

Straight from the "Hart"

March 29, 2024 Good Friday

Special Installment



HARTLAND

Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in worship through this service script.

Welcome — Opening Prayer

Good evening. Welcome to Good Friday 2024 as we observe sacred events in the life of Jesus. Let's pray. Now Lord as we sing the music, pray the prayers, hear the story --- may you transport us into the life of these events; so that as we live through it, our life may be forever changed. Amen.

Responsive Call to Worship (P – Pastor, C - Congregation)

The Call to Worship comes from Isaiah who predicts and summarizes the events that bring us to this service tonight.

P: The Messiah grew up before God like a tender shoot in dry ground. (He was vulnerable). His appearance -- did not attract us.

C: He was despised. We did not value him.

P: But in fact, it was our diseases he bore and our pains from which he suffered.

C: Yet we regarded him as punished, stricken and afflicted by God.

P: But he was wounded for *our* crimes, crushed by *our* sins.

C: The disciplining that makes us whole fell on him. By his bruises we are healed.

P: Like sheep, we all went astray; each of us turning to our own way.

C: yet it was on *him* that the LORD laid our guilt.

P: Like a sheep before its shearers or a lamb led to be slaughtered,

C: he silently submitted to mistreatment.

P: After forcible arrest and sentencing, he was taken away.

C: No one protested against him losing his life for the punishment they themselves deserved.

P: Yet after this ordeal, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. God will assign him a share with the great because he poured out his life to death.

C: He was counted among the sinners while actually bearing the sin of many and interceding for the offenders. Inspired by Isaiah 53:1-12 (CJB, NIV)

Music And sure enough, when Jesus arrived all of this came true. Our first song speaks to the taunting primarily of the Roman soldiers, but it represents all who rejected him in that day -- and this. Let's sing together...



To Mock Your Reign, O Dearest Lord

Words: Fred Pratt Green, 1972

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Music: English melody; arr. by Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

To mock your reign, O dearest Lord, they made a crown of thorns;
set you with taunts along that road from which no one returns.
They could not know, as we do now, how glorious is that crown;
That thorns would flower upon your brow, your sorrows heal our own.

In mock acclaim, O gracious Lord, they snatched a purple cloak;
your passion turned, for all they cared, into a soldiers joke.
They could not know, as we do now, that though we merit blame,
you will your robe of mercy throw around our naked shame.

A sceptered reed, O patient Lord, they thrust into your hand,
and acted out their grim charade to its appointed end.
They could not know, as we do now, though empires rise and fall,
your kingdom shall not cease to grow till love embraces all.

Responsive Reading 1 (P – Pastor, C - Congregation)

Jesus talked about the love of God's kingdom on Thursday night. Since we didn't have a service last night, we will touch on it now in the first part of tonight's worship. Let's begin with a reading on love and its supreme example we see in Jesus, for that was one of Jesus' main emphases on Thursday.

P: See what love the Father has lavished on us in letting us be called God's children! For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning:

C: -- that we should love each other.

P: We, for our part, know that we have passed from death to life because we keep loving each other. The person who fails to keep on loving is still under the power of death. The way that we have come to know love is through his having laid down his life for us.

C: And we ought to lay down our lives for one another!

P: If someone has worldly possessions and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how can he be loving God? Children, let us love not with words and talk, but with actions and in reality! [For] this is his command: that we are to trust in the person and power of his Son Jesus and to keep loving one another, just as he commanded us. Beloved friends,

C: Let us love one another because love is from God.

P: Here is how God showed his love among us: God sent his only Son into the world, so that through him we might have life. Here is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved friends, if this is how God loved us, we likewise ought to love one another...

C: If we love one another, God remains united with us, and his love is made complete in us. (from selections from 1 John 3:1-18, 4:7-12 (primarily CJB))

Music: We are to love with practical actions in the real world. But some are tempted to display the actions without love. Paul, (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) and the next song reminds us that the actions are to be motivated by sincere love.

408 The Gift of Love

Words: Hal Hopson, 1972

Music: Trad. English melody; adapt. by Hal Hopson, 1972

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1 Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love, my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

2 Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess,
but not be given by love within, the profit soon turns strangely thin.

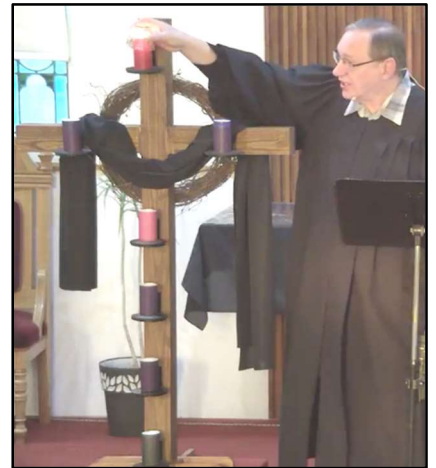
3 Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed; by this we worship, and are freed.

Lenten Cross Candles

This Lent we have been talking about the many challenges that we face to love as we truly ought. We aren't adding a new candle tonight, but we let's review them. It

is our inability to do these in our own strength, among other things, that put Jesus on the cross...

- * We extinguished the "**Ashen Return**" Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to heed God's message to us each day so that we can stay on the course he has for us. (put out bottom candle).
- * We extinguished the "**Resist**" Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to resist temptation. (put out the next candle).
- * We extinguished the "**Resolve**" Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to persist when life offers resistance and discouraging setbacks come our way. (put out next candle).
- * We extinguished the "**Repent**" Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to turn away from negative patterns that hinder us from positive habits.
- * We extinguished the pink "**Laetare Reconcile**" candle, (put out candle) recognizing how challenging it is to even desire, -- and seek to find wholeness in strained, and even dysfunctional, relationships.
- * We extinguished the "**Renew**" candle, recognizing how challenging it is to keep putting fresh energy into something that we are not designed nor called to become.
- * We extinguished the Palm-Passion "**Reset**" candle recognizing how challenging it is to repair damage and start fresh again.



Music: Christ showed us how to love — our Lenten candles have shown us how difficult it is to live and love as completely as Jesus lived and loved. The irony is that God's demonstration of his complete love for us through him is best revealed by his reaction to our rebellion that put him on the cross. Let's sing

Ah, Holy Jesus

Words: Johann Heermann, 1630; trans. by Robert S. Bridges, 1899

Music: Johann Cruger, 1640

1. Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended,
that we to judge thee have in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by thine own rejected, O most afflicted!

2. Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee!

'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee.

3. Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered;

the slave hath sinned, and the Son hath suffered.

For our atonement, while we nothing heeded, God interceded.

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

Let's move into Thursday's upper room. I briefly mentioned last Sunday how Jesus shocked the disciples into attention by taking the role of a servant and washing their feet. Let's hear again some of his specific words after that gracious act of hospitality.

After he returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me 'Rabbi' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because I am. Now if I, the Lord and Rabbi, have washed your feet, you also should wash each other's feet. For I have set you an example, so that you may do as I have done to you. Yes, indeed! I tell you this: No servant is more important than his master, nor is an emissary greater than the one who sent him. If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

[Later on, Jesus revealed that Judas would betray him, and Judas left the room]

... Jesus said, "Now people will see how great the Son of Man is. Because of him, they will also see how great God is. I am with you only a little longer. Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:12b-17, From 31-35 (CJB, EASY)

Responsive Prayer (P – Pastor, C - Congregation)

Join me in a responsive prayer

P: Lord, too often we turn from the cross and grieve your Holy Spirit by not serving or loving as you serve and love.

C: Rekindle the sparks of your love that burn within us.

P: Fan the embers of that love until it roars to life again -

C: -- in attitudes of peace and actions of reconciliation.

P: Teach us from Gethsemane and Golgotha -- to pray in our pain, and to carry our cross. Clarify our understanding of how to apply what it means today to kneel in loving service.

C: Purify our lives with your refining fire.

P: Burn in us so brightly that darkness meets its doom.

**C: Restore our devotion to loving humanity and serving those in need.
Amen.**

Sermon Every Time the Last Time

Most young parents love to chronicle the first things their child does, especially the first one. First teeth, first solid food, first steps, first successful use of fork and spoon. What excites us about their first times is not only their accomplishment of things that we have come to take for granted in our own life, but it is sensing the determination and excitement children have as they struggle and then are finally able to do something they have never done before. And when those first steps come and they mobilize, we love to watch them explore and experience with fascination the joy of first-time discoveries -- discoveries of things that we have long stopped noticing, much less appreciating.

There is a popular saying that if you want to rediscover the wonder of life — live it as if you have never experienced it before; as if every time is the first time!

First Time — Passover

So let's look at the first wide-scale redemption that we read in the Bible. It comes from Exodus. They are marching along as God works miracle after miracle to free his chosen people from Egypt. As it builds to a climax in Exodus 12, storytelling suddenly turns into an instruction manual for how to properly observe every Passover from then on. Commentators say this shift in style solidifies the connection between the historical event and the celebration of it. So not only was the first time an observance that points forward to God's continuing faithful acts with his people, but the annual observance also points back in remembrance of God's faithful acts -- as if it were the first time each year.

The instructions for that first event were use the blood of a lamb to mark the door frames, to roast the lamb over fire and not boil it (because it is faster), and bread that has no yeast (so you don't have to wait for it to rise to be edible) and to eat with their sandals on, staffs in hand, and their flowing clothes hitched up, in other words, prepared to go at a moment's notice. You'll almost never hear this advice

anymore, though some follow it all the time -- eat in haste -- gobble it down fast. They needed to get it done before the call comes for them to move out of the land. This wasn't just a generalized liberation that would release them from Egyptian tyranny and dump the people in the wilderness out on their own. No, this was just the beginning of God's instructions for this last meal were not only a sign of the end of slavery and a time for mourning, but to ensure they would receive some nourishment for this burst of energy that would lead to a journey and to a new life under the gracious reign of God. They were to memorialize this last meal, because it was their last meal before their redemption from the enslaving, life-sapping land of Egypt. It was their last meal before life. And as they eat this meal year after year, this is what they were to never forget about their future, and to never forget about their future, and to never forget about their heritage as they remembered this last meal: that God didn't just choose to free them, he chooses them to be his people and to fulfill a divine mission in the world through them.

Last Time — Jesus

The worshipers are called to celebrate this Passover each year as if it was happening the first time, as if they had never experienced it before — eyes wide and hearts open and attitudes of amazing wonder like the little child who has just discovered something new. Every time like the first time.

But you know how easy it is to slip into a routine. One of my seminary professors once told our class that every once in a while, he was halfway to his destination before he really became fully aware that he had taken the car out of park in his driveway. It isn't necessarily about distraction or being unsafe, but it is about how very easy it is for everything that is habitual to click into automatic. And we do this same meal, year after year after year after year — and for Christians, month after month after month — and in some churches, week after week after week.

But then, suddenly, we are jerked to awareness — or at least suspect — that maybe this will be the last year we will experience how we have experienced it in all these years past -- and it takes on a significance it hasn't had since — since the first time we experienced it.

There is another popular saying besides "live each time like it is the first time" (awe and excited wonderment), and that is "live each time like it is the last time." (be aware of the depth of meaning and so make the most of it)

Jesus, knowing what he was about to face, made his own arrangements for a special last meal with his close followers and friends. Luke says he eagerly desired

to share this time with them. Eyes open, heart exposed, all senses keyed to take it all in like it was the first time — it was only Jesus who knew it was also a last time. Jesus hoped they not only would experience it with awe and excitement of a first time, he hoped to instill it with a deep meaning that comes with those last times. He desired to make it an annual observance that would point us back in remembrance of God's faithful acts through him — and that we would observe it regularly as if it were the first time each time — and that it would become for Christians their "last meal before life".

The goal of the original Passover was to be nourished physically and spiritually for this burst of energy that they would need to quickly leave Egypt and begin the journey to a new lease on life in the promised land. The goal of Jesus' last meal was to spiritually nourish his disciples for the energy they would need to enter and journey in the new life with Christ in the kingdom of God on the way to heaven.

In the first redemption, as people became a nation, and as God's people remember their freedom year after year, they were to never forget their heritage nor their future: God didn't just choose to free them from the enslaving life-sapping power of Egypt, he chooses them to be his covenant people and to fulfill a divine mission in the world.

And in the second redemption, as disciples eat this meal again and again, we are never to forget our heritage nor our future: God didn't just choose to free Christ's followers from the enslaving life-sapping power of sin, he chooses us to be his new covenant people and to fulfill a divine mission in the world.

The question then remains: what is that mission? It never changes. God delivered Abraham's children from Egypt's slavery. His hope was that by the faithful living witness of the Jewish nation, all the world would come to know the glory of God and be blessed. This has always been their call and mission.

And the mission hasn't changed for we who have become the children of God through Christ. God delivers all who would receive his Son Jesus Christ from sin's slavery. His hope was that by the faithful living witness of Christians, all the world would come to know his glory through his Son's glory and be saved.

Too often we think God's glory comes via conquering the world by worldly force much in the same way the disciples errantly thought God's glory would be revealed when God's kingdom conquered Rome. We forget that the truest, deepest enemy is not Egypt or Rome or any other group or philosophy or religion. Our battle is not with people, but with our own inability to live faithfully. [Gesture to the Lenten Cross

Candles]. The power of sin and evil is not conquered by worldly power, but it is overcome with good acts of loving service in Jesus' name.

Jesus models love by kneeling and washing our feet. Some are tempted, then to treat Jesus like our own personal servant, thinking now we are the important, privileged person, and we try to use him for our own selfish gain. Jesus reminds us that he is our Lord and Teacher, and that no student is greater than that, not greater than their Master, nor is a messenger greater than the person who authorizes the message to be sent. Jesus is not our doormat upon which we wipe our feet clean — as if he were here to serve us and empower us to obtain our every selfish whim.

And yet our authorizing master has knelt and has served — not as inferior to us, but as an example for us to follow — so that we love one another as he has loved us. The promise is that if we follow his model of loving service, it is through this that the world will see God's glory and greatness, and be saved, and blessed. If we understand and do, Jesus promises we will be blessed as we follow his example of loving service.

Music So let's sing about our commitment to Jesus, our ultimate example of leadership -- which on Thursday night was kneeling in simple, humble hospitality, but by Friday afternoon, it became much, much more than mere "kneeling service" — Let's stand if comfortable and sing...

When I Survey

Words: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Music: Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Communion

Invitation And having heard his words and seen his example in that upper room, and on the cross, Jesus Christ our Lord now graciously invites us to draw close to him through his covenant meal. He invites all who love him, who earnestly repent

of their sin and seek to live in love and in service with one another. Let's prepare our hearts by singing

Music of Preparation

419 (vv 1,2) I Am Thine, O Lord

Words: Fanny J Crosby, 1873 Music: William H Donne, 1875

1 I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice, and it told thy love to me;
but I long to rise in the arms of faith, and be closer drawn to thee.

Refrain

Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to the cross where thou hast died;
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to thy precious, bleeding side.

2 Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord, by the pow'r of grace divine;
let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, and my will be lost in thine.

Refrain

Confession Let's confess. Almighty God, we like to believe we follow your example of loving service. We like to think we have learned better than the first disciples how to love and serve rather than bickering about personal power among ourselves and conquering those with whom we disagree, those who we perceive as the enemy, the enemy you told us to love. We would like to believe we would not have abandoned you in your time of need had we been with you in that first upper room.

But deep in our hearts, we realize that if Peter couldn't do it, we probably would not have fared any better than the original disciples. We could not have been more faithful. We know this because far too often, we still turn away from you when it is expedient. We put other things before our commitment to you and fail to heed your command to serve others.

Forgive us for not being more faithful when we sense the gathering darkness, and you call us into your upper room. Nevertheless, help us to accept the invitation. Help us to experience like it is the first time - with amazed wonder at your strength of grace -- and help us to experience it like it is the last time -- fraught with inspiration and packed with meaning -- too special to not put all of who we are into this covenantal sacrament and all it means.

Assurance Know this: "Even when we are not mindful of the wonders that he performs among us; even when we act presumptuously and stiffen our necks and refuse to obey God's will, determined to return to our [sin]. Even then, God is ready to forgive, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and he does not forsake us. (Based on Nehemiah 9:16-17) Our Lord is merciful and gracious, endlessly patient, loving and true, showing mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and granting pardon. Receive his forgiveness and be free of the spiritual enslaving chains of evil; free for joyful obedience to his call of loving service; for it is by the loving, serving, example of the One who died for us while we were yet sinners that demonstrates how much he loves us... how slow he is to anger, and how quick he is to forgive us. We receive his forgiveness so that --

Thanksgiving (Congregation joins on **bold font**)

The Lord [may] be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. From the earth you bring forth bread and create the fruit of the vine. You formed us in your image, delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God. You fed us manna in the wilderness, and gave grapes as evidence of the promised land. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. When we had turned aside from your way and abused your gifts, you gave us in him your crowning gift. Emptying himself that our joy might be full, he fed the hungry, healed the sick, ate with a scorned and forgotten people, washed the disciples' feet, and gave a holy meal as a pledge of his abiding presence.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and at home, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Therefore, with the confidence of God's faithful children, let us pray... **Lord's Prayer**

Offering Ourselves

And the words we just prayed are words that can very easily click into that automatic ... not thinking about what we are saying when we say them: Our Father, who art in heaven — Hallowed — be — thy — name. and the rest of the phrases that follow... do we really think about them so Lord, as we remember your redemption to new life and to loving service, we offer ourselves, our minds, our souls, and our bodies to you as holy and lively sacrifices, which is only reasonable in light of the saving work you have done in Christ. Fill us with grace and faith. Make us what you will as we put ourselves in your hands. With free and willing hearts, we give to you all that we are -- for your pleasure and for your direction; that we may, through the words and actions of our lives, bring glory to your name as you carry out your mission to your world through us, your people.

The Bread and Cup

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take and eat].



When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."



Communion Blessing

Merciful God, we give you thanks for entering your world to makes this meal possible. We give thanks that your deliver us from the power of sin, make a new covenant with us, and grant us an inheritance that includes us in your heavenly kingdom. In your goodness and good works, we recognize with awe just how blessed you are, and that you are the Source of all blessings. Amen.

Bible Reading 3 After some additional teachings and seder meal traditions, (or whatever they were observing, there is debate about whether it was an actual seder meal or not). The upper room was wrapped up and they moved to the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Jesus, hoping for the support of his friends, went deeper into the garden where he prayed that even though it wasn't his desire, he wanted what God the Father wanted to happen, "Not my will, but yours be done".

Summary of Luke 22:39-42

Music So let's move now with Jesus into his garden of prayer where he wrestles and prepares for the cross he knows is coming. Let's sing

Go to Dark Gethsemane

Words: James Montgomery, 1771-1854 Music: Richard Redhead, 1820-1901

1. Go to dark Gethsemane,
ye that feel the tempter's power;
your Redeemer's conflict see,
watch with him one bitter hour.
Turn not from his griefs away;
learn of Jesus Christ to pray.
2. See him at the judgment hall, beaten,
bound, reviled, arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall! O the
pangs his soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn of Christ to bear the cross.



Reading 4

We had moved to the garden with Jesus. But the weariness and heaviness of the day has overtaken us and all we can do is fall asleep. An angel came to strengthen Jesus as he prayed. When he finished, he wakes us up tells us to pray we won't fall into temptation. As he was saying this a crowd led by Judas appeared. He greeted Jesus with a kiss, which signaled the crowd which one Jesus was. As the crowd neared, we asked if we should fight back with our swords that we had. One of us didn't wait for the answer and struck off the ear of a high priest's slave. Jesus stopped the fight and healed the ear. Jesus then turned to the priests, elders and temple police (that crowd that had come out to take him) and asks why they came with weapons as if he were a dangerous revolutionary, and why they never touched him at the Temple in public, but now -- it is their hour -- and the power of darkness.

They seized him and led him away to the high priest's house. Peter followed from a distance, but then joined people who were warming themselves at a fire in the middle of the courtyard. But by the light of the fire, some saw his face and accused him of being with Jesus. Three separate times Peter denied knowing him. The third time it was must have been nearing Friday's dawn, for a rooster crowed. The Lord was still in visual range of Peter, and he turned to look at him. Then Peter remembered that this is what Jesus had predicted would happen just hours ago, and Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Jesus' captors now began to mock and beat him, blindfolding him and challenging to prophesy who it was that hit him, and they heaped insults on him. Now it was daybreak, which made it legal for the religious leaders to bring him before their council for trial and to pronounce a death sentence. They asked Jesus if he was the Messiah. Jesus replies that they wouldn't believe him if he said so, and if Jesus asked them, they wouldn't answer. They asked if he was the Son of God. Jesus replied, "*You* say that I am." There may have been other words that we don't know about, but the council concluded they needed no more testimony than Jesus own words to convict him. The problem was that Roman rule did not allow them to carry out a death penalty except for foreigners who invaded the sacred precincts of the Temple. So they brought Jesus to Governor Pilate and accused him of subverting the nation by forbidding the paying of taxes to the Emperor and claiming to be the Messiah — a king. [They were hoping to appeal to things that Pilate might see as a political threat to himself. Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answers, "You say so." Pilate turned to the assembly and said the charges

were baseless. They argued back that he stirs up the people by teaching all through Judea, from Galilee where he started to here in Jerusalem.

When Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee which was under the jurisdiction of his enemy Herod, he saw some political points he could make and sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at the time. Herod was happy because he had heard about and wanted to meet Jesus for a long time, wanting to be entertained by some miracle Jesus could perform. He questioned Jesus at length, but Jesus gave no answer. All the while the religious leaders stood nearby pressing their case with their accusations. Then Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. They put a royal robe on him and sent him back to Pilate. Pilate's strategy had worked, he and Herod became friends that day.

Pilate then called together the religious leaders and the people again. He told them that he had examined Jesus and found him innocent of their charges of leading a rebellion, as had Herod, for Herod had sent him back to him. He has certainly done nothing to deserve death, therefore, he concluded he would simply flog Jesus and then release him – *simply flog ☺* -- him and release him.

But the crowds insisted that Jesus be crucified, and there was a tradition that allowed them to release another prisoner instead of Jesus, and that the prisoner was Barabbas. The crowd insisted he be released instead. Pilate argued and second and third time with the crowd that Jesus had done nothing wrong. But they kept shouting for his crucifixion. Pilate finally relented and he had the murdering insurrectionist Barabbas released to freedom and handed Jesus over to be led away to be crucified.

Special Music Listen to “the way of suffering”,

The Via Dolorosa

Words and Music: Andrew Ripp, Chris Rice © 2019 Songs by Fishbone,
adm. by Essential Music Pub.

Down the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem that day
the soldiers tried to clear the narrow street.

But the crowd pressed in to see
the man condemned to die on Calvary.

He was bleeding from a beating, there were stripes upon his back.

And He wore a crown of thorns upon his head.

And he bore with every step the scorn of those who cried out for his death.

Down the Via Dolorosa called the way of suffering.

Like a lamb came the Messiah, Christ the King.
But He chose to walk that road out of his love for you and me.
Down the Via Dolorosa, all the way to Calvary.

... [repeat in Spanish]

The blood that would cleanse the souls of all men
made its way to the heart of Jerusalem.
Down the Via Dolorosa called the way of suffering.
Like a lamb came the Messiah, Christ the King.
But he chose to walk that road out of his love for you and me.
Down the Via Dolorosa, all the way to Calvary.

Jesus had already been so beaten and abused that he was unable to carry his own (30 to 40 pound) cross beam, as prisoners were expected to do. So the soldiers seized Simon of Cyrene (from Libya, North Africa) who was probably there for the religious festivities. Many followed Jesus, mourning for him. Jesus said to them, "Don't weep for me, but yourselves and your children for they will have to endure much worse... People will call the childless blessed for their families will not have to endure those days when the suffering is so intense people will wish they weren't alive." (He may have been referring to when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in the Temple about 40 years later or may have been a more general statement, for he then gave a colorful line that essentially means this: If people act this way when I the Messiah is among them, what will they be like when I am gone?

Two criminals were to be put to death at the same time as Jesus. They arrived at a place called the Skull (Calvary), and Jesus was put on the center of the three crosses being used. Jesus prays forgiveness for them for they didn't understand what they were doing. Meanwhile, soldiers were gambling for the prize of his clothes. People and soldiers alike mocked him, challenging to save himself if he is God's chosen one, the Messiah. A sign was above Jesus' head that read: "This is the King of the Jews".

Even one of the criminals insulted him, "If you are who you say you are, save yourself and us!" but the other criminal defended Jesus by saying to the first criminal: "Don't you fear God? We deserve what we are getting for our deeds, but he has done nothing wrong." Then he asked Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom and Jesus replied that today he would be with him in Paradise.

Now it is noon. Darkness covers the land for about 3 hours. The curtain in the Temple that divided the holy place from the most holy place ripped in two, a sign that Christ has opened up direct access to God through himself. Then Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Into your hands I commend my spirit." and he breathed his last.

When a centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." Because of his high rank, his witness, his testimony carried a lot of clout. The crowds returned home visibly grieving, but his friends, including the women who followed him from Galilee stood at a distance -- taking it all in. Have we taken it in?

Music Have we been able to put ourselves into the story — can we put ourselves into our heritage and be fully present on this holy night? Can we feel the glory and the tragedy of this day? Let's sing

Were You There?

Words: Afro-American spiritual

Music: Afro-American spiritual;

adapt and arr. by William Farley Smith, 1986 © 1989 UM Publishing House

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh---! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my lord?

Music Perhaps this will help us get there more fully. Try to put yourselves into the lyrics as on Calvary's hill we see the scene before us and sing --

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Words: Anonymous; trans. by Paul Gerhardt 1656 and James W. Alexander 1830

Music: Hans L. Hassler, 1601; harm. by J.S. Bach, 1729, alt.

1. O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown:
how pale thou art with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish which once was bright as morn!
2. What thou, my Lord, has suffered was all for sinners' gain;
mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve thy place;
look on me with thy favor, vouchsafe to me thy grace.
3. What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend,
for this thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?

O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be,
 Lord, let me never, never outlive my love for thee.

Prayer Let's pray. Merciful and ever living God, creator of heaven and earth; Your Son Jesus Christ, for our sake, was obedient -- even to death on the cross. His crucified body is laid to rest in the tomb on this holy day. Grant that we may be kept strong as we wait for the dawning of the third day when we will rise with him in newness of life, now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer we pray, Amen.

Music We need not only relive the moment, but we must also understand its significance for us. Charles Wesley writes about the healing power of Christ's life and death through the common imagery of his blood, through which flows the power of life (See Leviticus 17:11), so much like a transfusion that brings healing and life to someone's physical life who's blood is unhealthy. Jesus' blood gives spiritual healing and life to those sick with the disease of sin and who apply it — who trust in him and accept him into our hearts... the blood pumping organ of our life. Let's stand if comfortable and sing

O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done

Words: Charles Wesley, 1742 Music: Isaac B. Woodbury, 1850

1. O Love divine, what has thou done! The immortal God hath died for me!
 The Father's coeternal Son bore all my sins upon the tree.
 Th' immortal God for me hath died: My Lord, my Love, is crucified!
2. Is crucified for me and you, to bring us rebels back to God.
 Believe, believe the record true, ye all are bought with Jesus' blood.
 Pardon for all flows from his side: My Lord, my Love, is crucified!
3. Behold him, all ye that pass by, the bleeding Prince of life and peace!
 Come, sinners, see your Savior die, and say, "Was ever grief like his?"
 Come, feel with me his blood applied: My Lord, my Love, is crucified!

Blessing

Christ's hard service on the cross is completed, and our sin has been paid for "The Holy One says, "I am the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Those who wait for me shall renew their strength... they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. So be silent before him..." and as we go in silence, we now wait for our renewal to come. Amen. (Inspired by Isaiah 40:1-2, 25, 28, 31,41:1)