

A short act of worship for use in people's homes, provided by Mrs Rosie Greenhalgh.

Call to worship¹

On this most solemn of days we come to worship.

Jesus, lead us from the darkness of the garden, to the bare courtyard and its soldiers.

Draw us from Pilate's palace and its crowds, through the streets of Jerusalem.

Shepherd us to a lonely hillside where the Lamb of God waits for us.

We would follow you, Jesus, on this, your day of suffering.

The chief priests have decided Jesus is worthy of death, bound him, and delivered him to Pilate for questioning. Pilate has released Barabbas to satisfy the crowd, had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Reading Mark 15 vv 16-20 [To hear reading](#)

Play from 1 min 45 to 2 min 20

The soldiers mock Jesus

¹⁶ The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Hymn Come and see (*Singing the Faith* 270)

[YouTube](#)

1. Come and see, come and see, come and see the King of love;
see the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears.
Soldiers mock, rulers sneer as he lifts the cruel cross;
lone and friendless now he climbs towards the hill.

*We worship at your feet, where wrath and mercy meet,
and a guilty world is washed by love's pure stream.
For us he was made sin, oh, help me take it in.
Deep wounds of love cry out 'Father, forgive.'
I worship, I worship the Lamb who was slain.*
2. Come and weep, come and mourn for your sin that pierced him there;
so much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail.
All our pride, all our greed, all our fallenness and shame;
and the Lord has laid the punishment on him.
We worship at your feet...
3. Man of heaven, born to earth to restore us to your heaven,
here we bow in awe beneath your searching eyes.
From your tears comes our joy, from your death our life shall spring;
by your resurrection power we shall rise.
We worship at your feet...

The crucifixion of Jesus

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. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). ²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

²⁵ It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: The King of the Jews.

²⁷ They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!' ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The death of Jesus

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?').

³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, 'Listen, he's calling Elijah.'

³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down,' he said.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'

Prayer ²

Lord Jesus, the Romans crucified you under the charge: King of the Jews;
in mockery the chief priests called you King of Israel;
but to me you are the King of love, King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
and you will reign for ever and ever.

Forgive those things I have done which have caused you sadness,
and those things I should have done that would have brought you joy.
In both I have failed myself, and you.

Bring me back to that place where my journey began,
when I said that I would follow the way that you first trod.

Bring me to the foot of the Cross to stand next to the one who,
looking into your eyes, declared 'Surely this is the Son of God'.

The Lord's Prayer

Reflection

When we look at the cross we see the depths of human depravity. Judicial execution by the most horrific method, inflicting agony on the victim and exposing him to shame and humiliation; treating him as something less than human, as an insect to be crushed without a second thought. The very antithesis of God's command: Love your neighbour as yourself.

We have seen what sin produces in our own lifetimes, in the heartlessness of genocide: the Holocaust in the 1940s; Cambodia in the 1970s; the Kurds in the 1980s; Rwanda in the 1990s. We see the power of sin in ourselves whenever we are tempted to put our own needs above those of our neighbour; when we see our neighbour as less human than we are; when we look on our neighbour without loving him as ourselves; when we forget to love God with all we are.

Mark's stark account of the death of Jesus highlights for us the enormous cost of our redemption from slavery to sin. At the feast of Hannukah in the December before he died, Jesus told the Jews: I and the Father are one (*John 10 v 30*). He emphasises this to his disciples at the Last Supper. Yet here we see the separation of Father and Son by the power of sin.

The three hours of darkness set the mood. Then Jesus gives that cry of desolation: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? It is a wonderful thing to me that at this most difficult time in his life, Jesus draws what comfort he can from his hymnbook, the book of Psalms. You might like to read through Psalm 22 later and marvel at how well it describes Jesus' situation. Before the cross, I find that I too turn to hymns. Stuart Townsend wrote (*SoF 780*):

How great the pain of searing loss – the Father turns his face away...

Something amazing is happening on the cross. God is overcoming evil with good; overcoming sin with righteousness; overcoming hatred with love; but it is costing him very dear. When Jesus dies, the curtain of the temple is torn in two from top to bottom; the traditional sign of Jewish mourning is the tearing of garments (*e.g. 2 Samuel 3 v 31*). We feel the grief in the Godhead.

What did Jesus accomplish for us by living our life and dying our death? Why the cross? We were unable to free ourselves from the power of sin, but God poured out his very self to save us. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury around 1000AD, puts it in a nutshell:

Christ freed us from our sins, and from his own wrath, and from hell, and from the power of the devil, whom he came to vanquish for us, because we were unable to do it, and he purchased for us the kingdom of heaven; and by doing all these things, he manifested the greatness of his love towards us.

I turn to another hymn, this time by Charles Wesley (*StF 345*):

Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

As I write, the coronavirus is raging and we are witnessing some very Christ-like actions from those on the front line. The victims cannot save themselves, but doctors and nurses are risking their own lives to bring healing and life. Those responsible for bringing food to our supermarkets; for selling it; the bin men collecting our rubbish; all risk catching the virus. Already we are hearing of deaths among those who strive so hard to bring comfort to the rest of us.

If we are beginning to chafe at the restrictions laid on us and at the small sacrifices we have had to make, perhaps this reflection will help put our problems into perspective. Let us give thanks this Good Friday for the wonderful example set by Christ and for the amazing love of God for us. I leave you with a line from Stainer's Crucifixion, 'The Appeal of the Crucified':

O come unto me - this awful price, redemption's tremendous sacrifice – is paid for you.

Hymn When I survey the wondrous cross (*Singing the Faith 287*) [YouTube](#)

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.
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. His dying crimson, like a robe,
spreads o'er his body on the tree;
then am I dead to all the globe,
and all the globe is dead to me.
5. 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.

Prayer of Thanksgiving & Intercession

Lord God, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for paying the great price for our redemption; may we live to praise your holy name.

We give thanks for those risking their own lives to help others; keep them safe.

We pray for the many families around the world mourning loved ones lost to the pandemic and sorrowing because they could not say a proper Goodbye; give them your peace.

We pray for those living in fear and for all who cannot protect themselves; put your loving arms around them.

We bring to you our neighbours, our friends and our families; keep them in your loving care.

We thank you for the many blessings showered upon us; for food, warmth and shelter; for internet, phone and TV, which help us stay in touch with one another through social isolation.

We thank you for our church and the love we find there; bless us through this time of separation and keep us in your love until we can worship together once more.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Blessing

Christ crucified draw us to himself, that we may find in him
a sure ground for faith
a firm support for hope
and the assurance of sins forgiven.

And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us today and always.

Acknowledgements

- 1 Carol Penner [for details click here](#)
- 2 John Birch [for details click here](#)

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