

Holy Week Tenebrae

Service of Shadows



This evening we are celebrating a medieval liturgy called the *Tenebrae*. *Tenebrae* is the Latin word for darkness or shadows and this service is a representation of the darkness that covered the world at the death of Jesus.

We will end this service in silence.

Opening Prayer

On this dark day, as the shadows deepen,

We come to be present with Jesus.

With the glory of Palm Sunday behind us and the victory of Easter not yet come,

We will sit together in this space with our breaking, our broken hearts.

In this world that is at once beautiful and holy and tragic,

We seek to be present with all who suffer.

In the dark valleys of life, when sorrow threatens to overwhelm,

We long for a safe and sacred space to sit with our grief and our questions.

Jesus Christ, holy friend,

we know that you are here with us.

Let us be here with you. Amen.

<https://spaciousfaith.com/2013/03/22/good-friday-worship/>

Silence

The Christ candle is lit.

Let us read together the words spoken to Jesus on this day:

Reading 1 – The soldier’s words. – Mark 15:16-32

The soldiers led Jesus inside the courtyard of the fortress and called together the rest of the troops. They put a purple robe on him, and on his head they placed a crown that they had made out of thorn branches. They made fun of Jesus and shouted, “Hey, you king of the Jews!” Then they beat him on the head with a stick. They spit on him and knelt down and pretended to worship him.

When the soldiers had finished making fun of Jesus, they took off the purple robe. They put his own clothes back on him and led him off to be nailed to a cross. Simon from Cyrene happened to be coming in from a farm, and they forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Reading 2 – Pilate’s words. John 19:7-22

“Kill him! Kill him!” they yelled. “Nail him to a cross!”

“So you want me to nail your king to a cross?” Pilate asked.

The chief priests replied, “The Emperor is our king!” Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be nailed to a cross.

Jesus was taken away, and he carried his cross to a place known as “The Skull.” In Aramaic this place is called “Golgotha.” There, Jesus was nailed to the cross, and on each side of him a man was also nailed to a cross.

Pilate ordered the charge against Jesus to be written on a board and put above the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” The words were written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The place where Jesus was taken wasn’t far from the city, and many of the Jewish people read the charge against him. So the chief priests went to Pilate and said, “Why did you write that he is King of the Jews? You should have written, ‘He claimed to be King of the Jews.’”

But Pilate told them, “What is written will not be changed! What I’ve written, I’ve written.”

Reading 3 – The Crowds’ words. Mark 15:25-32

It was about nine o’clock in the morning when they nailed him to the cross. On it was a sign that told why he was nailed there. It read, “This is the King of the Jews.” The soldiers also nailed two criminals on crosses, one to the right of Jesus and the other to his left.

People who passed by said terrible things about Jesus. They shook their heads and shouted, “Ha! So you’re the one who claimed you could tear down the temple and build it again in three days. Save yourself and come down from the cross!”

The chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses also made fun of Jesus. They said to each other, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself. If he is the Messiah, the king of Israel, let him

come down from the cross! Then we will see and believe.” The two criminals also said cruel things to Jesus.

Reading 4 – Mary’s words. John 19:25-27

Jesus’ mother stood beside his cross with her sister and Mary the wife of Clopas. Mary Magdalene was standing there too. When Jesus saw his mother and his favorite disciple with her, he said to his mother, “This man is now your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “She is now your mother.” From then on, that disciple took her into his own home.

Reading 5 – The thief’s words. Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals joined in the cruel talk: You’re supposed to be the Anointed One, right? Well—do it! Rescue Yourself and us!

But the other criminal told him to be quiet: Don’t you have any fear of God at all? You’re getting the same death sentence He is! We’re getting what we deserve since we’ve committed crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong at all! Turning to Jesus he said: Jesus, when You come into Your kingdom, please remember me.

Jesus answered: I promise you that this very day you will be with Me in paradise.

Reading 6 – The bystander’s words. Matthew 27:45-50

At noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until three o’clock. Then about that time Jesus shouted, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?”

Some of the people standing there heard Jesus and said, “He’s calling for Elijah.” One of them at once ran and grabbed a sponge. He soaked it in wine, then put it on a stick and held it up to Jesus.

Others said, “Wait! Let’s see if Elijah will come and save him.” Once again Jesus shouted, and then he died.

The Christ candle is extinguished.

Reading 7 – The soldiers words. Matthew 27:51-56

At once the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and rocks split apart. Graves opened, and many of God’s people were raised to life. Then after Jesus had risen to life, they came out of their graves and went into the holy city, where they were seen by many people.

The officer and the soldiers guarding Jesus felt the earthquake and saw everything else that happened. They were frightened and said, “This man really was God’s Son!” Many women had

come with Jesus from Galilee to be of help to him, and they were there, looking on at a distance. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John were some of these women.

Reading 8 – Joseph’s words. Matthew 27: 57-61

That evening a rich disciple named Joseph from the town of Arimathea went and asked for Jesus’ body. Pilate gave orders for it to be given to Joseph, who took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. Then Joseph put the body in his own tomb that had been cut into solid rock and had never been used. He rolled a big stone against the entrance to the tomb and went away. All this time Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb.

Silence

Closing Prayer and Benediction

God thank you for being with us in this wondering moment
where we stand poised between life and death,
filled to the brim with sorrow,
filled with thoughts of what has been
and what lies before us.
Thank you for the gift of life.
Thank you for our friend Jesus
who was a gift to the world,
a gift in each of our lives.
Comfort us even as we are shaken by the horror of these last hours.
Be our friend in this time of sorrow,
and sustain us in the days to come.
Now Jesus, may God bless you and keep you,
May the very face of God shine upon you, and be gracious to you,
May God’s presence embrace you and give you eternal peace.
Amen.

~ written by Carol Penner, in A Funeral for Jesus: Good Friday Service. Posted on Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre website.