

**A SERVICE OF REFLECTION AND PRAYER  
ON THE EVENTS OF THAT FIRST GOOD FRIDAY.**

We read in Isaiah 53: 5,6.

‘He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.’  
and by his wounds we are healed.

**HYMN:** ‘There is a green hill far away’

1 There is a green hill far away,  
without a city wall,  
where the dear Lord was crucified,  
who died to save us all.

2 We may not know, we cannot tell,  
what pains he had to bear;  
but we believe it was for us  
he hung and suffered there.

3 He died that we might be forgiv’n,  
he died to make us good,

that we might go at last to heav’n,  
saved by his precious blood.

4 There was no other good enough  
to pay the price of sin;  
he only could unlock the gate  
of heav’n, and let us in.

5 O dearly, dearly has he loved,  
and we must love him too,  
and trust in his redeeming blood,  
and try his works to do.

**OPENING PRAYER:**

Gracious and merciful God, we thank you that even though we can’t gather together today  
to recall the events which happened on Calvary that first Good Friday we can do so in the safety of our  
own homes.

We come overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us,  
and his commitment to defeat evil,  
even when that meant his own suffering and his own death.

In response to such love and sacrifice,  
we commit ourselves to overcome evil with good,  
suffering with wholeness,  
and oppression with justice. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

**THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS**

**HYMN** “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” verses 1-3

1 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?

2 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

3 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

**THE FIRST WORD.**

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO. "(Luke 23:34a)

We give thanks that Jesus did as he told others to do, and forgave those who treated him so badly. And  
so, God of grace and immeasurable mercy, help us to overcome any hurts caused by wrongs done to us,

and to reach out in reconciling love and to pray with Jesus "forgive them."

**THE SECOND WORD.**

"TODAY YOU SHALL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE." (Luke 23:43)

We pray for all those who want to repent and begin a new life, but who feel that it is too late; let us pray that they will learn from the dying thief that Christ is the one nearest to them, and that paradise is as close as he is. Give us the assurance, O God, that whatever we have done, nothing can separate us from your love. And let us, pray as the thief prayed: "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom".

**THE THIRD WORD**

"DEAR WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON." and to John "BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER." (John 19: 26,27)

We pray for our families especially at this time when many of us cannot be with them. We pray for them all in these difficult times but we remember especially people whose fears and uncertainties about the future are causing stress and conflict; those where relationships are close to breaking down or have broken down; those who suffer abuse within the family circle. Spend a moment praying for members of your own family - that Christ may underpin relationships which are faced with the worst blows which life can give.

Silent prayer: Pray for families.

**THE FOURTH WORD.**

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Matthew 27:46)

We pray for all people who feel forsaken; for young and old, whatever their circumstances; and for ourselves when we feel forsaken or rejected. May we never forget that God's love for us is everlasting and genuine.

Silent prayer: Bring to mind and pray for those whom you know to be sorrowful... lonely...frightened because they are separated from friends and family

**HYMN "O sacred head sore wounded"**

1 O sacred head, sore wounded,  
Defiled and put to scorn:  
O kingly head, surrounded  
With mocking crown of thorn;  
What sorrow mars thy grandeur?  
Can death thy bloom deflow'r?  
O countenance whose splendour  
The hosts of heav'n adore!

2 Thy beauty, long desired,  
Hath vanished from our sight:  
Thy pow'r is all expired,  
And quenched the light of light.  
Ah me! for whom thou diest,  
Hide not so far thy grace:  
Show me, O Love most highest,  
The brightness of thy face.

3 In thy most bitter passion  
My heart to share doth cry.  
With thee for my salvation  
Upon the cross to die.  
Ah, keep my heart thus moved  
To stand thy cross beneath,  
To mourn thee, well-beloved,  
Yet thank thee for thy death.

4 What language shall I borrow  
To thank thee, dearest friend,  
For this thy dying sorrow,  
Thy pity without end?  
Oh, make me thine forever!  
And should I fainting be,  
Lord, let me never, never  
Outlive my love for thee.

5 My days are few, O fail not,  
With thine immortal pow'r,  
To hold me that I quail not  
In death's most fearful hour:  
That I may fight befriended,  
And see in my last strife  
To me thine arms extended  
Upon the cross of life.

## **THE FIFTH WORD.**

"I THIRST" (John 19:28)

There are - right now - countless people - men, women and children in the world who are undernourished, and dying of starvation. We pray that the Holy Spirit will empower us to answer the cries of those who suffer physical and mental distress through lack of food and water, both here in this country and throughout the world.

### **MEDITATION FOR GOOD FRIDAY**

The shape of God's love is a cross.

It did not begin as a cross -  
it began as an act of tenderness towards humanity

As we busied ourselves storing up treasures on earth;  
this treasure from heaven in human form taught another way  
the way of love.

The way of love and forgiveness of liberty and justice and peace.

He told us not to worry about tomorrow

He challenged us to be like the lilies of the field  
pure and carefree and clothed with the values of God's Kingdom  
where healing and caring and even loving enemies is the order of the day.

He lived life from the inside out telling stories which conveyed life to those who had ears to hear.

He took children and gave them places of honour;

He took women and gave them dignity;

He deluged the poor and the sick and the marginalised  
with compassion and extravagant love.

He poured out his power like pouring water into a basin and washing disciples' feet.

He gave away his power in unexpected ways

- to a woman who touched his robe
- to a child who had ceased to breathe,
- to a man who looked down from a tree.

He used his power to heal and to serve  
to carry the burdens we had been struggling to bear on our own.

He emptied himself of self and filled himself with others.

We tell the story year by year;  
this story of love and grace  
but again and again we are pulled up short  
by the tormented one who betrays.

The one who walked with Christ;  
a disciple as close as close could be;  
Judas - Judas Iscariot - his name  
but could it be you or be me?

Were his dreams shaped by greed? Prosperity? Power?  
Was he simply corrupt from the start?  
Could he not understand that Jesus desired lives totally lived from the heart?

So, how about us?  
Are we like so many today?  
With Judas-like dreams of greed  
or the need to prosper, to win, to succeed?

On today, of all days the day of Christ's death.

Where do we really stand?

Who do we truly follow, the power-hungry Judas or the empowering Christ?

This groaning creation starting right here and right now needs to know.

### **THE SIXTH WORD.**

"IT IS FINISHED" (John 19:30)

As Jesus said "It is finished", we give thanks for his life of love and his painful death for us and for our world. Even at the point of death, he cared about others. We pray, O God, for like minds and as deep a care for others, as we commit ourselves, and all those dear to us, into your hands. May they know that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from your love O God, revealed so clearly in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Silent prayer: Offer thanks to God for this incredible gift of love given to us at such cost by Jesus.

**HYMN** `O Love that wilt not let me go'

1 O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
that in thine ocean depths its flow  
may richer, fuller be.

2 O Light that follow'st all my way,  
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;  
my heart restores its borrowed ray,  
that in thy sunshine's blaze its day  
may brighter, fairer be.

3 O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,  
and feel the promise is not vain  
that morn shall tearless be.

4 O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
and from the ground there blossoms red,  
life that shall endless be.

### **THE SEVENTH WORD.**

"FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT" (Luke 24:46)

Teach us, O Lord, to fear death as little as we fear sleep; and fill our lives with the hope and faith of the resurrection, in the knowledge that in death our lives pass into the hands that made the world - the hands of the Creator. And may we place our lives in those hands while life is strong and full and sweet.

O God, with thanksgiving, into your hands we commit our lives.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER.**

#### **A POEM**

I heard two soldiers talking as they came down the hill.  
The sombre hill of Calvary, bleak and black and still.  
And one said, "The night is late, these thieves take long to die."  
And one said, "I am sore afraid, and yet I know not why."

I heard two women weeping as down the hill they came.  
And one was like a broken rose, and one was like a flame.  
One said, " man shall rue the day this deed their hands have done."  
And one said, only through her tears, "My son, my son, my son."

I heard two angels singing ere yet the dawn was bright.  
And they were clad in shining robes; robes and crowns of light.  
And one sang, "Death is vanquished." And one in golden voice,  
Sang, "Love has conquered, conquered all, O heaven and earth rejoice."  
*Anonymous poem included in one of William Barclay's commentaries*

**HYMN** "When I survey the wondrous cross"

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 through 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 a present far too small.  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

**BENEDICTION.**

Go in peace. May Jesus Christ, who for our sake became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you today and for ever. Amen