



# **Faithful to the End: The Women at the Cross**

**Meditations for Good Friday on the Way of the Cross**

**Online Service for Good Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021**

Introduction Theresa

The disciples, according to the Scriptures, had fled for fear of being arrested as Christ's followers.

But the women didn't run away. Was it because they were braver or more committed than the men who had followed Jesus? Possibly, though it may have been that the women weren't as likely to be arrested. Regardless, they were there, and they remained faithful...not just until Christ's death, but even afterward.

When our Lord hung on that Cross, paying the price for sin and spanning the great divide between heaven and earth, women who loved Him stood nearby, watching and no doubt weeping. Though they realized He was different from anyone else who had ever lived they so hoped He was the promised Messiah.

**HYMN** *Were you there when they crucified my Lord*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpSScICWJ9M>

**1 JESUS IS CONDEMNED** *Matthew 27:11-14, 22-25, 26b*

*Amanda*

Jesus stood before the Roman governor, who questioned him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked.

"So you say," answered Jesus. But he said nothing in response to the accusations of the chief priests and elders. So Pilate said to him, "Don't you hear all these things they accuse you of?" But Jesus refused to answer a single word, with the result that the Governor was greatly surprised.

"What shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?" Pilate asked them.

"Crucify him!" they all answered. But Pilate asked, "What crime has he committed?"

Then they started shouting at the top of their voices: "Crucify him!"

When Pilate saw that it was no use to go on, but that a riot might break out, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!" He had Jesus whipped, he handed him over to be crucified.

**Reflection** *Cassy*

Why doesn't Jesus say anything?

Why doesn't he proclaim who he is?

Why doesn't he confront the disbelief of the crowds and the arrogant cowardice of the powers that be?

But he says nothing.

Surely there are others who will speak up for him?

Where are the lepers who were healed?

Where are the blind who can now see?

Where are all the people who ate the bread and fish on the hillside?

Where are those who followed Jesus so easily when they thought he would become King of the Jews?

Yet no one speaks.  
No voice in the crowd comes to Jesus' defence.  
Jesus stands alone.

Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, the power of Rome.  
Weakness stands before strength.  
And yet, Pilate, the ruthless enforcer for the Empire is  
not really in control here.  
He cannot make Jesus confess.  
He cannot quiet the crowds.  
For all his power, he cannot find the courage to do what  
is right.  
So he does what is safe.  
He yields to the crowds for the sake of order.  
Pilate washes his hands – a symbol of his lack of  
courage and strength and power – his lack of  
commitment to do what is right and just.

The One who stands before governor in chains, bruised  
from the beatings, spit on his face, is the person with  
real strength.  
Pilate washes his hands and abandons Jesus,  
but Jesus does not wash his hands of the Father's will or  
of us.  
He is determined to love you and me  
regardless of the cost.

### **Response Theresa**

**God did not spare his own Son,  
but gave him up for us all. (Rom 8:32)**

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus,  
we are ashamed to admit  
how often we wash our hands of you.  
Give us the courage to follow you,  
even when all others reject you.  
Help us to be determined and firm in our conviction  
that following your will and showing love to all  
is more important than any other treasure that we have  
in this life.

Grant that the way of the cross  
may be for us the way of life and peace.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All**    **Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

**Silence:**

## **2 JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS AND MOCKED**

*Matthew 27:27-31 Lyn*

Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace, and the whole company gathered around him. They stripped off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. Then they made a crown out of thorny branches and placed it on his head, and put a stick in his right hand; then they knelt before him and made fun of him. "Long live the King of the Jews!" they said. They spat on him, and took the stick and hit him over the head. When they had finished making fun of him, they took the robe off and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

### **Reflection Cassy**

I cringe at the pain of the thorns.  
But I am wounded far more deeply at the humiliation and degradation Jesus suffered.  
Stripped naked for all to stare at.  
A crown of thorns thrust on his head.  
A stick in his hand and a scarlet robe on his shoulders.  
Soldiers bowing in mockery – spitting, hitting and whipping.

How cruel people can be towards their fellow human beings.  
We hear of men, women and children suffering and dying at the hands of others, even those who claim to love them.  
How unkind can we be to the people around us?

We like to think that we are ready to follow Jesus who offers us peace and love.

But are we?

Are we willing to let love and peace control us and lead us to live as people who truly want to serve others, even though it may not always be easy or convenient?

There in Pilate's courtyard we see a true servant.  
He was willing to endure anything, no complaints, no protesting his innocence, no cursing, simply accepting the cross for us.  
Enduring all things for us.

The thorns, the whip, the mockery, the nails, the cruel death – he did it all for us. He loves us even though it is our sin that caused him so much pain.

### **Response Theresa**

Because of our sins he was wounded,  
**beaten because of the evil we did.** (*Isaiah 53:5*)

Let us pray.

Thank you, Jesus,  
for allowing yourself to be tried and condemned and scourged.

For the joy of bringing salvation to all people  
and because of your great love for us,  
you endured the shame and pain.

**Amen.**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All    Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

**Silence:**

### **3 SIMON CARRIES THE CROSS Luke 23:26 ?**

The soldiers led Jesus away, and as they were going, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon who was coming into the city from the country. They seized him, put the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

## Reflection **Cassy**

I can only imagine the awful weight of the cross Jesus carried.

It is not just the weight of beams of wood that pressed down on him; it is also the weight of the burden that he carried for those whom he loved.

He came to offer them life, and yet they return only death.

So we see Jesus fall from the crushing weight of pain and grief.

His physical strength is failing.

The soldiers must have recognized this as well, because they forced a man from the crowd to help Jesus carry the cross the rest of the way to the place where he will be crucified.

Simon from Cyrene was just a bystander passing through on his way into town from the countryside.

And yet he bears the weight of the cross to save Jesus' strength.

I would like to think that if I had been there  
I would have rushed from the crowd and volunteered to carry that cross for Jesus.

But would I have had the courage to face the Roman soldiers

and risk being forced to walk with Jesus and his cross?

Would I have really been so eager to share his cross or would I have tried to be invisible in the crowd?

When the soldiers were looking around for someone to press into service,

would I have looked away and pretended not to notice what was happening?

It's easy to pretend not to see the needs, the grief, and the suffering around me every day.

It's easy to pretend not to hear the cries for help that come in many forms from those among whom I walk every day.

It is easy to convince myself that I am too busy,  
or too tired,  
or have too much on my plate already  
to get involved in the lives of others.  
There are simply too many who need too much.

And yet, I remember something that Jesus said,  
something about taking up my own cross and following  
him.

Jesus said something about becoming a servant of all,  
of putting myself last and others first.  
Is this what it means to be a servant?  
Is Jesus showing me what it means to be that kind of  
servant?  
Is this man from Cyrene modelling for me the path of  
discipleship?

### **Response Theresa**

Those who do not carry their cross and follow me  
**cannot be my disciples.** (*Luke 14:27*)

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,  
your Son came not to be served,  
but to serve.  
Forgive us for becoming so preoccupied with ourselves  
that we have become deaf and blind to the grief and  
suffering of those around us.  
Constantly remind us that we cannot love you  
without loving others as well.  
Help us to always remember that to be a follower of  
yours  
means that we share in the burdens of others.  
Lord, show us someone whose cross we may help carry.  
**Amen.**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

**Silence:**

**4 JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM** *Luke 23:27-31*

*Pauline*

A large crowd of people followed him; among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Women of Jerusalem! Don't cry for me, but for yourselves and your children. For the days are coming when people will say, "How lucky are the women who never had children, who never bore babies, who never nursed them!" That will be the time when people will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Hide us!" For if such things as these are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

### **Zanny**

*As Christ carried the cross-beam through the streets of Jerusalem, he was accompanied by a great crowd of people, among whom were women in mourning for him. The episode is only mentioned in St Luke's gospel, which is often described as the 'gospel of women' because of its strong female focus.*

*Christ himself had already wept for the people of Jerusalem, since he foresaw the future destruction of the city by the Romans in 70AD. Describing the fall of Jerusalem, is why he said: "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations."*

### **Reflection Cassy**

As Jesus struggles along the road toward that awful place of death, a group of women among the crowd following Jesus were crying, wailing, already grieving Jesus approaching death.

So now, as Jesus bears the most unimaginable pain of body and heart, he shows incredible love and mercy. He is about to die and is suffering unbelievable pain, and yet he is more concerned with others than with his own suffering and impending death. He stops to speak with them; to warn them of the pain and suffering that they and the whole nation of Israel will experience because of their rejection of their Messiah.

Do I ever stop in the midst of my own troubles like you did Lord Jesus to express concern and to care for others?

Am I so caught up in living out my own life that I lose sight of what is happening in the lives of those around me?

**Response Theresa**

Those who sow in tears  
**will reap with songs of joy. (Ps 126:5)**

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
forgive me for not fully embracing your sacrifice for me,  
for not living every moment of my life in a way that  
glorifies you

and tells others that you are my Lord and Saviour.

Forgive me

for being so caught up in my own troubles and my own  
busyness of life

that I forget to stop and encourage and care for others.

Help me to never lose sight of who you are,

what you have done for me,

and how that means I should act toward

others who are around me.

**Amen.**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

**Silence:**

**5 JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES John 19:23-25**

**Ann**

After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe, which was made of one piece of woven cloth without any seams in it. The soldiers said to one another, "Let's not tear it; let's throw dice to see who will get it." This happened in order to make the scripture come true: "They divided my

clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe." And this is what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

### Reflection **Cassy**

Jesus is forced to suffer the worst of human indignity.  
He stands alone as the soldiers strip from him the last  
thing  
that he possesses,  
and play games to see who will claim it.  
They thought Jesus was no different to the hundreds of  
other criminals they crucify.  
Yet...he is. He is completely different.

Just yesterday, Jesus removed his cloak and laid it  
aside to wash his disciples' feet.  
Now he's allowing others to strip off his clothes.

He could have stopped it, stopped their gambling,  
stopped them stripping him.  
He could have stopped it all with a breath, with a word!

Yet, he doesn't.  
He allows them to publicly disgrace and ridicule him.  
He is left with nothing, nothing, not even human  
decency.  
He gave away everything to be utterly humiliated,  
stripped naked, for us?

For me and you? Why?  
We have nothing of worth to give him.  
We can't pay him back for this.  
Where is our gratitude for this?  
Why does he allow himself to be so humiliated –  
because of his total commitment to you and me.

He lays aside everything for us.

### Response **Theresa**

People stare and gloat over me.  
**They divide my garments among them and cast lots  
for my clothing. (Ps 22:17b-18)**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

**Silence:**

Let us pray.

Father,  
we thank you  
that Jesus willingly allowed himself to be humiliated  
because of his deep commitment to each of us.  
He stretched out his arms of love  
on the hard wood of the cross  
so that everyone might come within the reach of your  
saving embrace.  
So clothe us in your Spirit that we,  
reaching forth our hands in love,  
may bring those who do not know you  
to the knowledge and love of Jesus  
and all that he endured for us;  
for the honour of your name.

**Amen.**

## **6 JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS** *Mark 15:25-32*      *Moria*

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The notice of the accusation against him said: "The King of the Jews." They also crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left. People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "Aha! You were going to tear down the Temple and build it back up in three days! Now come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law made fun of Jesus, saying to one another, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Let us see the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him!"

**Reflection** *Cassy*

The last awful step in the journey of death is about to be taken.

Jesus is laid on the ground, his arms spread out,  
so his wrists are on the ends of the cross bar.

A spike is driven through each of his wrist bones.

The pain is excruciating.

Jesus' body is hoisted into place,  
its weight pressing on his rib cage and lungs,  
making it almost impossible to breathe.

A spike is driven through his feet.

With painful effort the condemned can push up on the spike in his feet to catch his breath,  
but to do so only prolongs the agony.

I want to rage at the injustice of this;  
the cruelty of the Romans;  
the hypocrisy of the High Priest and religious leaders;  
the cowardice of the disciples;  
the treachery of Judas;  
the fickleness of the crowds;  
Don't they remember that Jesus only spoke of love and  
even of loving our enemies?  
How could they be so cruel to the most perfect human  
who had ever lived?

And yet, would we have done differently?  
Are the guilty ones those who were actually there that  
day and condemned him and hammered in the nails?  
Or is it human sin that drives in the nails? *My sin.*  
I want to pretend that I had no part in Jesus' indignity  
and death.  
But I was there.  
Jesus, you are here, dying, because of *my sin.*  
I was there. It was I who drove the nails.

### **Response Theresa**

He was pierced for our transgressions,  
**he was crushed for our iniquities.**      (*Isaiah 53:5*)

Let us pray.

Lord, remind us of the deathly cost of sin.  
Forgive us for those things we have done  
that are displeasing to you.

Forgive us for not allowing you to deal with the darkness  
that we harbour in the hidden recesses of our hearts.  
Forgive us for fooling ourselves into believing  
that we are more righteous than we are,  
that we are better than others,  
and that we have no need to repent.  
Forgive us for those things we should have done,  
but found excuses not to do.  
Give us grace to humble ourselves before you,  
so that our sins may be laid bare  
and we may know your forgiveness.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All**    **Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

**Silence**

**7 JESUS DIES** *Mark 15:33-34, 37-39 14:45 Chris*

At noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?" With a loud cry Jesus died. The curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The army officer who was standing there in front of the cross saw how Jesus had died. "This man was really the Son of God!" he said

**Reflection Cassy**

It is dark in the middle of the day.  
It seems that the heavens and the earth are grieving,  
telling us that something is horribly wrong.

Jesus, I hear you cry out in lament from the Psalms  
and know that it is the cry of human pain and desolation.  
Everyone has forsaken you,  
but there is one who still hears your prayer - the one you  
address as *my God*.

The earth shakes.  
The curtain in the temple is torn right down the middle.  
The Holy of Holies is exposed for all to see.  
What does it mean?  
Who are you?  
There is even a Roman who thinks that you are the son  
of God.  
But you are dead. It's too late. What have we done?

Is there any hope?  
Yet you never stopped loving us even in death.  
You died because of human sin, because of us.  
Sin is never the final word.  
God can redeem the worst that human beings can do.  
But this?  
What can come of this?  
What can God do with such a final ending?  
We hope, and wait . . . .

### **Response Theresa**

He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of  
death,  
**even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:8b)**

Let us pray.

O God, you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,  
to suffer death on the cross for our redemption,  
and to deliver us from the power of the enemy  
by his glorious resurrection.  
May we die to sin each day,  
so that we may live forever with him  
who died and rose again for us,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All    Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

Music: The Lament of the Three Marys.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFIncNOi01E>

## **8 JESUS IS BURIED** *Matthew 27:57-60 Zanny*

When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea arrived; his name was Joseph, and he also was a disciple of Jesus. He went into the presence of Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate gave orders for the body to be given to Joseph.

So Joseph took it, wrapped it in a new linen sheet, and placed it in his own tomb, which he had just recently dug out of solid rock. Then he rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb and went away.

### **Reflection Cassy**

Like every human being,  
Jesus was born with nothing and dies naked and alone.

The hysterical clamour of the passion is now quiet.  
His bruised and blood stained body,  
marked with the wounds of nails and spear,  
is hastily washed and wrapped in a clean linen shroud  
and laid in the coldness of the stone tomb.  
Now an anonymous corpse, seemingly like any other,  
he is buried as he was born, in obscurity –  
no funeral procession, no elaborate mourning.

Vaguely the words of promise and resurrection,  
spoken to the disciples in these last days,  
stir in their memories, and puzzle them,  
as they try to piece together what Christ's death has  
meant.

However, we know how the story ends.  
We know that this is not the final 'Amen' over Jesus of Nazareth.  
In just a few short hours,  
he will emerge from the cold dark tomb victorious over  
sin and death.  
His agony has been worth it.

### **Response Theresa**

You will not abandon me to the grave,  
**nor let your Holy One see decay. (Ps 16:10)**

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God,  
you rested in the tomb on the Sabbath day,  
and so sanctified the grave to be a bed of hope for your  
people.

Lead us to sorrow for our sins,  
which were the cause of your suffering and death,  
and grant that when our bodies lie in the dust  
we may rise and live with you.

**Amen.**

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.  
**by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

**Silence:**

Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**All** “**Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom**”.

### **FINAL BLESSING Theresa**

Most merciful God,  
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus  
Christ  
delivered and saved the world:  
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross  
we may triumph in the power of his victory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **HYMN 6 IT IS A THING MOST WONDERFUL**

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=C8IMUE\\_UXHQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8imue_uxhq)

### **End of Service**

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These readings, reflections and prayers from Pastor Vince  
Gerhardy, St Paul's, form our Good Friday Service