

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth

Good Friday Service

April 2nd, 2021

Worship Leader: Rev. Stephen Dunkin

Preparation for Worship

Holy and loving God,
as we prepare to set aside our busyness
and to focus intently on Jesus' suffering and death,
we ask for eyes to see all of the amazing things that Jesus' death
means for understanding you, your love, and our salvation.
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

The Call to Worship

Today the carpenter's hands are nailed to a cross,
the King of kings is crowned with thorns
and wears the purple robe of mockery.
Today he sets us free, himself imprisoned on a tree.
Today is God's Friday.
We come in worship.

Hymn #230: "Go To Dark Gethsemane" – The N Crew

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vD6tcMroY0A>

1. Go to dark Gethsemane, ye that feel the tempter's power;
Your Redeemer's conflict see, watch with Him one bitter hour,
Turn not from His griefs away; learn of Jesus Christ to pray.
2. Follow to the judgment hall; view the Lord of life arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall! O the pangs His soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn of Him to bear the cross.
3. Calvary's mournful mountain climb; there, adoring at His feet,
Mark that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete.
"It is finished!" hear the cry; learn of Jesus Christ to die.
4. Early hasten to the tomb where they laid His breathless clay;
All is solitude and gloom. Who hath taken Him away?
Christ is risen! He meets our eyes; Savior, teach us so to rise.

Prayer of Invocation

O Christ, who forsook no one

but was forsaken by the closest of friends,
and who committed no crime yet was sentenced to a criminal's death,
we enter your presence in awe and adoration.

On this day, centuries ago, you could have saved your life,
but you refused to betray the purpose for which you had been born.
You had come into the world to love God and neighbor as yourself,
and when that love required you to shoulder a cross,
you summoned the strength to bear it.

Today, O Christ, as we sing and pray about the cross,
teach us its meaning once again
and help us to take up our cross and follow you. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

O crucified Jesus, Son of the Father,
conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, eternal Word of God,
we worship you.

O crucified Jesus, holy temple of God,
dwelling place of the Most High,
gate of heaven, burning flame of love,
we worship you.

O crucified Jesus, sanctuary of justice and love,
full of kindness, source of all faithfulness,
we worship you.

O crucified Jesus, ruler of every heart,
in you are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
in you dwells all the fullness of the Godhead,
we worship you.

Jesus, Lamb of God,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us peace.

Almighty God, look with mercy on your family
for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed
and to be given over to the hands of sinners
and to suffer death on the cross;
through him who now lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon (Based on Colossians 1:19-22)

**In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross.**

**And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,
he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death,
so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.**

Brothers and sisters: through the cross of Christ
we are forgiven and reconciled to God. Praise be to God!

Responsive Reading:

Isaiah 53:1-6

Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

**For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.**

He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

**Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.**

But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

**All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.**

Ministry of Music: “My Lord, What Love Is This”, written by Graham Kendrick

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVqmdzQCI6U>

1. My Lord what love is this
That pays so dearly

That I the guilty one
May go free

Chorus

Amazing love O what sacrifice
The Son of God giv'n for me
My debt He pays and my death He dies
That I might live
That I might live

2. And so they watched Him die
Despised rejected
But oh the blood He shed
Flowed for me

Chorus

Amazing love O what sacrifice
The Son of God giv'n for me
My debt He pays and my death He dies
That I might live
That I might live

3. And now this love of Christ
Shall flow like rivers
Come wash your guilt away
Live again

Chorus

Amazing love O what sacrifice
The Son of God giv'n for me
My debt He pays and my death He dies
That I might live
That I might live

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 27:15 - 26

The Crowd Chooses Barabbas

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. **17** So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" **18** For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. **19** Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." **20** Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. **21** The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." **22** Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with

Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” **23** And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” **25** And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” **26** Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer of Illumination

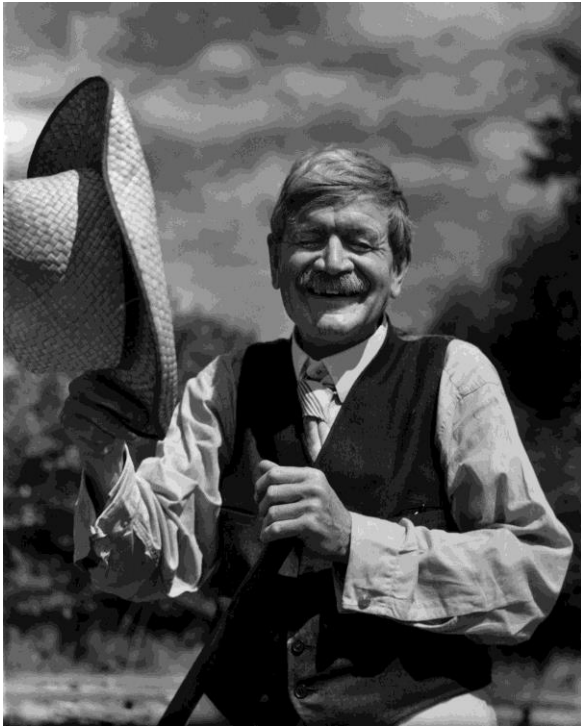
Lord God,
 help us to know your ways;
 teach us your paths.
 Lead us in your truth, and teach us,
 for you are the God of our salvation;
 for you we wait all day long.
 Through Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

“The Luck of Barabbas”

Matthew 27:15-26

Luck may seem to be an odd topic to focus on for Good Friday. I don’t know whether you believe in luck, but lots of people do. I remember a house that I was erecting for a contract price on Marble Rock Road north of Gananoque. I lost two weeks due to non-stop rain. Then half my construction crew caught the flu and were off for a week. Once they returned to work, the other half got sick. When you have a contract job, it doesn’t matter whether it takes you two weeks or two months to finish. You get paid the same amount. The OPP officer I was working for said to me one day, “Stephen, it is not that you have bad luck. You’ve got no luck at all!”





Stephen Leacock, the great Canadian humorist from the first half of the twentieth century, shown here in a famous picture by Yousuf Karsh and best known for his book “Sunshine Sketches of A Little Town”, said this about luck. “I am a great believer in luck, and I find that the harder I work the more of it I have.” This quote is not original to Leacock, but I remember seeing it on a billboard when passing through Orillia where Leacock had his summer home on Lake Couchiching.

One definition of luck is “good fortune; success due to chance”. It really doesn’t matter whether or not you are a believer in luck. You may change your mind after today’s study which focuses on Barabbas. Barabbas only played a

bit part in the drama of the crucifixion. His was not a speaking part, but his name was shouted with such fervor on the day Jesus died that you would have thought he was the star of the show.

Let’s begin by looking at his name.

Barabbas is an Aramaic name which is made up of two words.

bar means “son of” while **abba** is Aramaic word for “the father”. Put

the two together and you have a name which means “son of the father”.

bar.abbas

What do we know about this man Barabbas – son of the father – from Scripture? Matthew tells us that he was a “notorious prisoner”.

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. (Chapter 27)

You can see where this is going. There is a custom of releasing to the crowd any prisoner they want and the only name that appears is Barabbas. No other name is even hinted at. Barabbas was indeed notorious. But what had he done? What made him notorious? When we turn to Luke’s Gospel, it gives further insight into his background. There he is referred to as **19** a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. (Chapter 23) Here was a man who had been instrumental in starting an uprising or riot in Jerusalem

and who was also a murderer. John adds [40](#) ... **Now Barabbas was a robber.** (Chapter 18) Not a very savory character if you ask me.



I want to throw out to you another possibility in terms of this man's name. This is not based on Scripture, but comes from Origen, one of the early church Fathers and a biblical scholar. According to Origen and other commentators, Barabbas's full name may very well have been **Jesus Barabbas**, since Jesus was a common first name. Matthew 27 reads like this: [17](#) **So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"** There is a possibility – and I am only suggesting that it is a possibility, not a certainty – that it could read like this: [17](#) **So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Jesus Barabbas, or**

Jesus who is called Christ?" In other words, Pilate is asking "Who do you want me – Jesus son of the Father or Jesus who is called Christ (Messiah).

So we have looked at the name of this outlaw and we have been made aware of the custom that was prevalent during Passover. Now let's turn to examine the drama that took place. Under normal circumstances, we would be meeting in the sanctuary and I would do things a little differently. My plan would be to ask for a volunteer. Let's suppose that you are that volunteer. Your instructions are to leave the sanctuary and stand in the hall by the library where you could only hear loud sounds from the sanctuary. I would instruct you: "Pretend that you are Barabbas and that you are in your prison cell some distance away from where Pilate is speaking to the crowd. Stay in the hall by the library and listen for anything that you can hear. When someone comes and brings you back into the sanctuary, tell us what you felt as a result of what you could hear." Of course, I would send another



person along with you to make sure that you didn't cheat and stop just outside the sanctuary door!

I don't know this for a fact, but I expect that the prison cells were some distance away from the Judgment Hall. Let's take a guess at one quarter of a mile, or we could make it less if you prefer. What we must be aware of is that at a distance you can hear the noise of a crowd shouting, but you would be unable to hear the voice of one man, even if it were a loud voice. Barabbas could hear the shouts of the crowd but in all likelihood he would not have been able to hear the voice of Pilate.

So let us turn to Matthew's Gospel and follow the story as it is presented there. I suggest that you read it out loud and shout the parts that are in large bold print.

| Pilate | The Crowd |
|--|--|
| <p>15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.</p> | <p>20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.</p> |
| <p>21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"</p> | <p>And they said, "Barabbas."</p> |
| <p>22 Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"</p> | <p>They all said, "Let him be crucified!"</p> |
| <p>23 And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?"</p> | <p>But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"</p> |
| <p>24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."</p> | <p>25 And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.</p> | |
|--|--|

What would you have felt that day if you had been Barabbas locked away in your cell? If it had been me, and all I could hear were the shouts of the crowd, then I would have figured that my time to die had come! My life would not have been worth a single shekel. If all I heard was:

“Barabbas!”

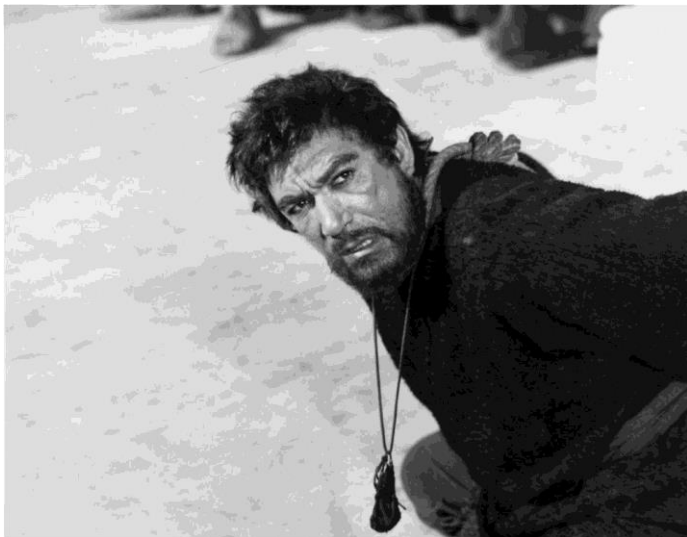
“Let him be crucified!”

“Let him be crucified!”

then it would have been clear that it was over. Based only on what he could hear, Barabbas got the wrong message. Instead of going to hang on a murder’s cross, he was set free. What a lucky break for Barabbas! Oh, the luck of Barabbas!!

I want to make a few observations about what we have talked about. First, the world will always choose Jesus Barabbas over Jesus who is called the Christ. The vast majority will choose a murder, a robber and an instigator of riots over a good Man. That is why Jesus said: **13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.** (Matthew 7) We choose the charismatic, populist leader over the One who offers the true gift of Life.

My second observation is that on the day he died, Barabbas was the first person that Jesus set free. Because of Jesus, he exchanged a jail cell for freedom and a Roman cross for life with his family and friends. Now whether it did him any good, we don’t know because we never find another reference to Barabbas. We don’t know what



happened to him after hearing about him on that first Good Friday. Simon of Cyrene was a different story all together. Being forced to carry the cross of Jesus changed his life forever. He became a follower of the Nazarene and so did his two sons. Whether the freedom of Barabbas purchased by the conviction of Jesus Christ affect him similarly, we will never know. Being given life in the face of certain death may have seemed like a lucky break, but in the end all men and women die. Because he was granted a

pass on Good Friday did not necessarily translate into receiving the gift of eternal life. If he did not put his faith in Jesus his Saviour, then all he received was a temporary reprieve.

There is one final observation I want to make. When Pilate washed his hands of Jesus and any responsibility for the death of this innocent man, those present declared:

“His blood be on us and on our children!”

On the surface it may appear that this was a curse that was brought upon all Jews. This interpretation has resulted in Hitler’s holocaust and the many atrocities that have been brought against Jews down through the ages by supposed Christians. But we need to be reminded of exactly who was responsible for the death of Jesus.

1. **Judas Iscariot** was the disciple of Jesus who betrayed him into the hands of the Jewish authorities.
2. **The Jewish leaders.** This group would have been made up of Caiaphas the High Priest, the chief priests, the elders and the scribes. Together they formed the Sanhedrin which tried Jesus on the charge of blasphemy.
3. **The Romans** were comprised of Pilate the Procurator who handed Jesus over to be crucified and the soldiers who actually nailed him to the cross.
4. **The Jewish mob of Jerusalem.** As we can see, they were somewhat passive and had to be goaded on by the Jewish leaders, but their guilt in the death of Jesus cannot be overlooked. Pilate gave them the opportunity to release Jesus, but they chose to release Barabbas as we have seen.

So the Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus applies only to Judas Iscariot, the High priest, the chief priests and the scribes, as well as to the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem and Israel. It does not apply to all Jews in general.

We would do well to ask the question: What does the phrase mean... **“to our children”**? Is it a curse which is passed on from generation to generation? The Greek word for children used here – *teknon* – can mean “the child of parents” and so would be confined to one generation. The same word is used in Luke 23:28 where Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem. In the context of verse 25 it refers to the offspring of the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem who shouted for Christ to be crucified. This at once limits the meaning to only one generation and corresponds with the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Even so, that cry was to have devastating consequences for that and the next generation of Jews. The destruction of Jerusalem impacted the history of Judaism for centuries.

Some may refer to the luck of Barabbas, but I see it instead as part of God's necessary plan of salvation. If I was a believer in luck, then I would say that we are the lucky ones. Don't just skip over these verses, as I expect you will be tempted to do, but read them carefully.

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

You will not find the word "luck" in these verses, but you will find a much more important word. It is called **grace!** It is impossible to speak of the "Grace of Barabbas", but we can certainly speak of the "Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Hymn: "The Power of the Cross" – Keith & Kristen Getty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uS7fc7VTJZs>

1. Oh to see the dawn of the darkest day
Christ on the road to Calvary
Tried by sinful men torn and beaten then
Nailed to a cross of wood

Chorus

This the pow'r of the cross
Christ became sin for us
Took the blame bore the wrath
We stand forgiven at the cross

2. Oh to see the pain written on Your face
Bearing the awesome weight of sin
Ev'ry bitter thought ev'ry evil deed
Crowning Your bloodstained brow

Chorus

This the pow'r of the cross
Christ became sin for us
Took the blame bore the wrath
We stand forgiven at the cross

3. Now the daylight flees now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head
Curtain torn in two dead are raised to life
Finished the vict'ry cry

Chorus

This the pow'r of the cross
 Christ became sin for us
 Took the blame bore the wrath
 We stand forgiven at the cross

4. Oh to see my name written in the wounds
 For through Your suff'ring I am free
 Death is crushed to death life is mine to live
 Won through Your selfless love

Chorus 2

This the pow'r of the cross
 Son of God slain for us
 What a love what a cost
 We stand forgiven at the cross

Closing Prayer

Holy God, you have opened our ears to hear your Word
 and our lips to proclaim your truth:
 open our eyes this day to see in the cross
 the revelation of your love;
 through Jesus the crucified,
 to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, one God,
 be honor and praise, now and forever. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn: "Grace Greater Than All Our Sin", Sovereign Grace Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Je22nSpTZVQ>

1. Marvellous grace of our loving Lord
 Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt
 Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured
 There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt

Chorus

Grace grace God's grace
 Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
 Grace grace God's grace
 Grace that is greater than all our sin

2. Dark is the stain that we cannot hide
 What can avail to wash it away
 Look there is flowing a crimson tide
 Whiter than snow you may be today

Chorus

Grace grace God's grace
 Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
 Grace grace God's grace
 Grace that is greater than all our sin

3. Marvellous infinite matchless grace
 Freely bestowed on all who believe
 All who are longing to see His face
 Will you this moment His grace receive

Chorus

Grace grace God's grace
 Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
 Grace grace God's grace
 Grace that is greater than all our sin

Benediction (Philippians 2:3-8)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

**Who, being in very nature God,
 did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own
 advantage;
 rather, he made himself nothing
 by taking the very nature of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.
 And being found in appearance as a man,
 he humbled himself
 by becoming obedient to death—
 even death on a cross! Amen.**