



Good Friday

Eternal God,

In the cross of Jesus we see the cost of our sins
And the depths of your love:
In humble hope and fear may we place at his feet
All that we have and all that we are,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

Jesus is Tried before Pilate

They took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.) Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Jesus is condemned to death

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" They shouted in reply,

"Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

Crucify him! Crucify him!"

When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is

your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 18 and 19

Please pray for:

for those who are deprived and oppressed,
for all who are sick,
for those in darkness, in doubt and in despair,

in loneliness and in fear,
for prisoners, captives and refugees,
for the victims of false accusations and violence,
for all at the point of death
and those who watch beside them,
that God in his mercy will sustain them
with the knowledge of his love.



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A Reflection for Good Friday

The day when everything was stripped away. Jesus, in his life, had already laid aside his heavenly majesty, now he was being stripped of his very life. The cross was the place of human shame and degradation, the lowest point of human pain and suffering. And our God meets us there.

There is no hiding at the cross, we cannot avert our eyes or hide from view. There is no cover up. Right now, we are living through unprecedented times because of Covid 19, we too are facing a life that is stripped bare. The usual tasks that occupy us, the daily routines of going to work, and the social niceties of visiting friends and family have deserted us. Even the nation's favourite pastime of grocery shopping has become fuelled with anxiety and fear of deprivation. Life has changed.

Can there be hope for us still from the cross?

St. Paul, writing to the Christians in Galatia wrote this:

"For Freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore
and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery

Galatians 5:1.

Jesus' death on the cross was for our freedom. A freedom from attitudes and worn out ways that no longer serve us. And perhaps never did.

There is a prayer I like to use in the morning that has these words:

Open our eyes to acknowledge your presence,
that freed from the misery of sin and shame we may
grow into your likeness from glory to glory.

The power of the cross is the divine gift of release from all that binds us. This season of social distancing might also be an opportunity to embrace and grow into that freedom.

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