilate is the one being judged,
not Jesus.
and that Pilate fails the test.

In some ways, the pivotal point comes
where Pilate presents Jesus to the crowd
with the words,
"Here is the man."

It is near the beginning of the text in John 19.
Pilate has ordered Jesus to be flogged.
The soldiers make the crown of thorns
and force it on his head.

They put a purple robe on him
and bow before him,
striking him
and mocking him as "King of the Jews."

Then we read,
"Pilate went out and said to them,"
'Look, I am bringing him out to you
To let you know that I find no case against him.'
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 police saw him,
they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him.' "

The moment speaks of power and authority,
with Pilate on his balcony high above the plaza
and surrounded by the trappings of his position –
soldiers, officials, courtiers, and others.
He gestures to a great crowd of people,
presenting to them the accused, Jesus,
half naked,
numb from being beaten,
wearing his crown of thorns,
the humiliated king of the Jews.

"Here is the man."
declares Pilate.

Who is this man
this condemned prisoner?
Is that not the question each of us must answer
as we stand in that crowd,
as we gather at the foot of the cross,
witnesses to his death?

What exactly is Pilate saying?
John's telling of it
suggests that it is offered as proof of Jesus' innocence.

Is he saying, to the charge of **blasphemy**,
 *"Look at him, he's just a man,
 and looking pretty weak and beaten up at that.
Do you call this a God?
That's a ridiculous claim."*

Or is he saying, to the charge of **treason**,
 *"Look at him, he's just a man,
 weak and beaten.
He has no weapons
 or columns of soldiers following him.
What possible danger could someone like this
 present to Caesar's empire?"*

I am reminded of the lines
 from the rock-opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*
A soldier brings in the next prisoner.
Pilate asks,
 *"Who is this broken man
 cluttering up my hallway?
Who is this unfortunate?"*

The soldier responds
 "Someone Christ, king of the Jews."

And Pilate says,
 *"Oh, so this is Jesus Christ
I am really quite surprised.
You look so small,
Not a king at all.
We all know that you are news.
But are you king?
King of the Jews?"*

Whatever Pilate meant,
 whatever he did or didn't do
 to get out of a tight spot,
whatever the religious leaders believed,
 whatever the crowd wanted,
Jesus died.

And we as his followers today
 need to be able to give an answer
 to who this condemned man is,
 and what this moment means for us.
"Here is the man."

Here is the man
who is Isaiah's Suffering Servant
despised and rejected
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity. ([Isa 15:3](#))

Here is the man
who is the way, the truth and the life,
who came to show us the way to God. ([Jn 14:6](#))

Here is the man
whose grace is sufficient for us
and whose power was made perfect in weakness. ([1 Cor 12:8](#))

Here is the man
who, though he was in the form of God
emptied himself,
humbled himself
and was obedient even to the point of death on the cross. ([Phil 2:6-8](#))

Here is the man
who, from that cross, declares, "*It is finished,*" ([Jn 19:30](#))
not in defeat, but in victory,
having accomplished all that God has given him to do.

Here is the man
in whom God came to dwell with us
and to share our human story
even at the point of its deepest pain.

And on this day,
when the Saviour hangs in agony on his cross,
God is not looking down from above
cruelly allowing the son to suffer –
God is... **hanging on the cross.**

In Christ, God enters completely into our pain and loss,
into the mess our broken relationships
the helplessness of our unemployment,
and the anxiety of our current physical distancing,
and infection graphs,
and staggering predictions of death,
and our concern for our loved ones,
into the worst of our suffering,
to be truly **with us.**

Good Friday reminds us that, no matter how terrible the suffering we face,
Jesus is with us in it.
He doesn't try to dance around it,
or deflect the blame onto someone else.
He faces and endures the agony before him
and it is for us.
That is our confession this day,
and our hope.

And now to the One who humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross,
we give all glory and praise,
world without end. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of life, God of beginnings and endings, today we pause to remember the power of death. We tell the story of what happens when someone angers those in power. We tell a story of betrayal by a friend, trial by empire, execution as a way of silencing the one who names injustice. We tell a story that happened long ago and far away and which continues to happen today in places close at hand.

Lord, in your mercy: O Lord, hear our prayer

As we remember the story, help us to see its truth. As we tell of Jesus' trial and execution, remind us of those who are found guilty for doing and saying the right things. As we tell of the friends who are conspicuously absent from the cross, remind us how easily we slip away when the struggle for justice becomes dangerous or challenging. As we look at the cross, remind us of the power of empire in any age, and remind us of our duty as people of faith to proclaim a different empire, a different kingdom, a new way of living together.

Lord, in your mercy: O Lord, hear our prayer

God of endings, today we hear the agonized words "It is finished". We think of all those things that are stopped before they come to fruition, of hopes crushed, of promises left unfulfilled, of possibilities that leave us wondering. We remember O God the needs of a world suffering from a deadly pandemic. We lay before you our fear, our sense of dislocation, our isolation in our distancing. We remember those who struggle with lost jobs, endless child-care obligations, the threat of infection in their work, and our concern for the health of those whom we love. We have never been through anything like this before, and feel there is nowhere to turn. We place ourselves and those whom we love in your care, and ask for your healing and consolation. We remember with thanksgiving the selfless service of medical people, those who still serve us as clerks, cleaners, drivers, those who are working endless hours to serve us, and pray that you will use all of us, in whatever way we can, to keep people safe, see that those who are in need are helped,

and that we can soon put this threat behind us. God of hope, even in the threat of a global pandemic, we remember that day follows night, hope replaces despair, and life will conquer death.

Lord, in your mercy: O Lord, hear our prayer

And now, as we prepare to leave this time of worship, may we do so ready to challenge the empires of our world, even if such a challenge leads us to a cross. Help us remember that every ending is a new beginning, even if in the depths of the end we have no way of seeing what that new beginning might be. We pray in the name of the one who showed us the depth of his passion for Your Kingdom, who taught us to live in love and justice, in whose life, death and resurrection we can find the path to Kingdom living.

Lord, in your mercy: O Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen.

Hymn

Book of Praise – 231 “When I survey the wondrous cross”

YouTube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fvFfPqjO4 ← click this link

- video with only on-screen lyrics
- performed at [Westgate Baptist Church](#), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2007
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Commissioning

We wait here by your tomb
carrying our grief;
the grief of the betrayer,
the grief of the denier,
the grief of the crucifiers.

We carry the grief of the lost,
the heartbroken,
the bereft.

Upon you was laid the grief of us all.
God of endings, God of darkness,
God of the tomb, God of dark days and great loss,
be with us now as we wait with Jesus.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all,
now and forever. Amen.