**Good Friday Act of Worship – 10th April 2020**

**Opening Words:**

Welcome to our Good Friday Service. The service today will be different from the previous two I have filmed in recent days. Today we will have a focus on the cross, nails and the candles. The candles will be extinguished one by one after each reflection/meditation has been read.

There is a Christian song written by Matt Redman and I want to read to you the first verse and chorus:  
*Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice,   
you became nothing poured out to death.   
Many times I’ve wondered at your gift of life,  
and I’m in that place one again,  
I’m in that place one again.*

*And once again I look upon the cross where you died,  
I’m humbled by your mercy  
and I’m broken inside.  
Once again I thank you,   
once again I pour out my life.*

Matt Redman © 1995 Thankyou Music/Capitol CMG Publishing/Integritymusic.com

**Prayer**

Lord we come before you on this ‘Good Friday’ we are as ‘in that place one again’ to remember the horrors of Good Friday when you were crucified on the cross of Calvary.   
We’re in that place again to remember your great sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice that has and ever will be made. We are here ‘in that place again’ to remember and to give thanks to you for giving your life that we might live, not just today but in eternity.

Help us to remember today the horror of what you went through but also the love that you showed then and show to us now as we are living in isolation. Help us to acknowledge that we are joined by the Spirit in love and unity. Gathered together in worship.

And so we join together in saying the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:   
Our Father who art in heaven….

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| **Hymn: There is a green hill far away**  1.. There is a green hill far away  without a city wall,  were the dear Lord was crucified,  who died to save us all. | 4.. There was no other good enough  to pay the price of sin;  He only could unlock the gate  of heaven, and let us in. |
| 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. | 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. |
| 3.. He died that we might be forgiven,  He died to make us good,  that we might go at last to heaven,  saved by his precious blood. | Cecil Frances Alexander (1818 – 1895) ccl 275793 |

**Bible Reading: Matthew 27:11-26 – Jesus before Pilate**

**11**Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’

‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied.

**12**When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. **13**Then Pilate asked him, ‘Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?’ **14**But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge – to the great amazement of the governor.

**15**Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. **16**At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3A11-26&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-24146a)] Barabbas. **17**So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, ‘Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ **18**For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

**19**While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.’

**20**But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

**21**‘Which of the two do you want me to release to you?’ asked the governor.

‘Barabbas,’ they answered.

**22**‘What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ Pilate asked.

They all answered, ‘Crucify him!’

**23**‘Why? What crime has he committed?’ asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’

**24**When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood,’ he said. ‘It is your responsibility!’

**25**All the people answered, ‘His blood is on us and on our children!’

**26**Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

We hear now a ‘Meditation of Pilate’s Wife’

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| **Meditation of Pilate’s Wife**  I told him not to get involved.  ‘Leave it alone,’ I said,  ‘stay out of it.  After all you’re the governor,  you’re the one in charge.  Let the Jews sort it out,  send him off to Herod,  get someone else to do your dirty work for a change.  It’s not your problem!’  So what did he do?  Made a right botch of things, that’s what!  Oh, he tried all right, I’m not denying that;  he wanted to wash his hands of Jesus as much as I did,  more if anything.  I’ve never seen him so agitated,  so uncertain what to do.  And to be fair he took my advice, to a point;  sent the man off to Herod, just as I suggested.  But let him send Jesus back, that’s what I can’t understand –  he let that cunning old devil off the hook  and left himself in the lurch.  Honestly, men!  After that it was downhill all the way.  ‘You decide,’ he told the crowd,  ‘Barabbas, or Jesus?  It’s up to you?’  Brilliant!  They could all see what he was angling for,  and they were damned if he was going to get it. | ‘Give us Barabbas!’ they shouted,  and you could almost hear the chuckle;  they could scarcely keep the smirk off their faces.  So there he was,  nowhere else to turn,  no one else to turn to,  the decision his and his alone.  Yet even than all wasn’t lost;  he should have stood up to the mob,  listened to his conscience –  not that he ever has before, mind you.  But when they suggested his loyalty might be suspect,  his job on the line,  that settled it.  Now look at him. I thought my nerves were bad,  but his – they’re shot right through.  He just can’t forget the man,  night or day, never a moment’s peace.  He’s tormented by shame,  riddled with guilt.  Well, I tried to warn him;  I couldn’t do more.  He made his decision, and now he has t live with it.  But I can’t help wondering sometimes,  when I look into his eyes,  when I catch that haunted, hunted expression deep within,  just who passed judgement on whom that day.  Was it Pontius who condemned Jesus?  Or was he the one condemned? |
| From Nick Fawcett’s book: “Worship through the seasons – Reflective Services for Lent, Holy Week and Easter”, Kevin Mayhew, Suffolk, 2001, page 86/7. | |

*(The first candle is blown out)*

**Prayers**

Lord we can only start to imagine how the shouts of the crowd must have hurt you. Only a few days earlier you were heralded a hero by those who welcomed you into Jerusalem. And now crowds gathered and shouted not words of praise and hosanna….but that they wished for Barabbas to be released and for you to be crucified. We can only imagine the loneliness you must have felt.

Pilate washed his hands of you, had you flogged and handed over to be crucified. On this day we remember and we give thanks for your great sacrifice that gives the glorious opportunity for humanity to receive the gift of everlasting life. So, Lord, we come and say thank you!

Amen.

**Bible Reading: Matthew 27:27-44 - The soldiers mock Jesus**

**27**Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers round him. **28**They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, **29**and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said. **30**They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. **31**After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

**The crucifixion of Jesus**

**32**As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. **33**They came to a place called Golgotha (which means ‘the place of the skull’). **34**There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. **35**When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. **36**And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. **37**Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is jesus, the king of the jews.

**38**Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. **39**Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads **40**and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!’ **41**In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. **42**‘He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43**He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, “I am the Son of God.”’ **44**In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

**Reflection**

*I don’t know if any of you have ever seen the film Directed by Mel Gibson: “The Passion of the Christ” which came out in 2004. I recall going to watch it at the cinema when at Theological College I went with friends from the different Theological Colleges.*

Ever since watching it whenever I prepare for Good Friday services my mind goes back to that cinema. The large screen…the surround sound…I recall Mel Gibson getting criticised for making it the crucifixion scene too bloody and too graphic. Part of me always thinks can any re-enactment of such a horrendous way of dying ever be too graphic?

I will never forget the scenes where Jesus (played by Jim Caviezel) is being flogged, beaten and whipped not to mention the crucifixion itself. They were horrendous scenes, scenes where in another film I might have looked away in disgust and horror. But knowing this was an event in Christian faith and history that changed the world forever enacted by someone – I forced myself to watch not because of some fascination with pain but because Jesus bore that pain, that horrendous pain, for me and for you. He was willing and prepared to die that we might have life.

This is very much at the heart of the Gospel: The Good News that we, as followers of Christ, are called to share and proclaim in the communities in which we are set. At present that calling to share our faith is being done in unique ways as we are isolated in our homes. And we are not likely to have another Good Friday, or Easter celebration, quite like this one!

But even though we are apart, we are united by a bond stronger than anything. A bond with one another and for those who believe a bond with Jesus. As I type this reflection the words of a hymn/song come to mind, I will read a chorus, verse and chorus to you:

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| *Bind us, together, Lord, bins us together with cords that cannot be broken; bind us together, Lord,*  *bind us together, O bind us together with love.* | Made for the glory of God,  Purchased by His precious Son.  Born with the right to be clean, for Jesus the victory as won. | *Bind us, together, Lord, bins us together with cords that cannot be broken; bind us together, Lord,*  *bind us together, O bind us together with love.* |
| Bob Gillman © 1977 Thankyou Music/Capitol CMG Publishing/IntegrityMusic.com ccli 275793 | | |

It was love for humanity for His Father, God, and for you, me and the whole of humanity that took Jesus to the cross of Calvary. It was a dark place for him as he bore the sins of humanity upon his shoulders as he died for us. The love of God nailed to the cross. He died for us.

*(the second candle is blown out)*

The next song may be new to you – I invite you to listen to the words and sing along if you want.

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| **Hymn: Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day**  1.. Oh, to see the dawn  of the darkest day:  Christ on the road to Calvary. Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten, then nailed to a cross of wood.  *This, the power of the cross: Christ became sin for us. Took the blame, bore the wrath -  we stand forgiven at the cross.* | 3.. Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath quakes as its Maker bows His head. Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life;  ‘Finished!’ the victory cry.  *This, the power of the cross: Christ became sin for us. Took the blame, bore the wrath -  we stand forgiven at the cross.* |
| 2.. Oh, to see the pain written on your face, bearing the awesome weight of sin. Every bitter thought, every evil deed crowning your bloodstained brow.  *This, the power of the cross:*  *Christ became sin for us.*  *Took the blame, bore the wrath -*  *we stand forgiven at the cross.* | 4.. Oh, to see my name written in the wounds, for through Your suffering I am free. Death is crushed to death,  life is mine to live  Won through your selfless love.  *This, the power of the cross: Son of God slain for us. What a love! What a cost!*  *We stand forgiven at the cross.* |
| Keith Getty and Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music/Capitol CMG Publishing/Integritymusic.com ccl 275793 | |

**Bible Reading: John 19:25-30**

**25**Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26**When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ **27**and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**The death of Jesus**

**28**Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ **29**A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. **30**When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

We hear now a ‘Meditation of Mary Magdalene’

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| **Meditation of Mary Magdalene**  It was over;  finished –  thirty-three years of life, three years of ministry,  seven days of turmoil, Six hours of agony,  finally ended -  and I couldn’t believe it.  Yes, I know that sounds daft, having stood there and watched him die, having seen them drive nails into his hands, having watched the spear thrust into his side, having witnessed his dying breath. What else did I expect, you may ask?  What other outcome could there possibly have been? And I understand all that, for I knew he was dying, of course I did.  Yet when it finally happened,  when the end came,  I was numb, unable to take it in,  paralysed with grief.  It just didn’t seem possible that this man Jesus, whom we’d known and loved, whom we’d trusted and followed, who had been the very centre of our lives, could have been taken from us, snuffed out, never to be seen again. It wasn’t that he hadn’t prepared us, you could never accuse him of that -  he’d spoken of death until we were sick and  tired of hearing it.  And we honestly thought we were ready, our hearts torn in two,  that we’d always expected him in the final | that we’d taken it all in,  come to terms with the inevitable,  steeled ourselves to face the worst.  But we hadn’t,  not when it came to the wire.  The theory was one thing,  the reality something else.  I realised as we stood there,  the tears rolling down our faces,  chapter to come up smiling,  put one over on those wretched Pharisees  and show them who was boss.  But of course it wasn’t like that,  nothing like it at all.  It was over,  finished,  just like he’d said it would be,  and I couldn’t get my head round it,  couldn’t make sense of it whatever.  Yet there’s one thing ‘ve held on to since that  awful moment;  one memory which has brought comfort even  in the darkest of hours,  and that is those last words of his,  that cry he uttered with such dreadful yet  confident finality:  ‘It is finished,’ he shouted.  ‘It is finished!’  Words spoken not in sorrow,  not in anger,  nor in weary resignation,  but in a tone of sheer thanksgiving,  as though somehow even there,  especially there,  he had accomplished the very thing he came to do. |
| From Nick Fawcett’s book: “Worship through the seasons – Reflective Services for Lent, Holy Week and Easter”, Kevin Mayhew, Suffolk, 2001, page 94/5. | |

*(The third candle is blown out)*

**Time of prayer**

Loving God the candles that once lit up the cross have now been extinguished. We remember and give thanks for your death that enabled us to have life and life everlasting.

We com before you in this time of separation and lift to you the concerns that we have and the worries we carry.

In a few moments of quiet and stillness we bring our prayers of concern and anxiety to God either in silence or spoken out in our homes….   
*(we keep silence)*

In a few moments of quiet and stillness we bring our prayers of thanks to God either in silence or spoken out in our homes….   
*(we keep silence)*

Lord we pray for your peace and strength to encircle us at these difficult times.

We offer all our prayers to you.

Amen.

Our final hymn is one I am sure many of us know.

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| **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. | 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? |
| 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. | 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. |
| Isaac Watts (1674 – 1748) ccl 275793 | |

**Final Prayer**

Lord, on this day when we remembered the horror of Good Friday when you died for us. May you hold us all in one loving and gracious embrace. That we may know even if on our own that you are present with us now and always. Amen.

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I want to express a huge thanks to all who helped make this service possible.

For those who read different parts and those who led the music.

Please remember if you are going to be taking part in following the Easter Sunday Service and you want to join in Communion please have bread and wine/juice available in your homes so that we can join together in sharing Communion.

I hope that as many of us as possible will follow the service by reading this document or following the video on the Chapel website.