

A Service for Good Friday

Liturgy and readings:

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.
Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.
We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and praise and glorify your holy resurrection:
for by virtue of the cross
joy has come to the whole world.

I Peter 2: 24 - 25

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The Collect

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus
we see the cost of our sin
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear
may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,

.
All **Amen.**

Hear the Passion of our Lord according to Matthew

And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's Son." ' The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

Sermon

Sacrifice is as old as humanity. Offering a sacrifice to the gods in return for favours: sacrificing a lamb in the Temple to the God of Israel for forgiveness after mistakes and failures is part of the human story.

Today we are all having to learn about sacrifice. The sacrifice of our freedom. The freedom to travel, the freedom visit family, meet friends, attend the theatre, cinema, sport events, museums, go shopping, go to the pub, go out for a meal, worship in public, show our respect to the dead. Many are making even greater sacrifices: losing their jobs, their businesses, their livelihoods. Others are working tirelessly to provide food, medicines, equipment and basic services. There are those too who are making the greatest sacrifice: the sacrifice of their health and lives in hospitals, medical centres and care homes.

The message is make a sacrifice for the common good: **Stay at home: protect the NHS: save lives.**

Britain's wartime leader, Winston Churchill told the people "I have nothing to offer you but blood, toil, sweat and tears". People had to make

sacrifices. This time we are all having to make sacrifices not to defeat an enemy with guns and bullets but to defeat a tiny invisible enemy - the virus covid-19.

It is Good Friday. The focus for Christians is the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The sacrifice Jesus made with humanity and for humanity, so we could all live a good life, a full life, a life with God. In the fourth century in explaining the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus, Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the early fathers of the church, wrote, "**Humanity had to be brought back to life by the humanity of God. We had to be summoned to life by His son**".

In thinking about the sacrifice of Jesus; in seeing the sacrifices people are having to make for the sake of others - that they might have life - we are discovering what it is to be fully human. **brought back to life by the humanity of God.** Discovering that race, nationality, all human boundaries are not really important. We are all in this together. Nothing matters as much as life itself. Discovering too that caring and helping others brings more happiness, more fulfilment than caring only for ourselves.

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4: 11

Closing prayer

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;