

WELCOME**OPENING WORSHIP** **Psalm 31** (*read*)**HYMN** **On a Hill Far Away (Ol' Rugged Cross)****INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to our Good Friday worship service. This year, Botley Baptist and Calvary Chapel join together for Easter worship, today and on Sunday at 9:00 am and 10:30 am. We hope you have signed up with Steve for these services, that your seats are reserved in family groups and socially spaced as advised by medical professionals across the world.

This is a Communion service, being the first Sunday in the month, AND being a special service at which the "Lord Supper" has tremendous significance.

The focus of our meditations this morning is taken from the 19th Chapter of the Gospel of John.

READING 1 **John 19:1-16** *Austin Vickery***MESSAGE 1** **The clash of two legal systems**

The crucifixion of Jesus is one of the most emotionally moving, disturbing and painful accounts of public execution I have ever read. Having lived in a certain part of world for 12 years, reports of public executions was not uncommon.

Around 33-35 AD, one would not have expected such a public execution by a government who, amongst their many achievements, prided themselves to have the most well develop legal system, which laid the foundation of the western legal system. Despite all their achievements, little did they realise the tension this little outpost of their vast empire would cause them, where a people called the Jews made their home for millennia.

The Jews had their own legal system, one they claimed was given to them by God, and they would not bend the knee to any other. The Romans agreed to an uncomfortable truce with the Sanhedrin, the governing council of the Jews: *we will allow you to keep and practice your laws, as long as you keep the peace in the land. Any outbreak of trouble and we will move in and take over.*

Things went well until, on the east bank of the Jordan river, a man born to his parents in their sunset years, started baptising people using an age-old ritual of cleansing as a public confession of wrong, and going a step further in seeking to be made right before God. *Repent!* he shouted to passers by. *The Kingdom of God is about to be established on earth! Greater is He who comes after me, whose sandal straps I am unworthy to untie!*

Enter stage right, Jesus, the man of the hour!

John mentions three Passover festivals in Jesus' timeline of activities, which tells us, Jesus' years of public ministry lasted 3 - 3.5 years, during which Jesus mentioned on several occasions, *My time has not yet come* and He would slip away to avoid confrontation before God's appointed time.

It was now God's appointed time. Jesus entered Jerusalem to a rapturous welcome, not tens of people as some Sunday school picture portray, not even hundreds, but thousands of people. It was after all, Passover week and Jews from all over had gathered in the city.

Luke tells us, *Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction.* If people reacted then, as they are now on the streets of cities in Burma, then as as happened in Burma, we would expect the Roman army to move in.

A few days after Jesus entered Jerusalem, He sent Peter and John ahead to prepare the Passover meal, which Jesus said, *I have longed with great anticipation and desire, to have this (last) Passover meal with you.*¹

¹ Luke 22:15

After the meal, they left for garden at Gethsemane where Jesus had his last, very intimate and emotional conversation with His Father before one of the disciples who spent three years with Jesus, betrayed Him with a kiss, a contradiction in terms, and a phenomenal abuse of an intimate relationship.

What followed can only be described as a travesty, a gross miscarriage of justice Jesus faced not one, not two, but three trials; two were significant and one, was not really a trial, but ... let's see. You decide.

Jesus was taken from the Gethsemane by the arresting Roman officials to meet Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas who was Chief Priest that year. They conversed, and I would presume the tone would have been very cordial, the old man Annas putting himself in the role of an elder, a father-figure.

As they conversed, came daybreak². Everyone who was anyone in spiritual circles gathered in Caiaphas' house. Breakfast would have been on order, and Matthew tells us, the agenda was to look for anyone who would lie about Jesus!

This set the tone for what followed. The Romans did not give the Sanhedrin the authority to pass a death sentence on anyone. It took sometime for the Chief Priest compose himself, and posed a trick question. He asked Jesus, *Tell us if you are the Messiah*. If Jesus said "Yes" or "No", either way they would have Him.

Jesus' reply, *"You said it, not me"*, angered the High Priest who shouted in rage. When people act in anger, they make mistakes, and the High Priest made two mistakes: first, he declared that Jesus committed blasphemy, but in Jewish law, blasphemy was to curse God using God's sacred name. Jesus did nothing of the sort. The second mistake the High Priest did was to circumvent the requirement for witnesses. The Law required 2 witnesses and the High Priest declared, *You heard his blasphemy; who needs witnesses*. Two mistakes made as a result of anger!

Jesus' identity as Messiah was in fact self-evident. Reports that the blind saw, the lame walked, lepers were cured, the deaf heard, and the dead came back to life³ was brought back to the Sanhedrin, whose spies were sent all over the

² Luke 22:66-71

³ (Matthew 11:2-5; Isaiah 29:17-21)

countryside to cover Jesus' activities. Israel's God had entrusted authority to His Son Jesus, therefore, submitting Himself to the lower court of the Judean establishment (*despised by many Judeans at the time*), was out of the question⁴.

The Sanhedrin passed a verdict that was beyond their jurisdiction - **Guilty of blasphemy! He deserves to die!** The first trial ended in a mis-trial because the court acted beyond its jurisdiction.

Act 2, Scene 1 - Jesus is taken to Pontus Pilate the Roman Governor and the second legal case begins. The Sanhedrin wanted Pilate to pass a verdict of death on Jesus, but Pilate was not concerned with their interpretation that Jesus deserved to die, guilty of blasphemy (which He had not committed).

Pilate took Jesus inside his palace and asked Him, *So! Are you the King of the Jews?* If Jesus said "Yes", Pilate could sentence Him to death as Roman Law stated there is only one king, and he is Caesar.

Amidst the cacophony of false charges and distorted statements being shouted, the priests accused Jesus of creating riots all over the country including Galilee. Herod Antipas who was in charge of Galilee was visiting Jerusalem at that time, and Pilate decided Herod should deal with this.

Was this the third trial? All Herod wanted was for Jesus to conjure some magic to entertain him, which obviously Jesus wouldn't. So they made fun of Him, flogged Him, put on a purple robe on Him and sent Jesus back to Pilate.

Jesus first trial was before the Sanhedrin, which ended in a mis-trial. The second trial before Pilate was interrupted when Jesus was sent to Herod which ended as a non-trial, and now Jesus was back before Pilate, who gave his verdict. Ever the politician-diplomat, Pilate stated, *Herod and I have examined the evidence and find this man innocent. This man has done nothing to deserve the death penalty. I will have Him flogged (to appease your anger) and return Him to you*⁵

Egged on by the priests, the crowd were not getting what they wanted, so the charges had to be changed.

⁴ Matt. 26:63-64

⁵ Luke 23:14-ff

Whipped up by the priests, the crowds asked for something so significant, without understanding the significance of their request. Once again, in anger and rage, **they asked for a substitutionary death! Release a guilty man, and let an innocent man die in His place.**

Jesus of Nazareth, the Jew from Galilee, innocent of all charges brought against Him by an angry mob whose ability to reason was drowned out by their anger, and their personal agenda, was executed for political rather than religious reasons, taking the place of a criminal guilty of insurrection who deserved to die, which Jesus was blamed for, but no evidence provided, only hearsay!

Jesus' substitutionary death was repeated when on the cross, one of two criminals crucified with Jesus mocked Him, *If you are the Messiah, prove it! Save yourself and us!*, to which the second criminal said, *We deserve to die for what we have done, but this man hasn't done anything wrong!*

Two mis-trials and one non-trial, and Jesus died innocent of **all** the charges brought against Him. He died in place of the man who was truly guilty.

Isn't this the purpose of God in the story of salvation? That Jesus in whom was no sin, would die for our sin? That the only way God could restore us into His perfect eternal Kingdom, was to absolve us of all sin, and the only way this would be achieved is for His Son to die on the cross, instead of us, we who deserved to die because of the way we treat and disrespect God in our daily lives!

Reading 2

John 19: 25b-27

Robin Isaac

MESSAGE 2

Settling Family Matters

We remember the words of a dying person more often than we do what a person says in his life. Jesus on the cross uttered 7 short sentences/phrases.

These seven words are taken from the four gospels and assembled into what was probably their chronological order. The first three Jesus spoke were about people around Him:

"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

"This day you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

"Woman, behold your son." (John 19:26-27)

The next four are Jesus surrendering Himself to His Father:

"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34; Mat. 27:46)

"I thirst." (John 19:28)

"It is finished." (John 19:30)

"Into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

"The disciple whom Jesus loved", John, records

Today, let's turn our attention to three words Jesus spoke from the cross as recorded by John who has captured emotion of Jesus surrendering His humanity on the cross.

Along with the other 11 disciples, John saw Jesus being nailed to the cross, and raised onto the tree. He would have fetched Mary and the other women. As they stood and watched and hours rolled on, Jesus' head hung lower-and-lower as His shoulder muscles weakened. His sight would have slowly dropped to an area at the foot of the cross. John would have guided Mary and others closer to the cross, to maintain eye contact with Jesus, and He with them.

Looking up at her Son, her vision blurred by tears, Mary watched her Son die in excruciating pain. Surely her thoughts rolled back in time 33-35 years prior, when an old man in the Temple, Simeon said, *"This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."* Did she imagine then, what she was witnessing now?

Seeing His mother standing there emotionally distraught, knowing that her husband was no more, soon her eldest would no longer be by her side, the Disciples would soon disperse into the world carrying His message, Jesus was concerned for the care of his precious mother. She had given birth to him under socially difficult circumstances, protected Him from a pogrom of infanticide

and cared for, nurtured and reared him, now a widow in the male-dominated society of that time, Jesus wanted to make the best arrangements for her.

Was it not His Father who told Moses to teach an emerging nation, “*Honour your Father and Mother, that all may go well in the land in which you live*”?

Condemned to die on a cross, innocent of all charges brought against him, in exchange for a hardened criminal, Jesus was obedient to His Father’s commandment and set the example of honouring His mother. *Dear Precious Woman...* (a term of endearing respect), *The man standing next to you will be your son.* Looking at the Disciple John he said, *Take her and look after her as you would if she were your own mother,* which he did immediately thereafter.

At that very moment, Jesus’ teaching, *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,* comes alive as the Father’s love is poured through His Son from the cross.

This pandemic has highlighted the pain and the emotional cost of people separated from each other. Particularly heart-rendering is the separation of adult children from their parents.

Before our next reading, spend a few moments thinking of people you know for whom this separation has been difficult. The One who can comfort them is the One who knows the pain of separation; after all He suffered being separated from His Son through death on the cross!

Reading 3

John 19:28-29

Robin

MESSAGE 3

I thirst

Doctors, nurses and medical staff will tell you, as death approaches, the human body systems begin to shut down one-by-one, the last being the heart.

Crucifixion lasts as long as the muscles can hold the body. Athletes will tell you, muscles need to be hydrated in order to function. Remember scenes of the London marathon, or any long distance race? Bottles of water are placed at regular stations along the way, handed out to runners as they pass by.

Dehydration causes people to collapse; even even die.

Jesus had been hanging on the cross for 3-4 hours after He was nailed to it. The way He was treated, it is unlikely He was offered a drink of water.

The One who said to a Samaritan woman by the well, *If you only knew what a wonderful gift God has for you, and who I am, you would ask Me for living water!*⁶

The One who cried out to the people, *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water’”*⁷ ...

... is now hanging on a cross, nearing death, and says, *I thirst!* The fountain of Living Water has poured Himself completely dry, He has poured Himself into us, that we may be more like Him, and He can barely whisper two words, *I thirst!*

And what does He get? A sponge soaked in sour wine (wine gone bad, foaming wine), held up to His lips at the end of a hyssop branch.

God does nothing which does not have significance. Everything God does points to His one and only message, *The ONLY way to Him is through His Son who died to defeat death, in order that the door to eternal life is opened.*

Both the hyssop branch and the sour wine have great significance. The hyssop branch is used at the first Passover to spread the blood around the door frames⁸. The hyssop and blood are used in the ceremonial cleansing of the leper⁹. Hyssop is used for cleansing someone who has touched a dead body.¹⁰

The hyssop branch is a symbolic act by which the blood of the sacrifice was transferred to the sinner. It is crazy how much symbolism is going on here.

⁶ John 4:14

⁷ John 7:37

⁸ Exodus 12:22

⁹ Leviticus 14:4-7

¹⁰ Numbers 19:1

Jesus is drinking wine vinegar. Psalm 75:8 states, *“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”*

Jesus prayed, *“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup (of bitter, sour wine) to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”*¹¹

Therefore it's safe to conclude that the cup of sour wine Jesus drinks at the crucifixion represents the cup of God's wrath which we all deserve to drink because of our sin. The cup could be taken away from Jesus even if he didn't drink it. But the cup of God's wrath could not be taken away from us, **unless** Jesus drank it on our behalf.

The hyssop plant and the wine vinegar symbolise the substitutionary death of Jesus on our behalf. **Jesus died in our place.** Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath that we were supposed to drink. It was as if God ordained the hyssop branch to show up right at the crucifixion to remind everyone watching, God saying, *“It wasn't the blood of the lamb spread of your door frame with the hyssop that allowed the angel of death to pass over you when you were leaving Egypt. It wasn't the blood of animals that Moses sprinkled on you with the hyssop that appeased my wrath. **It was my Son's blood. I did that. I** lead you out of Egypt. **I** paid the price for your rebellion. Look at the hyssop and remember My Son. Look at this Old Testament symbol and now look at the One it was symbolising.”*

A sponge soaked with sour wine at the end of a hyssop branch, was held up to Jesus' lips, when He whispered, *“I thirst!”* God is asking us to be always reminded, it was **HE** who allowed His Son to die on the cross, for our sin!

Pause and drink this Truth: It is not the blood of the lamb that saves us; God the Father who allowed His Son to drink the cup of foaming wine, that we won't have to drink it to be cleansed of sin, who saves us. We are cleansed of sin, **because** Jesus drank that cup of foaming, sour, bitter wine that had gone bad, which represents the distastefulness of sin before God.

¹¹ Matthew 26:42

HOLY COMMUNION

These two **ELEMENTS**, Bread and Wine remind us of this Truth: **DEATH** separates us from God, and **LIFE** unites us with God.

Sin - A simple act of disobeying or disregarding God's stated Will or Plan, separates us from God, and if not repented and restored into fellowship with God, results in **Death** and total, eternal alienation from God.

By dying on the cross Jesus broke the stranglehold of death, and restored us into our rightful relationship with God.

It is finished! - three most powerful words ever spoken, words which rang across the Heavens, over all God's creation. These three words are **so** powerful, a curtain of darkness descended over the earth. Let's not even begin to try to explain it - it happened, because of the immensity and profoundness of what was accomplished.

Jesus surrendered His earthly family

Jesus surrender His human body (I Thirst!)

Jesus surrendered His life on earth, to death. **It is Finished.**

His mission on earth was accomplished. This is what he came to do: to surrender to death.

He set the record straight - ONLY through death comes life. He taught this, didn't He?

"... unless a seed falls to the earth and dies..."

"... unless you die to yourself and are born again as new life..."

So when we "celebrate" Jesus' broken body in broken bread, we are celebrating His final words, "It is finished"! I surrender My body to death. My body is broken.

My work in my human body is finished.

As a plate of broken bread comes to you, take, pray and eat, thanking God for the obedience of His Son, who surrendered His body to be broken by death.

“It is finished”!

... ..

The poured out cup follows the broken Bread. It symbolises **HOPE**. You cannot have resurrection with out death. In death Jesus cried out, **“Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!”** and breathed his last.

As the cup comes around to you, take, pause and drink.

The work of Christ is finished, but the life of Christ is eternal, safe in the hands of the Father. At the Father’s appointed time, Jesus the Christ will be crowned King over His Father’s kingdom. This is our firm **HOPE**

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HYMNS

sung during Communion

Amber V *

Lets make this our prayer this Good Friday:

Father! When my life on earth is finished, I want my spirit to be safe in Your hands. Today, I surrender my life to you Eternal God, knowing that my spirit is safe for eternity with you. AMEN!

Final Reading

John 19:31-42

Philip Vickery

PRAYER

Philip Vickery

HYMN

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (Amber)

BENEDICTION

The story has been told and re-told, and the Truth of it is known.

Is worship is over?

No! Worship continues day and night in Heaven for the glory of God, and will gain a new dimension when His Son returns to claim the Kingdom God has given Him! **AND** worship will continues into eternity!

So, go into your world and live the life of Christ in you.

Live and share the assured hope that defies despair.

Live and share the assured love that defies understanding.

Live and share the assured life that defies death

In the Name and for the Glory of Jesus the Christ.

AMEN.