

4.3.2026 Good Friday

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

Isaiah 53:3-12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25; John 18-19:42

“It is finished”

*Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The readings for Good Friday begin with voices from the Hebrew scriptures. The Psalmist cries, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?...I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.*” The Psalmist’s cry of forsakenness, echoed by Jesus from the cross in Matthew and Mark (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34), gives voice to the anguish of humanity’s ongoing cry to God, day and night around the world in places of illness and dying, oppression and war. The drama of Good Friday lays bare the ongoing and often unjust suffering of innocent people and the complicity of crowds and nations in this suffering.

Jesus’ cross and suffering also speak to us through the words of Isaiah about God’s Suffering Servant: “*He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.*” As Christians, we are the inheritors of a faith that understands Christ crucified for the sins, transgressions and evil of the world. Jesus reveals God’s purpose for him in that well-loved verse, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life*” (Jn. 3:16). God gave his Son to suffer death on the cross, to be crushed for our iniquities, so that by faith in his bruises, all people might have eternal life.

Isaiah reveals humanity’s wayward sinfulness, writing, “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” Human beings and nations continue to turn away from God and from their neighbor in need, both across the street and across the world. How shall we honor Good Friday – the day we mediate upon Jesus’ cross and God’s love for this fallen world? We are inheritors of, not simply of an old story; we are inheritors of a living faith in a living God who desires that we embody the suffering love of Jesus for others.

We honor this day when we remember that Jesus continues to suffer in this world. Like sheep without a shepherd, we continue go our own way, repeating the passion story of Christ in the modern world. We continue to see human beings and nations go astray turning on their own way. We continue to see a perversion of justice in the world where powerful leaders like Pilate cannot do the right thing, cannot pursue truth, and instead, cave to the demands of the crowd.

The Passion of Christ is echoed today when people betray those whom they should love and protect. Like Judas, we throw people under the bus when they no longer serve our goals and

interests, and we betray those whom we should protect and care for.

The Passion of Christ is echoed today when we, like Peter, deny our Lord. When pressed for a confession of faith, we remain silent. When we should help Christ in our neighbor in need, we turn a blind eye. We nuance and massage our confession until it loses all meaning, and at times, we simply drive past someone in their hour of need, denying Jesus who is always standing before us in our neighbor.

The Passion of Christ is echoed today by religious leaders who seek to serve not Christ, but their nation and its powerful leaders and interests, leaders who confuse faith with nationalism. Like the Pharisees, religious leaders today can also turn a deaf ear to Jesus in the poor and the oppressed, remaining silent before those the world calls unimportant and disposable.

The Passion of Christ is echoed today when perversions of justice carry away countless people, placing them like Christ outside the gate of the city. In doing so, we ignore Jesus' words to Pilate, "*You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.*" God has given us in our communities and nations, the sacred trust of justice to help and lift the weak and all who are in need.

The Passion of Christ is echoed today as nations seek to justify violence and war in Jesus' name. Standing before Pilate, Jesus says, "*My kingdom is not from this world.*" Yet daily, we confuse the nearness of the kingdom of God in Jesus with kingdoms and violent battles of this world. We continue to forget that Jesus told Peter to put away his sword (Mt. 26:52).

The Passion of Christ is echoed today as we falsify, misrepresent, and twist truth for our own gain. Jesus says to Pilate, "*Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.*" Pilate asked him, "*What is truth?*" We have gone astray because haven't struggled with the truth of Jesus' love and forgiveness. Instead, we have declared untruths as truth, believing that an untruth said enough will become the truth.

The Passion of Christ is echoed today, like the crowd on Good Friday shouting, "*Crucify him!*", when we are swayed by popular opinion to become uncaring of others, shamefully treating as invisible and expendable Christ standing in our very midst.

Good Friday is an opportunity to realize that we have not always been who we say we are. Good Friday is an opportunity to recognize that we have not always done what is right: we have acted uncharitably, mercilessly, and hardheartedly toward the weak – toward those we should have helped and lifted. Good Friday is an opportunity to seek God's forgiveness for the evils we have committed in thought, word, and deed.

Jesus' words from the cross, "*It is finished,*" are not the words of a hopelessness lost cause. Jesus is saying, "It is accomplished. It is complete. My work is done." Jesus was betrayed,

handed over to religious and political violence, and his truth was ignored. Crucified, the one who thirsted is the one who offers living water to cleanse us of our sin. Finally, Jesus was laid in a tomb so that his death might open the way to eternal life for all who believe in him.

We know this story well, yet we need to hear it again and again in the context of our lives in the brokenness of today's world. Good Friday should encourage us to renew our faith in Christ. Good Friday should help us see the truth about ourselves and the communities in which we live. Good Friday should open us to the truth about the God who loves us and our enemies. Good Friday should cause a change of heart, helping us to live for others as Christ lives for us.

Good Friday should remind us that one day, we too, will all be placed in a tomb,  
a grave that, by faith, is the way to eternal life.

At the end of your life, like Jesus, will you say, "It is finished. I have accomplished the work  
that you have given me, O Lord, to do over my lifetime."

Live each day as Christ for your neighbor. Honor truth and seek justice for all in need.  
Honor this day by carrying Jesus' cross of love for others each and every day. Amen.