



Good Friday

The Last Words
Friday 2nd April 2021

Online Worship for St Paul's URC
and South Croydon United Church

Opening Music – ‘O sacred head, surrounded’

sung by Ex Cathedra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9iTUtRj2zE>

*O sacred Head surrounded
By crown of piercing thorn!
O bleeding Head, so wounded,
Reviled and put to scorn!
The pow'r of death comes o'er you,
The glow of life decays,
Yet angel hosts adore you
And tremble as they gaze.*

Welcome

My friends, welcome back to the manse for our online worship on this Good Friday, during which we will be hearing and reflecting upon the last words and sentences of Christ.

Wherever we are, we meet as one-family, to worship.

We take this journey together – but we will leave abruptly, with no break-out rooms as we depart.

The Croydon 'Witness' youtube is available at 11am

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLt1wizx87s>

The darkness of this day, its despair and pain,
will dominate and should dominate.

But we are not alone – for God dwells with us,
and the Spirit settles into our hearts.

(silence)

Gathering Prayer

Jesus,

Today you drain to its very dregs the cup of suffering,

You lean forward into the abyss of the world's woes,

The beloved son prepares to be forsaken.

In this day of trouble, do not be far from us.

Man of peace, you know this world as well as us,

It still spins and human affairs continue,

when we prefer violence to suffering love,

In this day of trouble, do not be far from us.

Jesus whose closest friends desert you,

In this day of trouble, do not be far from us.

Jesus, you speak out in marketplaces as we shrink in shadows,

In this day of trouble, do not be far from us.

Forsaken, betrayed, lonely Saviour,

In this day of trouble, let us not be far from you. AMEN

'STAY HERE WHERE NAILS ARE DRIVEN'

Tune: 'Shrub End'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nh1D9L8y3HA>

*Stay here where nails are driven
hard through Love's tender hands;
for where Love's side is riven,
faith, pierced by grief, still stands.*

*This is where faith discovers
the length to which Love goes;
this is where grief uncovers
the deepest truth Love knows.*

*So wait, where pain and grieving
engulf complacency,
in earth's despair believing
the truth of Calvary.*

*Then see, through desolation,
how grief and joy are turned
to rise / exultation
because of Love's deep wound.*

Words © Alan Gaunt

*Merciful God,
As we remember how your son Jesus was brutally treated and
crucified,
For us,
As we reflect on his final words,
Bless our hearing.
Help us to wrestle with the mystery of your Love. Amen*

FIRST WORD:**Luke 23: 33-34****Tina**

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Meditation

"They do not know what they are doing"

They.

Who are "they"?

It is so easy to name others

to blame others

the Romans

the crowd

Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas

they all played their part and conspired against Jesus

or simply followed orders to maintain the peace

to keep Jesus' kingdom from infringing on theirs.

And yet where are we when Jesus' kingdom infringes on ours?

on our peace and our order?

on our prosperity and our security?

Where are we when the victims of our so called peace cry for justice?

when those disenfranchised by our order, call for compassion?

when the hungry and the lonely beg us to share our prosperity

our security

our power?

Where are we when Christ is crucified among us?

Surely, he should have raged at the sinners who nailed him to the tree.

Surely, he should have raged at us for the pain we cause,
the evil we do both knowing and unknowing.
Yet compassion is there in the first words that he utters.
And it is amazing to us.

When Miran Gomoh, mother of David, an NHS worker, murdered
days after his father died from covid, says 'I forgive you' to her
child's killers,
It is amazing - almost inconceivable to us.

Compassion cries out from the cross:

"Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing"

SECOND WORD: Luke 23: 39-43

Steve

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Meditation

We cannot comprehend his generosity

The other criminal is right, 'we should get what we deserve'

Dredged oceans

Uprooted forests

Chemicals on the land, plastic in the food-chain.

Young children, working fingers to the bone for our cheap clothes.

Wars so that we can sell more weapons.
Young and old with mental ill-health.
Selfies of our best self – to reduce those who we call 'less than'
Our racist attitudes
Our unwelcome to the different
We should get what we deserve.

But Jesus disagrees – and offers paradise.

'I CANNOT TELL' (vs. 1-2)

Sung by Matt Beckingham

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDXFTkhRuGg>

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon us, now or then,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary
when Beth'lem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted
and stays our sin and calms our lurking fear
and lifts the burden from the heavy laden;
for still the Saviour, Saviour of the world is here.

Words: William Young Fullerton

THIRD WORD: John 19: 25-27

Fran

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Meditation

Who can grasp the grief?

the grief of Mary watching her son suffer?

the grief of Mary watching him die?

And who can grasp the grief of the son?

The son who must see his mother mourn.

What grief we have borne this past year?

Who can grasp the grief of mothers, fathers, partners, friends and children, separated as their loved ones died.

How does a nation and a world grieve for such loss?

What gift does Jesus offer us, if not each other?

What gift can a man give his mother?

What can he offer when he is gone?

How can he help her?

Hold her?

Comfort her?

"Woman, here is your son"

Here is one I love, to love you, and for you to love.

One who knows me

One who is my brother and who can speak of me.

One Who can hold you, comfort you,

One who shares your grief

"Here is your mother"

Here is one I love, for you to love, and to love you.

The one who taught me,

the one who fed me,

the one who wiped away my tears

the one who hugged me,

the one who grieves with you.

What gift does Jesus offer us in our grief, if not each other?

FOURTH WORD: Mark 15: 33-34 from 'The Crucifixion' by John Stainer

There was darkness over all the earth.

And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying:

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

FIFTH WORD: John 19: 28

Lilla

*After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said
(in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.'*

Meditation

We've all said it.

'I'm thirsty'

But not in the same way.

There is a timelessness about hanging on a cross.

It's not a quiet death,

Over in an instant.

It is torture.

If you've hanged long enough to be thirsty,
Then you've been hanging a long time.

Jesus knows in his body, his people's needs.

All who thirst,

All who are close to death and reach for life-giving water

All whom poverty and drought,

all that reduces our lives and crucifies us.

SIXTH WORD: John 19: 29-30

Martin

A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So, they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.'

Meditation

Dare we suggest that this is relief.

It's done, it's over.

All that endless pain.

The ordeal is finished.

But he does not merely say, 'it's over'

He says 'it is accomplished, fulfilled, achieved'.

There must have been relief,

But victory also.

A job done.

The good news declared.

Look world, even in pain there is hope.

Prayers of Intercession

Lords' Prayer

Holy God

*on this dark day we bring before you the darkest places of our world,
and of our lives,*

*holding in our souls the knowledge that even in those darkest places,
the cross is ever present in the place of pain;*

sharing pain

carrying pain

transform pain into healing.

We bring before you the dark places in our world.

The places of war and violence...

The places of illness, pandemic and poor health-care

The places of hopelessness (refugee camps, loneliness, on streets)

We bring your cross to these dark places.

We pray for those who live in the darkness of pain and suffering...

Those who grieve,

Whose minds are in turmoil

Who suffer broken relationships

We bring your cross to these dark places.

We pray for those who have died,

those for whom your cross has been a stepping stone to new life.

Those who barely live

Those who would rather die

We bring your cross to these dark places.

O light of God, you stand with us in all we face,

Even the cross.

Let us say together the prayer that gave strength to Jesus:

SEVENTH WORD: Luke 23: 46 from 'The Crucifixion' by John Stainer

*After this, he said,
'It is finished. Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.'
Then he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.*

There is nothing more to be said, surely.
Why would he choose to speak so close to the end?
Why muster the last energy to cry out?
Couldn't God hear his thoughts?

Unless it is us who need to hear,
his final hope and faith.
That God accepts him home,
with arms outstretched and hands ready in welcome.
We need to hear.
This year, of all years, we need to know his faith,
and to put our trust in the same God.

If he could do it in death, we can do it in life.
'Into your hands, I commit my spirit.'

'WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS'

sung by St Michael's Singers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MF9tVfTMXs>

*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.*

*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.*

*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?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Words: Isaac Watts

Blessing

We go in peace
To face the dark
In hope of the light. AMEN

Closing Music – ‘Bach (again) - Come Sweet death’

by Edwin London

Performed by Eric Whitacre & Rezonans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8wWEG1ZsfM>

*Come, sweet death, come, blessed rest!
Come lead me to peace
because I am weary of the world,
O come! I wait for you,
come soon and lead me,
close my eyes.
Come, blessed rest!*

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