

2nd April 2021 – Good Friday

Rev Alan Combes

Introduction

Sisters and brothers, welcome to this morning's Good Friday service.

Christ has come amongst us – giving up all his power and glory. He has lived our life and bears our grief. In this moment, on this solemn day – all of his example, his healing, his teaching, his miracles and his love come to their painful, terrible fulfilment on the cross. So we journey with him through those last terrible moments, asking God to speak to us through the humanity and glorious divine grace of Christ...

God of power and mercy, in love you sent your Son that we might be cleansed of sin and live with you forever. Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death that we may learn from his example the way we should go. We ask this through that same Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

StF 284 – There is a green hill

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| 1) There is a green hill far away,
Outside a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all. | 4) There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in. |
| 2) We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there. | 5) O dearly, dearly has he loved,
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do. |
| 3) He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by his precious blood. | |

Cecil Frances Alexander CCL No. 515642

Station 1: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane - Matthew 26:36-41

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.' Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.' Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?' he asked Peter. 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

In this moment we eavesdrop on Jesus knowing where the road of 'being fully God's' will lead him. He reveals to us the importance of being totally honest with God in prayer. I wonder...

- How is God calling you to participate in God's salvation movement by offering love, justice, mercy, truth and hope to the world?
- We prepare for the cross - the place for us to be totally and brutally honest with God about our actions, thoughts and feelings?
- Are you up for whatever God has in mind, no matter where God is leading you?

Station 2: Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested – Mark 14:43-46

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: 'The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him.

As Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss - Jesus greets him with the name "Friend," accepting both the betrayer and his betrayal in love...

- How do you respond to those whom you see as betraying or opposing you - at home, school, work, or even in our own community?
- Do you see them as loved by God?
- Do we respond to threats with violence and anger rather than love and forgiveness?

1) On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross, where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

Ch) *So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

Station 3: Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin - Luke 22:66-71

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. 'If you are the Messiah,' they said, 'tell us.' Jesus answered, 'If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.' They all asked, 'Are you then the Son of God?' He replied, 'You say that I am.' Then they said, 'Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.'

The Sanhedrin didn't know what to believe? Today the debate is also all about fake news and what is truth? And Jesus says: I am the way, the truth and the life...

- What truth of Jesus is revealed in his journey to the cross?
- Jesus... how do we know you are who you say you are?

Station 4: Jesus is denied by Peter - Matthew 26:69-75

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him. 'You also were with Jesus of Galilee,' she said. But he denied it before them all. 'I don't know what you're talking about,' he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant-girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.'

He denied it again, with an oath: 'I don't know the man!'

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, 'Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.' Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'

Immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: 'Before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter was the strong, faithful one and yet even he faltered in the face of such pain... Yet still he became the rock upon which the Church was built...

- I wonder where we have faltered? Where do we deny Jesus in our lives?
- Yet we remember that the cross is about second chances, and we bring our own confessions to God.

2) O, the old rugged cross, so despised by the world
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left his glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

Ch) *So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

Station 5: Jesus is judged by Pilate - Mark 15:21-22

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' asked Pilate. 'You have said so,' Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, 'Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.' But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

- Have you ever accused someone of wrong or picked on them just to please the crowd or group you were with? How did you feel?
- Have you ever been accused or picked on, but the power of the crowd was too strong to fight? How did you feel?
- Have you ever stood by and watched as someone else was hurt and said nothing to defend them? Why?
- Would you go against the crowd for someone you love, even if that meant putting yourself in their place?

Station 6: Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns - John 19:1-3

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' And they slapped him in the face.

Imagine how would you feel if you were the one who put the crown of thorns on Jesus' head? It could have been any of us...

- Pilate's men put him in royal purple to mock him. I wonder if all of the men wanted to do that? Or were they forced by circumstances?
- Do you deny Jesus by mocking him?
- Who would we have been in that situation?
- What would you have done?
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3) In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see;
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died
To pardon and sanctify me.

*Ch) So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

Station 7: Jesus bears the cross - John 19:6, 15-17

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify!' But Pilate answered, 'You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.' But they shouted, 'Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!' 'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate asked. 'We have no king but Caesar,' the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

Jesus chose to carry his cross. He was not forced. He was not a puppet with the strings pulled by God. In his humanity, Jesus exercised human free will. He could have escaped from those sent to arrest him but he chose to wait for them. He picked up the cross when it meant he had to lay down his life. He did it for us. When we choose to follow Christ and his teachings, we are called to pick up our cross... it is our free will to do so – out of love for him...

Station 8: Jesus is helped by Simon the Cyrenian to carry the cross - Mark 15:21

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

We all experience some sort of pain or burden - a cross we are compelled to bear. It might be the agony of physical illness, persecution, hunger, homelessness, loneliness, sorrow or depression.

Our cross becomes so much lighter when we identify our suffering with the suffering of Christ.

- Are you willing to share the burden of another person's cross?
- Are you willing to share the burden of your own cross with someone else?

4) To the old rugged cross I will ever be true,
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then he'll call me some day to my home far away,
When his glory for ever I'll share.

Ch) *So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

George Bennard CCL No. 515642

Station 9: Jesus meets the Women of Jerusalem - Luke 23:27-31

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, "Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!" Then "they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

In the midst of his terrible passion journey, Christ speaks to the mourning women; "Do not weep for me; Weep for yourselves and for your children." Jesus saw into the souls of the women.

Today many women weep:

- because they are not heard and their lives and work are disenfranchised
- for sons forced to take up arms in wars that are not theirs
- for daughters who are abused and mistreated
- disrupted homes
- for their own bruises and broken bones

Christ still hears them weeping. Do we?

Station 10: Jesus is crucified - Luke 23:33-34

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Jesus asked forgiveness for those who crucified him.

- Can I forgive someone who has wronged me or someone I love?
- Have I wronged someone, whether a stranger or a friend, and do I need to request forgiveness from that person?
- Am I willing to be a model of forgiveness and reconciliation for those who watch me every day?

1) When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride

2) Forbid it Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood

Station 11: Jesus promises his Kingdom to the good thief - Luke 23:39 – 43

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

The leaders of Jerusalem mocked Christ and called for his death. The crowds followed suit, thronging around to see the condemned and to condemn. The soldiers taunted Christ to save himself, so that at the end, even the criminal hanging next to Christ hurled insults. History shows us that crimes against humanity only take one leader to convince us that the 'others' do not deserve what we have, that something is 'wrong' with 'them.' One leader to persuade us in such a way that we join in and dehumanize entire populations. Yet the other criminal saw Christ and found his way to Paradise. When "others" are degraded, do you hold yourself accountable so that you do not join in?

Station 12: Jesus dies on the cross - Luke 23:44-46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last.

We will never fully know the meaning of the cross until we realize that our Lord's death was for us – for me, for you. Charles Wesley put it eloquently in his hymn, "O Love divine, what has thou done!/ The immortal God has died for me! " Although we don't deserve it – Christ, in his love for us, carries our weakness and sin on his shoulders. He dies our death that we might be right with God.

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| 3) See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown? | 4) Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all. |
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Isaac Watts CCL No. 515642

Dear God, our loving heavenly Father, as on this solemn day we bow at the foot of the Cross, may the love that was manifested there stream into our hearts, challenging and subduing them and winning from us that response which is your will for us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your 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 for ever. **Amen.**

Station 13: Jesus is placed in the tomb - Matthew 27:57- 60

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

After the crucifixion, Jesus' body was taken down by Joseph then lovingly wrapped in spices and linen sheets by Nicodemus. What does Christ's ultimate sacrifice truly mean to you?

Song – Were you there

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| <p>1) Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble.
Tremble. Tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?</p> <p>2) Were you there when they nailed him
to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed him
to the tree?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble.
Tremble. Tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him
to the tree?</p> | <p>3) Were you there when they pierced him
in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him
in the side?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble.
Tremble. Tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him
in the side?</p> <p>4) Were you there when they laid him
in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him
in the tomb?
Oh~oh~oh~oh!
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble.
Tremble. Tremble.
Were you there when they laid him
in the tomb?</p> |
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Traditional CCL No. 515642

Blessing

May Jesus Christ, who for our sake became obedient unto death, and even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you now and forever. **Amen**
Go in peace and God go with you. **Amen**