

ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Good Friday: A Service of Lessons and Song

> March 29, 2024 6:30 pm

Welcome to St. James's!

We're glad that you have joined us today to enjoy the blessings of worship and to participate with us in God's mission in the world of justice and love.

However you come to this place, exhausted or energized by life, comfortable with church or not, gay or straight, trans, nonbinary, cisfemale or cismale; of color or white, neurodivergent or neurotypical, persons with or without disabilities, younger or older! Whoever you are,

know the people of St. James's strive to love and welcome you as God does, unconditionally and completely just as you are!

6:30 pm A Service of Lessons and Song with Veneration of the Cross

Acolyte Marian King
Minister of Music Patrick Michaels

Officiant The Rev. Matthew Stewart

Readers Yvette Verdieu, John Hixson, Jeff Zinsmeyer, Thomas DeFreitas

Usher Nancy McArdle

Videographer Steve Clark

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Opening Sentences

Officiant In stillness nailed,

To hold all time, all change All circumstance in and

to Love's embrace. (Poem found in an English convent)

Please kneel as you are able for a time of silence.



Words: Walter Russell Bowie (1882-1969), alt. Music: Mit Freuden zart, 1529

First Reading: The Crucifixion

Yvette Verdieu

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

Then the soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him,

they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

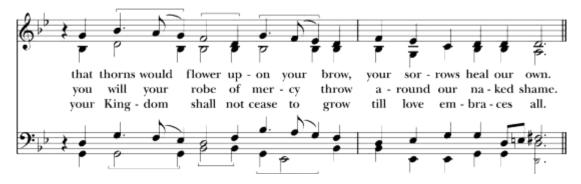
It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.

(Mark 15:16-25)

Hymn: To Mock Your Reign

H 170





Words: F. Pratt Green (b. 1903), alt.

Music: The Third Tune, Thomas Tallis (1505?-1585); ed. John Wilson (b. 1905)

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Second Reading: The Cross and Non-Violence

Yvette Verdieu

What we have in the crucifixion is God saying: 'I will come into the midst of your game – I will enter that place of shame, of agony; the place where you cast out other people; the place which the accuser has set up (the accuser being the whisperer behind the lynch) – and I will undo his power by showing that it's the innocent one that you have killed...What does my love look like? My love looks like my stepping into that place so as to get you out of this bloody scratched disc going round and round and playing the same bloody game.' This is not a non-violent understanding of the crucifixion. You couldn't have a non-violent understanding of the crucifixion. But it's an understanding of the crucifixion which attributes no violence to God. (James Alison)

Hymn: Jesus' Death was not God's Need



WORDS and MUSIC: Daniel Charles Damon LOVE'S NEED Words and Music © 1993 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. 7.5.7.5.D.

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

A great number of the people followed Jesus, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?' (*Luke* 23:27-31)

Hymn: Sometimes Our Only Song Is Weeping







Text: Adam M. L. Tice, 2014 @ GIA Publications Music: Patrick Michaels, 2021 @2023 Selah Publishing Co., Inc OneLicense.net License #A-700155

Fourth Reading: The Cross and the Queer

John Hixson, Jeff Zinsmeyer

So, three years ago, I decided to give up something for Lent. I gave up, once and for all, any notion of atonement that involves Jesus dying for our sins. I suppose I'd been flirting with this break for fifteen years before that, but it's hard to let go of a notion that seems as Christian as apple pie is American. It's all I ever learned about the cross. Why else would Jesus have died?

Well, I'll tell you, he was killed because he was queer.

As GLBT persons have reclaimed the word "queer"—in a move not unlike Christians reclaiming the image of the cross—they have turned the word into a positive point of identity. Literally, "to queer" something is to foul it up. And increasingly GLBT persons have decided that when the system of heterosexism is so unjust to so many it needs to be fouled up; it needs to be queered. In its widest sense, "queer" has even been unhinged from sexual orientation. It has become

the name for anyone who consciously chooses to resist the forces of injustice on every front possible and to ally themselves with those who are falling—and getting pushed—through the cracks of society.

Now take a good careful look at Jesus. Forget for a moment that "he came to Earth to die for our sins." Look at his life. He talks to women in a society where that was off limits (he even allows himself to be reproved by the Syro-Phoenician woman). He blesses children in a world where they were little more than the labor force in waiting. He feasts with tax collectors and other socio-religious outcasts. He praises Samaritans. He breaks taboos over who to eat with, who to talk to, and who to touch. He tells stories again and again that turn things upside down. Jesus' entire ministry is one long conscious choice to resist the forces of injustice on every front possible and to ally himself with those who are falling—and getting pushed—through the cracks of society. Jesus is queer.

And as all of you must surely know, when you're queer, you don't need any sort of divine destiny in order to face the threat of an untimely death. Society—in all its religious, social, political, and economic expressions—will all too happily grind you up.

Jesus died not because God required his death to liberate me (or you) from sin but because the powers that be in this world required his death in order to keep me (and you) in check. The cross... and the lyncher's rope, the assassin's bullet, the basher's baseball bat, and the jail cell... all of these represent the world's attempts to keep power in hands other than God's.

In fact, perhaps the most effective attempt of all has been to lure us into understanding the cross as God's will. Then we are tempted to invest ourselves in honoring Jesus' death rather than in emulating his life. Atonement does not hinge on the violence present in Jesus' death. It hinges on the hospitality present in his life—and that's where our attention belongs, even, and especially, during Lent.

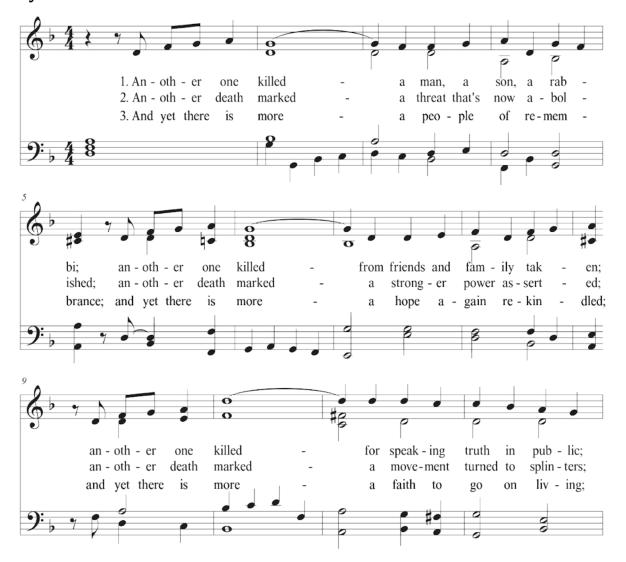
Yes, the cross is real. It is the loud, painful, shattering "No!" that the world shouts again and again to the unconditional welcome that God offers to all persons. And for this reason, the cross and the queer have a long history. But the cross doesn't have the last word. The queer does. (*David R. Weiss*)

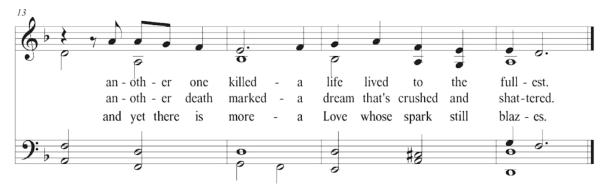


Words: Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) and tr. Robert Seymore Bridges (1874-1930) Music: Herzlich tu mich verlangen, Hans Hassler, adapt. Johann S. Bach (1685-1750) A reading from the Gospel according to John.

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. (*John* 19:25-27)

Hymn: Another One Killed





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Sixth Reading: The Cross and the Earth

John Hixson, Jeff Zinsmeyer

Good Friday is the one day in the Christian year when death is given its due. Most Christians avoid it, politely stepping around all that messy crucifixion business and going straight for the Easter party. Some years I avoided it, too. But this year more than ever I needed to cast my lot with the dying, for it felt like we would be living with death for a long time to come...

I had been listening to Leonard Cohen's final album You Want It Darker. The title track lyrics evoke the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead.

Magnified, sanctified, be thy holy name Vilified, crucified, in the human frame A million candles burning for the help that never came You want it darker, we kill the flame.

If I could give a name to the anxiety I experienced then it would be the fear that we are killing the flame. The utter inability of our political institutions to prevent or even slow the catastrophe of climate change is now on full display. I'm no apocalypticist. Entropy is inherent to our universe; stars and solar systems and planets disassemble and assume new forms. It is the speed of the destruction, and the human agency behind it, that nearly overwhelms me with grief....

Good Friday is a day when Christians reflect on our own sin and complicity. But that word "sin" carries a strong whiff of judgment. British novelist Francis Spufford suggests a better name for this condition: "The Human Propensity to Mess Things Up." The HPtMTU is a great equalizer. It cuts across religious, socio-economic, and cultural boundaries. And it's not just individual faults that

are the problem; we mess things up: species and ecosystems, ice sheets and atmospheres.

Given our innate HPtMTU, it often feels as if we can never do enough to stop the hemorrhaging of life. I wonder how much of climate activism comes from deep feelings of guilt and fear and grief over our individual and collective HPtMTU. Those of us with half a conscience are hounded by the voice in our head telling us there is always more we can do, and so we fling ourselves headlong into further actions and denunciations, hoping it will all add up to something effective while we ignore the mounting guilt. We then grow apathetic, because such a cycle is ultimately exhausting.

From seventh-century Nineveh, in what is now Iraq, Saint Isaac of Syria wrote: "An elder was once asked, 'What is a compassionate heart?' He replied: 'It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons and for all that exists.""

Christianity will truly come into its own, I believe, when it fully embraces that path to compassion, when it refuses to look away from the ecological Good Friday we are inflicting on the world. Only then will our actions, humbled and chastened, flow from compassion rather than from guilt. This requires a shift in vision, a redirecting of our gaze back to the One who loved the world into being and who sustains its every breath. (*Fred Bahnson*)

Hymn: O Earth, We Hear your Cries of Pain



Words: Jann Aldredge-Clanton @ 2012 Music: ENDLESS SONG Robert Lowry One license.net License #A-700155

Seventh Reading: The Cross and the Thief

Jeff Zinsmeyer

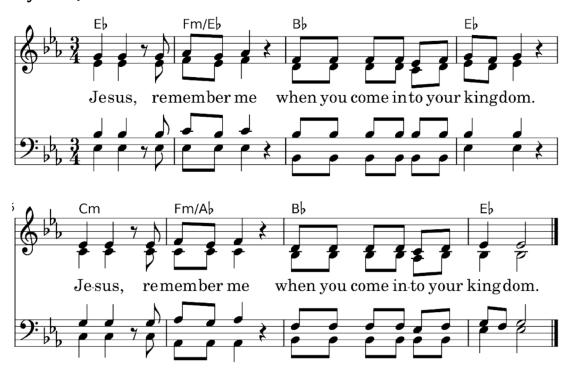
A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

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.' (*Luke* 23:39-43)

Hymn: Jesus, Remember Me

Taize chant



Text: Luke 23:42. Taize' Community Music: REMEMBER ME, Jacques Berthier (1923-1994) Used with permission from GIA publications.

In Jesus' first century Roman world crucifixion was reserved for slaves, enemy soldiers and those held in the highest contempt and with lowest regard in society. To be crucified was, for the most part, an indication of how worthless and devalued by established power an individual was. It also indicated how much of a threat that person was believed to be to the order of things. There was a decided crucified class of people. These were essentially the castigated and demonized as well as the ones who defied the status quo of power. It is in this respect that I believe Jesus' crucifixion affirms his identification with the marginalized and outcasts. Indeed, on the cross Jesus fully divests himself of all pretensions to power and anything that would compromise his bond with those

most othered in the world. The reality of the cross further affirms the profundity of God's bond with put-upon bodies...

At the same time, the cross represents the height of human wickedness. It is in this regard that the impotence of human evil, that is divisive and destructive power—that which would destroy bodies, is revealed. This is revealed in several ways. First, Jesus takes on all of this evil, yet he is not destroyed by it. The first indication that evil has no power over Jesus is seen in his response to the jeering and taunts he receives from the crowd throughout his crucifixion. As he is spat upon and ridiculed for not being able to save himself, Jesus does not respond in kind, neither does he try to prove himself by conforming to the demands of the people to come down from the cross. Most striking is the fact that he does not condemn the crucifying crowd. Instead, he asks for their forgiveness. Essentially, Jesus refuses to allow evil to destroy who he is and thus to become somebody that he is not. He does not succumb to narratives outside of himself, namely narratives of power. Most importantly, he does not allow them to compromise his bond with the powerless and oppressed. At this point it is beginning to become clear that divisive and destructive human power at its height is impotent in relationship to the power found in the intersect of divine and human realities. This was the power of Jesus, and this was the power of the cross.

In the end, the cross shows that evil at its mightiest simply cannot prevail against the power found in the intersect of divine and human goodness that is Jesus. Ironically, the power that attempts to destroy Jesus on the cross is itself destroyed by the cross.

There is a final irony in the fact of Jesus crucifixion. That Jesus had to be crucified actually reveals his power. If he were not a threat to the dominating political and religious forces of the day, then they would have summarily dismissed him. That he was a threat, that he was powerful meant that they had to crucify him. Thus, that which is to be a sign of Jesus' weakness—the crucifixion—actually reveals his power. In this sense, Jesus' words, "Forgive them Lord, for they know not what they are doing," takes on a new layer of meaning. They mock at the pretensions of power. On the cross God has used the weak to confound the power of the strong. (*Kelly Brown Douglas*)





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Ninth Reading: Jesus Gives Up His Spirit

Thomas DeFreitas

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. (*Mark 15:34-37*)

A time of silence is now kept.

The Veneration of the Cross and Stripping of the Altar

As a wooden cross is brought into the church by its bearers we stand and the choir sings the anthem.

Following the anthem, all are invited to express their devotions before the cross as they feel called, kneeling, sitting, lying, touching the cross.

As the cross is venerated, the Altar Guild reverently strips the altar, also a ritual remembrance of the death of Jesus.

Anthem: At the Feet o' Jesus Text: Langston Hughes Music: Jodi Mikalachki *The Adult Choir; Sadie Piatt, soprano*

Reflection Hymns: God Weeps



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Reflection Hymn: You laid aside your rightful reputation



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Prayers for Good Friday

Dear People of God: Our heavenly Creator sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; that all who believe in him might be delivered from the power of sin and death, and become heirs of everlasting life.

We pray, therefore, for people everywhere according to their needs.

In silence, all now offer prayers for the world and those in need.

The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

The Officiant then says

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy and, as you have bound yourself to us in love, leave us not who call upon your name, but grant us your salvation, made known in the cross of Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**



- They pierced Him in the side.
- The blood came streamin' down.
- 5. He hung His head and died.

Words: Traditional Music: Negro Spiritual; arr. Carl Haywood (b. 1949) from The Haywood Collection of Negro Spiritualists, Copyright @1992

Postlude

Saint James's Episcopal Church 1991 Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge, MA 02140 Website: www.stjamescambridge.org

Office Email: office@stjamescambridge.org Emergency Pastoral Line: 857-600-1329

Interested in speaking to a priest or asking for prayers? Email Rev. Matt at matt@stjamescambridge.org

Want to donate to St. James's? Visit the website or follow the QR code here:



Announcements

Holy Week Services

March 30 at 7:30 pm - Jazz Easter Vigil with Lighting of the New Fire March 31 at 10:30 am - Festive Easter Eucharist followed by Easter Egg Hunt

St. James's Episcopal Church Welcomes You!
I am: visiting just for today. I wish: to be on the church mailing list.
seeking a new church home to receive a call or email from St. James's.
to receive a can or email from our junies s.
Please circle items below you'd like information about:
Church School/Choir/Bible Study/Food Pantry
I'd like prayer for:
Name(s):
Address:
City: Zip:
Phone:
Email address:
Please fill this form out and place it in the offering plate or the church office.