

## Worship at home

April 2, 2021

Good Friday



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Darkness\\_\(1670488216\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Darkness_(1670488216).jpg)

### **God calls us to worship**

“On this day our Lord was tried before the High Priests,  
then by Pilate,  
thereafter by Herod,  
and then by Pilate again;  
was scourged, mocked, and condemned to death.  
He was led out to Calvary.  
At nine o’clock He was crucified.  
From twelve o’clock until three He endured the darkness of dereliction.  
At three o’clock, He bowed His head and died.”<sup>1</sup>

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth,  
and wisdom and might,  
and honour and glory and blessing!

### **We bring our praise and confession**

We come to the foot of your cross, Lord Jesus,  
and we weep with the disciples.  
With Mary, we ponder the mystery of your life and death.  
With those who witnessed your love in word and action,  
we proclaim the truth of who you are.  
We come to you this day, because you first came to us.  
We come to love you, because you first loved us.

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<sup>1</sup> Good Friday prayers, *Prayers for the Christian Year*, Church of Scotland, 1952.

We come to serve you, because you first served us.  
We come to worship, humbled by your love for us,  
offering our love to you.

God of love and mercy,  
you sent Christ into the world  
so that we might have life and have it abundantly.  
Yet our lives are often less than you would have them be.  
We do not trust the power of your love.  
We have filled the world with violence and terror  
because we cannot trust the way of compassion and service.  
In the face of uncertainty and trouble,  
we give up on you and one another.  
Forgive who we have been,  
amend who we are,  
and direct who we shall be  
for the sake of Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

### **God assures us of His grace and mercy**

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us. Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us, no matter what we have done, God's deep love will never let us go.

**Hymn** #239 "O sacred head, sore wounded"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRjJ9nufa2c>  
(Aceplridge)

## **God speaks to us through His Word**

READ Mark 15:1-39.

**1.** The gospel of Mark begins with the proclamation that over and against the kingdoms of Caesar, Herod, and the Self a greater kingdom has come near by the birth and baptism of Jesus of Nazareth. A prominent theme throughout the ensuing chapters is the conflict between these two ways of doing life: within the kingdom of God or without.

Now, that conflict has reached an apex.

When charged with the treasonous offence of claiming to be the King of the Jews, Jesus refused to answer negatively. When charged with the blasphemous offense of purporting to be the Son of God, Jesus made no reply.

The conflict has come to a head.

Crucifixion was a form of punishment Rome reserved for those who posed a serious threat to the empire and its way of life. It was designed to humiliate and intimidate. Not only were the rebels beaten, stripped, forced to carry their own cross as a public spectacle, and suffer a brutally inhumane death, everyone else saw them struggling and then hanging from the cross. Crucifixion was a way for Rome to terrorize the citizens into compliance and warn would-be insurrectionists of their fate should they try to take on the Empire.

It seemed as though Jesus had met with the same end as all the rebels who had gone before him.

**2.** However, to think only along these lines is to miss the mark regarding who Jesus is and the terms of his messiahship. Repeatedly he had to correct his disciples who held to the mistaken idea that the Messiah is a political hero who would break the chains of the tyrant. Even as he hung on the cross, the onlookers misunderstood what was happening. They tried to prolong his life to see if Elijah would come (failing to recognize that Elijah's ministry had already been accomplished in that of John the Baptist)!

It's true that the Messiah poses a threat to the political powers in that those who follow him will be forever questioning and challenging the decisions of the leaders –

we've experienced some of this in the various responses by Christians to the government-mandated COVID restrictions; from disciples proclaiming the government has overstepped to disciples proclaiming it hasn't gone far enough. And both coming out of various interpretations of the messiahship of Jesus.

Yet, the Messiah is more than an agitator.

Maybe he didn't answer the charge of being King of the Jews because that label might distract the conversation.

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*The most profound conflict doesn't involve forces of politics and popularity but the spiritual struggle between what is good and holy and what is evil and commonplace.*

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Jesus' sacrifice makes sense only when we take a step back, look at the bigger picture, accept the reality of sin and acknowledge that sin is a power present in every human life and thus in the societies and systems in which we live.

Politics and religious jealousy may have put Jesus on the cross. However, that alone wouldn't have torn the curtain nor caused the Messiah to suffer the utter darkness of God-forsakenness.

**3.** At 12 noon, the earth lost its source of light and warmth.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus prayed the first verse of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm:

*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

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

The curtain of the temple provided a barrier between the inner chamber which housed the ark of the covenant and thus the judging-saving presence of God, and the outside world. And the curtain performed two services. Firstly, with the discretion of the priests and the temple staff, it restricted who could enter the holy chamber. Secondly, it protected people from God. God is perfect holiness, pure light. Humans are

not. Sin cannot exist where there is purity. Darkness cannot exist where there is light. Humans can't stand in the presence of the Holy God.

With the tearing of the curtain, there is now no human mediation between us and God save that of Jesus the Christ. Furthermore, we no longer need to be shielded from the perfect light of God. By his crucifixion, Jesus has moderated the forgiveness of sin. When we accept his grace, we are reclaimed by God, adopted by our heavenly Father. The Judge declares us justified, forgiven, righteous, holy; able to not only stand but live in the presence of the Divine!

And all because Jesus endured our God-forsakenness on our behalf.

Jesus, truly divine and truly human; the Son of God and the Son of Man; the King of Israel and the Messiah, could not take himself off the cross. The One named "The Lord is our salvation," had to die.

*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*

On the cross, Jesus endured the total absence of grace and mercy, the absence of goodness, the absence of light, ... the absence of God.

He endured the consequence of Sin.

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*We therefore do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weakness, we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.<sup>2</sup>*

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4. That Psalm from which Jesus prayed the first verse ends with the lines:

“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;  
and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.  
For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and he rules over the nations. ...  
future generations will be told about the Lord,  
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that he has done it.”

Jesus has done what no king could do. In his suffering and sacrificial death he has endured the worst of humanity. He confronted the powers of darkness in our place

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 4:15

and on our behalf. He fought the battle we cannot. And has won for us, forgiveness and eternity in the presence of the Triune God.

By enduring the Godforsaken cross, the Lord has done it!

What can we say, but,

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*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth, and wisdom and might, and honour and glory and blessing!*

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Amen.

**Hymn** #240 “What wondrous love is this”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVNktRGU3As>

(Sounds like reign)

**God sends us with His blessing**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all.

Amen.