

A Tenebrae Service for Maundy Thursday

'Tenebrae' comes from the Latin word for shadows and dates back to the fourth century. The purpose of the service is to hold before us the betrayal, loneliness and pain of Jesus' last hours. The service ends with Jesus' words from the cross 'it is finished' but Christians believe the story continues on Easter morning. During the service, seven candles are extinguished, and the service ends in darkness.

Let us pray.

Loving Lord Jesus,

We bow our heads in silence, for the words are too difficult to speak when we contemplate your suffering.

We bow our heads in silence, in shame at the cruelty which still exists in our world.

We bow our heads in silence, in unity with all who suffer across the world tonight.

We bow our heads in silence, to listen to your word, to enable you to speak to us.

We bow our heads in silence, as Jesus did before, during and after these experiences in his life.

We bow our heads in silence before you.

God of the still, small voice, speak to us after the storms of life have done their worst; speak to our hearts with the silence of your love, and lead us on through the darkness of this night to the light of Easter morning. **Amen.**

1) The shadow of betrayal – Matthew 26: 20-25

After a period of silence, the first candle is extinguished

Lord have mercy, **Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy**

2) The shadow of inner agony – Luke 22: 40-44

After a period of silence, the second candle is extinguished

Lord have mercy, **Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy**

3) The shadow of loneliness – Matthew 26: 40-45

After a period of silence, the third candle is extinguished

Lord have mercy, **Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy**

4) The shadow of desertion – Matthew 26: 47-50, 55-56

After a period of silence, the fourth candle is extinguished

Lord have mercy, **Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy**

5) The shadow of accusation – Matthew 26: 59-67

After a period of silence, the fifth candle is extinguished

Lord have mercy, **Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy**

6) The shadow of mockery – Mark 15: 12-20

After a period of silence, the sixth candle is extinguished

Lord have mercy, **Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy**

7) The shadow of death – Luke 23: 33-46

The final candle is extinguished.

It is finished ...

1) The shadow of betrayal - Matthew 26: 20-25

²⁰ When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; ²¹ and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.' ²² And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?' ²³ He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' ²⁵ Judas, who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so.'

2) The shadow of inner agony - Luke 22: 40-44

⁴⁰ When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'⁴¹ Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, ⁴² 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' ⁴³ Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴ In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

3) The shadow of loneliness - Matthew 26: 40-45

⁴⁰ Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' ⁴² Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' ⁴³ Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.'

4) The shadow of desertion – Matthew 26: 47-50, 55-56

⁴⁷ 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. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' ⁴⁹ At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him (...)⁵⁵ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶ But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

5) The shadow of accusation – Matthew 26: 59-67

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days."' ⁶² The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' ⁶³ But Jesus was silent. 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.' ⁶⁴ 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.'

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your verdict?' They answered, 'He deserves death.' ⁶⁷ Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him.

6) The shadow of mockery – Mark 15: 12-20

¹² Pilate spoke to them again, ‘Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’ ¹³ They shouted back, ‘Crucify him!’ ¹⁴ Pilate asked them, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’ ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ ¹⁹ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰ 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.

7) The shadow of death – Luke 23: 33-46

³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’ ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?’ ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ ⁴² Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ ⁴³ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last.