

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

GOOD FRIDAY

Good Friday PRAYERS

Blessed are you Lord our God: through your Son Jesus Christ
you have known our pain and show us your mercy.
Surely he has borne our griefs; he has carried our sorrows.
He was despised, he was rejected; a man of sorrows and acquainted with
grief. Surely he has borne our griefs; he has carried our sorrows.
He was pierced for our sins, bruised for no fault but ours.
Surely he has borne our griefs; he has carried our sorrows.
His punishment has bought our peace, and by his wounds we are healed
Surely he has borne our griefs; he has carried our sorrows.
We had all strayed like sheep, but the Lord has laid on him the guilt of us all.
Surely he has borne our griefs; he has carried our sorrows.
So with robbers and soldiers, priests and governors, disciples and betrayers,
we pray; Lord Jesus, we thank you
for all the benefits you have won for us,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for us.
Most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Behold the wood of the Cross, whereon was hung the Saviour of the world.
O come let us worship.

Turn again my people, listen to me.
Father, hear our prayer and forgive us.

Father, forgive us.
Unstop our ears that we may receive the gospel of the cross.
Lighten our eyes that we may see your glory in the face of your Son.
Penetrate our minds that your truth may make us whole.
Irradiate our hearts with your love that we may love one another for Christ's
sake. Father forgive us.

Lord you are punctured, no longer divided between inside and out, knowing
in your flesh the sharp violence that kills what it fears: take us through the

narrow door from which an endless river flows into a new body - wounded
but unafraid; through Jesus Christ, the passion of God. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God
who on this day rested in the sepulchre, and
sanctified the grave to be a bed of hope for your people:
make us so deeply sorry for the sin of the world,
which was the cause of your passion,
that when our bodies lie in the dust,
our souls may live with you;
for with the Father and the Holy Spirit
you live and reign, now and forever. Amen.

John 18 v28 – 19 v35

They took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?' They answered, 'If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.' The Jews replied, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death.' (This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.) Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, 'I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' They shouted in reply, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas was a bandit. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.' The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, 'Do you refuse to speak to me?'

Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.' From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.' When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.' Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews", but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.' And that is what the soldiers did.

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. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.)

Good Friday Meditation

Pilate had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'

And John tells us that the leaders do not like it! They objected strongly. They would have liked to have the plaque removed, but if that failed, at least to amend this prominent plaque which gave the crime of the condemned man to the claim, "*This man said, I am King of the Jews.*" But Pilate was having none of it, "*What I have written I have written.*"

When, at the beginning of the so-called trial, Pilate asked the first question, "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" Jesus answered, "*Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?*" Maybe this is all Pilate is interested in; does Jesus represent a threat to Roman rule. Pilate already has a crowd of insurgents in his dungeon; Is Jesus just another rebel? Jesus asks where Pilate gets the notion that he is a king from. When Pilate says it is from those he supposes to be Jesus' own people, Jesus replies, "*My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.*" Jesus pointedly does not say he is a king, but does talk about his kingdom. And Jesus points out that his kingdom has a very different basis from Roman rule and what people's expectations of kingdoms are – the rules of the Kingdom of God are very different, and they certainly do not involve fighting; the quality of the Kingdom of God is not one of power and domination, but one of service, love and peace.

Pilate seems not to understand yet for he asks, "*So you are a king?*" Jesus again pointedly does not say he is a king, but answers, "*You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.*" Perhaps Pilate just gives up. Perhaps he perceives the change of agenda from talking about kings, the agenda the people and their leaders have brought towards Jesus' agenda, for he asks now, "*What is truth?*"

But it more seems that Pilate is losing interest and just wants to get a way out of this potentially incendiary situation, for he returns to the people saying, "*I find no case against him.*" and then he comes up with a plan. There is either a convention of a pardon for someone at this festival time, or Pilate invents it to try and get off the hook, but the crowd will have none of it. Perhaps Barrabas is a genuine folk hero, for one side's terrorist is another side's freedom fighter, or perhaps the overriding priority is to destroy Jesus.

Then it seems that there is an escalation in the charge against Jesus as if the title 'king' in the end had not impressed; *'he has claimed to be the Son of God.'*

To coin a phrase, this puts the fear of God into Pilate. Again, he takes Jesus into his chambers, away from the crowd to question him. Is this because SON OF GOD is not just a phrase to reflect anyone, but a title claimed by the Emperor of Rome himself! *'Where are you from?'* As is so often the case Jesus chooses not to answer. *'Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?'* Jesus answered him, *'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.'* Again, Jesus shows his kingdom is of a different nature to those that have kings and rulers, and Jesus yet again does not accept the title 'king'. The crowd play on Pilate's worst fears, that he will incur the Emperor's displeasure when they turn the screw saying *'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.'* The Gospel writer then has Pilate pour burning coals on the crowd and in their anger gets them to say words that compromise their deepest understanding and loyalty to their tradition in even their God; *'Here is your King!'* They cried out, *'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!'* Pilate asked them, *'Shall I crucify your King?'* The chief priests answered, *'We have no king but the emperor.'*

It is now the chief priests who commit blasphemy against their ancestral God, and who, according to their own code, deserve death. Their manipulation of the crowd had inadvertently led to their own ultimate manipulation into the place they most condemn themselves. And Pilate knows this, and exposes it to public notice and eternal memory, *Pilate had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'*

Jesus receives the penalty that Roman rules reserved for two groups of people; escaped slaves and terrorists. I do not know whether it was only those who took a road of violence who were labelled terrorists, whether there was any tradition of passive resistance then, but we have seen that was Jesus' road. Perhaps it also reminds us the extent to which slavery was endemic and a foundation block of Roman, and so many more societies, that to challenge the institution by claiming freedom was seen as an act of violence against the whole system, but it was Jesus' role to proclaim not only liberty but a new meaning of liberty. Jesus never claims to be a King, so we should not use that title of him in any words or songs of worship.

In John's Gospel, Jesus cries at the end, "It is finished." Kings are finished. Violence as a way is finished. Enslavement is finished. Truth and that other way of Kingdom begins, and is vindicated, so it is GOOD Friday!

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*Next Sunday, April 5th, **EASTER SUNDAY***
Colossians 3 v1-4, Matthew 28 v1-10.

This Thursday 2nd Apr 10am-3pm
Easter Egg Hunt & Craft Fair at St John's

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Wednesday 1st April
7pm Taize Service at St Peter's

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2nd April

7pm at St Peter's;

Communion of Last Supper with Footwashing and Vigil

GOOD FRIDAY 3rd April

10am St Peter's

12 Noon Churches Together in Broad St

1-3pm Messy Church at St John's

1pm zoom service – contact Rev Jenny

2pm St Mary's

7pm St John's

HOLY SATURDAY 4th April

7pm St John's

Ceremonies and First Communion

Easter Sunday 5th April

Services at usual times