

*Common Worship in Separate Places
For the people of Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church
London, Ontario
and their friends*

*Good Friday
10:30 a.m.
10 April 2020*

To cross the threshold into worship, light a candle and keep a moment of silence.

Opening Words

L: He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

P: Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

L: Let us worship God.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

O God, holy and immortal, you revealed your inmost nature in the suffering love of your Son. We marvel at the truth that this was all for us, the lost, the lowest, and the least. As we gather at the foot of the cross and bow before the wounded Christ, inspire us to offer you our inmost selves with answering love. Let his wounds be our healing, his death our life, his shame our glory; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God forever.

O merciful One, we confess our affliction and sorrow. Forgive the wounds we inflict on each other and the harm we do to ourselves. Forgive the grief we cause you when we betray and deny you, when we misjudge and mock you, when we run with fear from your call and claim upon us. Forgive us when we know not the evil we do; and forgive us when we do know.

Lord, have mercy upon us;

Christ, have mercy upon us;

Lord, have mercy upon us.

O Lord Jesus Christ, on this holy day of your passion you stretched out your arms on the hard wood of the cross to draw the world into your saving embrace. Draw us to yourself now; subdue our wayward hearts and secure us to that eternal love you share with Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. *Amen*

An Assurance of Pardon

L: "If we have died with him, we will also live with him." May the almighty and merciful God put away our sin, grant us true pardon, and bring us to life everlasting.

P: May the peace of Christ be with us all.

Prayer for Illumination

O God, in the speaking of your Word, tell us what we need to hear and teach us how we ought to live; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

The Psalm for the Day

Psalm 22: 1-21 (*A heartfelt cry for deliverance from suffering and hatred.*)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy,

enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted;

they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved;

in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human;

scorned by others, and despised by the people.

All who see me mock at me;

they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

'Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver —
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'

Yet it was you who took me from the womb;

you kept me safe on my mother's breast.

On you I was cast from my birth,

and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

Do not be far from me,

for trouble is near

and there is no one to help.

Many bulls encircle me,

strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

they open wide their mouths at me,

like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water,
 and all my bones are out of joint;
 my heart is like wax;
 it is melted within my breast;
 my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
 and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
 you lay me in the dust of death.

For dogs are all around me;
 a company of evildoers encircles me.
 My hands and feet have shrivelled;
 I can count all my bones.
 They stare and gloat over me;
 they divide my clothes among themselves,
 and for my clothing they cast lots.

But you, O Lord, do not be far away!
 O my help, come quickly to my aid!
 Deliver my soul from the sword,
 my life from the power of the dog!
 Save me from the mouth of the lion!

(Said together) **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
 as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen**

The Gospel Reading for the Day

St Matthew 27: 27-50 *(The crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.)*

The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but

when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 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.

L: This is the Gospel of our Risen Christ

P: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Some thoughts on the Gospel Reading.

St Matthew 27:50 *"Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last."*

Jesus didn't cry aloud because his mission was unfinished, like a carpenter expiring on his half-built table. Jesus' death *is* the fruition of his whole life's calling. His work was complete. In that sense, his death is the kind we should all want to have; not its brutality, no, but the way it gathers up his life's purpose in purposeful consummation. "It is finished," he says (according to St John). "My life's work is complete."

That work was a hornet's nest of conflict. People who live so single-mindedly live at cross-purposes with the world. They won't 'stand down' or compromise. They'll die like fanatics for the very thing they live for. Jesus died, not of old age, but by a public execution ordered by a wealth-creating State. Judged a perfect failure, he was mocked and spat upon, disgraced in the world's eyes. He never owned a house, never excelled at business or a profession, and never won community awards. No big funeral,

no glowing eulogy – he didn’t even have RRSPs socked away. This is what comes of single-minded living.

To us this is folly. To die for what you live for? Why? For most of us, the purpose of living is just to keep on living. We put off death the way children put off bedtime. But doesn’t a feeling haunt us, hinting there should more to life than *just* avoiding death?

On the cross, God’s truth appeared as the victim of the world. Like the seamless garment he wore, Jesus’ life and death were made from whole cloth: the death he had to die was woven from the life he had to live. But God’s goodness, at work in Jesus, was misperceived by everyone on that first Good Friday. The soldiers were blinded by their orders (though a Centurion who saw Jesus die suddenly saw something more in him). Pilate was a spineless politician. He twisted like a weathervane in the winds of public opinion. Caiaphas was a religious cliché. He stood on tradition. The mob made Jesus their scapegoat. A criminal dying beside him taunted him. Judas betrayed him. Peter denied him. The rest just ran away. No one perceived how much they misperceived him. Shouldn’t that trouble us?

“Each man kills the thing he loves,” wrote Oscar Wilde. We kill the things we love but love the things that would destroy us. Twisted knots of desire choke us; mangled perceptions of reality entangle us. Yet God grants our tangled human nature a role in the drama of our own salvation.

What wondrous love is this? It’s the love of God appearing as the victim of our self-righteous misperceptions. And it’s voiced in the saddest utterance ever heard since world was made: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Who can hear this cry and not be brought up short, not want to repent? Learning Christian faith is learning *truly* to perceive that cry and discover it’s a doorway flung open, a portal into the very heart of God.

What, then, are *our* cries of sorrow and anguish but a doorway for God to enter our hearts too? Our cries begin the moment we’re born. We fill our lungs only to cry. Then come those cries of regret and sadness that punctuate everyone’s life; until, finally, comes *our* last cry, when *our* work is done, *our* life consummated, and we yield in death to the mystery of the love that is God’s life.

Prayers of Intercession

Holy One, you give us new life in Christ’s passage through death. In his name, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we offer prayers for the Church and the world.

We pray for the Church of Jesus Christ in this city of London, across the land, and throughout the world. Speed the day when, in the sanctuaries of your Church, your people shall regather to worship you in word and sacrament, with song and prayer. As we await that day’s coming, confirm your Church in faith, increase it in love, and preserve it in peace.

L: Lord in your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who suffer pain in body, mind, or spirit, and for those infected by the COVID-19 virus. As your Son Jesus Christ suffered pain and healed it in others, help them find their peace in him. In their misery and need, give them health and strength, show your mercy, and calm their fear.

L: Lord in your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are near death and fear death. Give them faith to place their hands in the hands once pierced with nails, but now stretched forth to meet and embrace them. We commit them into your care and keeping.

L: Lord in your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who stretch out their hands to help and heal others; for neighbours who watch over neighbours; for nurses and physicians who treat wounded bodies, and for social workers and counsellors who soothe wounded souls. We pray for those who clean messes and repair broken things; and for those who drive and deliver our goods.

L: Lord in your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people plunged into economic hardship, whose livelihoods are imperiled. Do not let their troubles multiply. Open our ears to the cries of people stripped of economic security, lest we support injustice to secure our own well-being at the cost of their impoverishment. Do not let governments rule without compassion, or rich hands grasp at profits they do not deserve. Help us fashion a just society, where all have what they need for fullness of life, and enough to spare for works of mercy.

L: Lord in your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.

We are grateful those we have known who have died, especially those who were dear to us. Remembering our love for them, we pray for patience with each other. Make us slow to anger and quick to forgive. Awaken us to the wonder of all living things, open our eyes and ears to the beauty of creation, and give us contentment with the life you have given us to live....*(keep a time of silence in God's presence)*....

L: Lord in your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.

Holy One, bring your saving work to completion within us, and bring all things to their perfection through him who made them, even Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and Holy Spirit, one God forever.

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

debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. *Amen*

Benediction

(Said together) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever. *Amen*