

Straight from the "Hart"

Worship Service from April 2, 2021

Good Friday 7 pm



Welcome and Introduction Welcome to our Good Friday evening worship service. I'm glad you joined us for this important day in the life of the church and holy week. Tonight, through candles, readings, and music we will try to re-experience certainly not all, but some of the events on holy week. As you listen to the candle readings representing the loss of light in our world, as you hear the abridged Bible readings, and as you sing, imagine the imagery that is being placed before you, put yourself into the story as if you were there experiencing it as it were happening.

Throughout Lent we have been looking at Jesus as he fulfills his mission to bring wholeness to the broken and healing to the hurting, and he calls us, even as we are receiving his restoration, to offer and bring his healing to each other and beyond. And our motivation is seeing the great lengths to which Jesus went for us. It isn't about what great works we can do, but what he has done and what we commit to allow him do through us. So let's begin this night by singing *When I Survey*.

Music *When I Survey*

Call to Worship

We have been traveling on a journey with Jesus, who has been offering hope to so many people through his teaching, healing, touching, and transforming lives for three years. He lived what he taught. No one was outside of his boundaries of compassion. As a result, he became popular among the ordinary people, and especially among people who were considered "less than normal", the broken the despised and the rejected. He never considered anyone unvalued, only unique.

We've been talking about how their social system had broken so many people, to the point where God's presence was hard to see in the midst of difficult circumstances. It is why the Christ candle was present but unlit throughout our series. But tonight it is lit because of the recognition received by the people through Palm Sunday -- people were beginning to see him, people who were hoping for a new society; for the systems under which they lived made their world difficult.

Lenten Candles

Candle 1) We heard about the fragility of life. James reminds us that “we don’t even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” (James 4:14). We extinguish this first candle [Put out candle 1] because for so many people, life, and quality of life, has become a challenge, and there is an inability to give life.

Candle 2) We heard about the scarcity of life. When Job lost everything, he said “Sighing has become my daily food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have nor rest, but only turmoil” (Job 3:24-26) We extinguish this second candle [Put out candle 2] because so many people have lost the ability to provide for their families and themselves, and there is an inability to share.



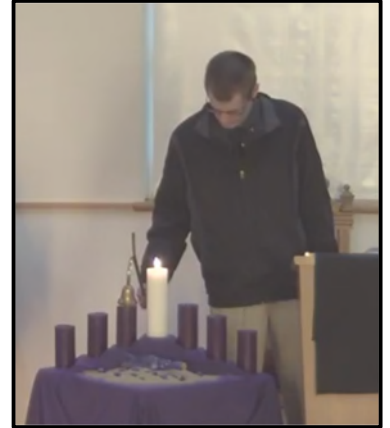
Candle 3) We heard about the barriers of life. Paul warns about people “who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way... for such people serve their own appetites... by smooth talk and flattery [in order to] deceive the minds of naive people.” (From Romans 16:17-18) We extinguish this third candle [Put out candle 3] because so many people have excluded from constantly closing ranks around increasingly narrow points of view, and there is an inability to understand.

Candle 4) We heard about the entropy (the wearing down, wearing out and giving up) of life. Ecclesiastes says, “my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it [and they may handle it foolishly (19a)]. All their work is grief and pain, even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless... all things are wearisome... there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:20, 1:8a,9c) We extinguish this fourth candle [Put out candle 4] because so many people have lost their incentive to proactively take on life, and there is a lack of creativity.

Candle 5) We heard about the erosion of life. Sometimes, in the name of the God-granted “dominion” over the earth people damage the environment at a rate faster than it can repair itself rather than treating dominion as stewardship -- of care-filled management. Paul writes, “...creation waits in eager expectation for the children

of God... in hope that ~~the~~ creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay..." (From Romans 8:19-21) We extinguish this fifth candle [Put out candle 5] because many people are adversely affected by their environment, and there is a lack of safety.

Candle 6) We heard about the disunity of life. Titus read from Paul, his mentor, "there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception... [always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons] disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach, and that for the sake of dishonest gain... [and those under their influence] foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures, ... [living] in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." -- (From Titus 1:10-12, 3:3) We extinguish this sixth candle [Put out candle 6] because many people are caught in the divides of opinions about what is true, and there is no more support.



Comment

And speaking of divisions, even on Palm Sunday, we are aware that not everyone was excited about Jesus entering Jerusalem as the light of the world. For he challenged the powerful people who shaped their society, the ones who had set up the norms and diligently worked to maintain the peace by the enforcement of what they considered "appropriate boundaries".

They were threatened by Jesus' words and actions which demonstrated their system that worked so well for them did not work so well for others. Nor did these first and foremost in society like Jesus' prediction that the last shall be first and the first last. They began to plot to restore their particular perception of peace by starting up the machinations of their unjust, unholy, unfair systems to remove this problem -- Jesus.

We've come to this place tonight because we recognize just how committed people of the world can become to preserving its own ways -- and without its right hand knowing what its left is doing -- how deep a price it exacts from those who would follow the values of another kingdom. We've come to this place to contemplate what is beyond words, what is beyond all our earthly understanding. May the Holy Spirit intercede for us what is incomprehensible -- and inexpressible.

In this Lenten journey of recovery, we confess our own complicity in the brokenness of the world, by our actions or lack of actions. We confess our own

need to restore, repair, and renew our Holy Vessels so that we might be able to create and imagine new possibilities, new solutions, for the healing that is required to make the world more just, more whole.

Let's pray. God of Suffering, You take no delight in the destruction of your creation, of your people. We confess that times our own broken edges, sharp and raw, may sometimes contribute to the pain of others. We cannot manage it on our own, yet we try, forgetting to turn to you, forgetting to turn to each other, forgetting the power you offer, the call on our hearts, to transform tears to balm, and brokenness into new realities of justice and hope. It can feel overwhelming, and fearful when we see what "the system" did to Jesus when he challenged it.

Help us healer. Forgive our disbelief. Show us our connection to your healing power. Inspire us to move one step at a time toward greater care for one another. In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness and our desire to unite in service to you and to each other and beyond to others.

SILENCE

Music (vv 1,2,4) *Together We Serve*

Love is the strength of our song to the last and the least. Tonight we open our service by a demonstration of love that happened not on Friday, but on the previous Wednesday.

Bible Reading Matthew 26: 6-13 Jesus is Anointed

(R1 = Reader 1, R2 = Reader 2)

R1: Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table.

R2: But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor."

R1: But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Comment

In those days, oil was used in many ways. Mixed with various herbs, it was used as healing balms. It was also used as a skin softener, an odor-reducer in cleansing practices, and also used for many rituals such as anointing leaders (esp. kings). Many symbols during holy week point to the sovereignty (the supreme, independent authority) of Jesus, including this brief but powerful incident carried out (in Matthew's version) by an unnamed woman who offered an extravagant action of devotion and love and declared his supreme authority over all things.

Surprisingly, those who loved Jesus most were the ones who responded with anger. Are we like the first disciples, in danger of withholding our resources of extravagant love? Do we recognize the amazing love that we received from Jesus that demands our soul, our life, our all (as we sang earlier)? Do we hesitate to bring healing and wholeness even as we proclaim to be disciples of the one who is Love itself?

The disciples were, in their minds, justifiably angered by the alleged waste of giving resources; so they must have been shocked when Jesus not only defended her actions, but even more when he reminded them of another use of oil on the body -- embalming. They hadn't yet grasped that he was going to Jerusalem to die.

As we sing this next song, think about who has poured extravagant love into your life, and feel that care. And think about the what love Jesus poured into you and into me -- enduring the shame of a cross so that we could be forgiven, cleansed through and through (sanctified is the word sometimes used) and from the guilt and power of sin, so that everything we lay all our accomplishments at his feet and he will crown us with the victory over sin and with his glorious presence someday.

Music (vv 1,3) *The Old Rugged Cross*

Now we leap forward a day. The Thursday night supper is over, which concluded with hymn.

Bible Reading Matthew 26: 30-35 Predictions

(R1 = Reader 1, R2 = Reader 2, **C = Congregation**)

R1: When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

R2: Peter said to him, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you."

R1: Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times."

R2: Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you."

R1: And so said all the disciples.

R1: So Congregation, you are "all the disciples", so let's repeat with Ben after me. I will never desert you.

R2+C: I will never desert you

R1: I will never deny you. **R2+C: I will never deny you.**

R1: I will never desert you. **R2 +C: I will never desert you.**

R1: I will never deny you. **R2+C: I will never deny you.**

Now let's sing what we just said, Are Ye Able?

Music (vv 1,4) *Are Ye Able?*

Now let's sing this next song which leads us into the next text.

Music (v 1) *Go to Dark Gethsemane*

Now we move to the garden. When the struggle is on, watch Jesus pray in the garden as our example when our struggles are on...

Bible Reading *Matthew 26: 36-41 Jesus Prays in Gethsemane*

R1: Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

R2: He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.

R1: Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

R2: Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping;

R1: and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial;

R2: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

R1: [This happened two more times, then he told them,] Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

R2: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.” At once he came up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

R1: Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you are here to do.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him....

R2: Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Now we sing the next part of that story...

Music (v 2) Go to Dark Gethsemane

Bible Reading Matthew 26:57-68 Jesus before the High Priest

R1: Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered.

R2: Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.

R1: At last two came forward and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”

R2: The high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?”

R1: But Jesus was silent.

R2: Then the high priest said to him, “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

R1: Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

R2: Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?”

R1: They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?" **[Pause]**

Bible Reading Matthew 27:1-31 Jesus Brought before the State

R2: When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

R1: Now Jesus stood before the governor.

R2: and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

R1: Jesus said, "You say so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.

R2: Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?"

R1: But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesu Barabbas... Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"

R2: And they said, "Barabbas."

R1: Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

R2: All of them said, "Let him be crucified!"

R1: Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?"

R2: But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

R1: So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

R2: Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

R1: Then 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.

Let's now sing about what we just read.

Music (vv 1,2,3) *To Mock Your Reign*

Bible Reading Matthew 27:35-31 Jesus on the Cross

R2: 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."

R1: 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, "... 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,

R2: "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.

R1: From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ... Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split...

R2: Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

Music (v 3) *Go to Dark Gethsemane*

Comment

All during Lent we have remembered the healing acts of Jesus, the radical nature of the boundaries he crossed in order to restore wholeness—the desire of God that transcends all things we do to stand in the way, including the death of kindness, love, and compassion. God overcame all of that. You received nails with your Lent Kit. If you haven't added them to your display, when you get home, do so, tonight. If you had already had them in, arrange them in a more prominent place for these next couple days. The nails, doing their work, the darkness descended and deepened on the world. [Extinguish the Christ Candle]



A song has these words:

We lay our broken world in sorrow at your feet,
 Haunted by hunger, war and fear,
 oppressed by power and hate.

Where human life seems less than profit, might and pride,
 though to unite us all in you, you lived and loved and died.

One last scene to close out that Friday and Saturday --

Bible Reading Matthew 27:55-61 The Burial of Jesus

R2: Many women were also there [at Jesus' cross], looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him.

R1: Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus.

R2: He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

R1: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. The next day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three

days I will rise again. 'Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead, 'and the last deception would be worse than the first.'

R2: Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Comment

One of the most significant ingredients in all the purposes of anointing: healing, cosmetic, and ritual. It was among the gifts at the birth of Jesus and was no doubt present in the preparation of his body after death. Myrrh was a treasured element of sap from the life of trees. It provided healing properties for a myriad of afflictions, was used in ritual anointing of leaders, and in purification. It was likely more costly than the other birth gifts of gold and frankincense put together.

And so we are inspired by the connection of healing and death through the common use of myrrh in the story of Jesus. In this Good Friday moment, are there things that need to die within us to make room for the resurrection of something new in our lives? Are there things we can lovingly lay to rest that are no longer needed, indeed that may stand in the way of our recovery of wholeness? What can you let go of in this moment – old hurts and disappointments of the past that need forgiveness? Perhaps God has already forgiven but you cannot forgive yourself? Think about these things and ponder the cross, what he had done for us and see if God may enlighten us to certain things that may relieve and roll away our heart's burdens and find some happiness.

Music (vv 1,2,3,5) *Alas and Did My Savior Bleed*

Prayer

Almighty God, Kahlil Givran wrote that "Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars." Fitting words to describe your Son, Jesus Christ.

The debate of the blame game of who is responsible for those scars, of who accomplished Christ's death never ends – as if a definitive answer of someone to point at accomplishes anything. One songwriter wisely put it -- after describing himself as a living witness to the unbearable and unjust agony of the passion, the crown of thorns, the whips, the nails that hung you on that tree, and as his anger

and horror rose within, he could no longer watch, he had to turn away, and that is then that he noticed -- he saw the hammer in his own hand.

It was not about any group or person that did this to you, Jesus, it is our own sin, and the sin of humanity as a whole that did this – it is our own individual and collective guilt of sinful acts and sinful nature that put you on that cross, but even more – it wasn't that we forced you there, we can't force you, Supreme Lord of all authority, to do anything. But that you willingly went and gave yourself to this task – to take not only the physical pain of what was done to your body, but also the punishment for the guilt of all our sin, such is your great love for us.

As Hemingway put it "The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places." This world has fallen so far and crushes everyone who touches it. When strength happens, it is because you, the great healer, who was willingly broken for us, comes in grace and love to pick up the pieces of our brokenness and put us back together again.

Blessing Therefore, we go in silence but not in despair. May the words of Jesus ring in your ears: *“you will see the Son of Man ... coming.”* and *“[You have] performed a good service for me”* May the Spirit hover, move, and deliver salve to your soul until we meet again on the Day of Resurrection. **Amen.**