

## Call to Worship

In my distress I called to the Lord; he answered me and set me free. The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid. It is better to trust in the Lord than to depend on man.

## Introit HYMN: StF 270 Come and see the King of love.

- 1 Come and see, come and see,  
come and see the King of love ;  
see the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears.  
Soldiers mock, rulers sneer  
as he lifts the cruel cross ;  
lone and friendless now, he climbs towards the hill.  
*We worship at your feet,  
where wrath and mercy meet,  
and a guilty world is washed  
by love's pure stream.  
For us he was made sin —  
oh, help me take it in.  
Deep wounds of love cry out  
'Father, forgive.'  
I worship, I worship  
the Lamb who was slain.*
- 2 Come and weep, come and mourn  
for your sin that pierced him there ;  
so much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail.  
All our pride, all our greed,  
all our fallenness and shame ;  
and the Lord has laid the punishment on him.
- 3 Man of heaven, born to earth  
to restore us to your heaven.  
Here we bow in awe beneath your searching eyes.  
From your tears comes our joy,  
from your death our life shall spring ;  
by your resurrection power we shall rise.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

## Reading: John 18:1-14

<sup>1</sup> When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

<sup>2</sup> Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup> So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

<sup>4</sup> Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”

<sup>5</sup> “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.

“I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) <sup>6</sup> When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they said.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”

<sup>9</sup> This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: “I have not lost one of those you gave me.”

<sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)

<sup>11</sup> Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

<sup>12</sup> Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him <sup>13</sup> and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

### **Prayers of Approach**

Lord, teach us to understand that your Son died to save us not from suffering, but from ourselves, not from injustice, far less from justice, but from being unjust. He died that we might live – but live more as he lives.

We come in prayer to you on this dreadful anniversary, conscious that we were bought at a price, that your Son gave himself for us. We are so aware that we are unworthy, and ask for your mercy to surround us now, as we think of the events of that first Good Friday, and stand with Jesus in his suffering.

Lord, what would we have done? Would we have fallen asleep and then run away terrified, like the disciples at Gethsemane? Thank you that you forgive us in our weakness, when we run away from conflict and cost.

Lord, what would we have done? Would we have shouted ‘hosanna’ on one day, and ‘crucify’ on the next? Forgive us when we fail you because it is easier to follow the crowd.

Lord, what would we have done? Would we have been harsh and judgemental like the Pharisees? Forgive us when we are quick to condemn, or hide behind the law.

Lord, what would we have done? Would we have been like the soldiers, hard and factual, just doing their job? Forgive us when we act blindly and unthinkingly, without considering the effect on others.

Lord, what would we have done? Would we have slunk away, ashamed, from the horror of Calvary? We bless you that you forgive us when we let you down, and that your love is stronger than all the evil the world could throw at you.

Lord, accept these prayers, offered in your name.

Amen

### **Reading: John 18:15-40**

<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard, <sup>16</sup> but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

<sup>17</sup> “You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter.

He replied, "I am not."

<sup>18</sup> It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

<sup>20</sup> "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret." <sup>21</sup> Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

<sup>22</sup> When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

<sup>23</sup> "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" <sup>24</sup> Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

<sup>26</sup> One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" <sup>27</sup> Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

<sup>28</sup> Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

<sup>30</sup> "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

<sup>31</sup> Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. <sup>32</sup> This took place to fulfil what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

<sup>33</sup> Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup> "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

<sup>35</sup> "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

<sup>36</sup> Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

<sup>37</sup> "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

<sup>38</sup> "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him." <sup>39</sup> But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

<sup>40</sup> They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

***We say together the Apostles' Creed***

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

**Reading: John 19:1-16**

<sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe <sup>3</sup> and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

<sup>4</sup> Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

<sup>6</sup> As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

<sup>7</sup> The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

<sup>8</sup> When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, <sup>9</sup> and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

<sup>12</sup> From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

<sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). <sup>14</sup> It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

<sup>15</sup> But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

<sup>16</sup> Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

### **Music: Finlandia [Sibelius]**

### **Sermon**

Suppose that -

Judas had not taken a bribe of 30 pieces of silver, and that Jesus had not overturned the tables of the money changers.

Jesus had not disputed with the Pharisees, and questioned their self-satisfaction; had not shamed the would-be stoners of the woman taken in adultery, who were, until put on the spot, sure enough of their own righteousness; had not told the religious experts that they were hypocrites and whitened sepulchres, and called into question the authority of organised religion; had not ridden into Jerusalem in triumph, raising hopes amongst ordinary people that the nation was going to take a sudden turn for the better; had not let people call him ‘Messiah’, with all the hopes that were involved in that; had not upset the High Priest, and made him feel threatened by a new order; had not seemed a danger to the nation.

Then, if only some of these things had not been done, there would have been no crucifixion. If Jesus has preached quietly, stayed out of harm’s way, been modest, judicious and uncontroversial, then, no crucifixion, in all likelihood.

No arrest; no trial, no humiliation, no scourging, no via dolorosa, no cross, no agony, no desolation, no death.

And no resurrection, and no church. Just another soon-to-be forgotten religious sectarian, perhaps recognized as a prophet for a while, by a few, before being forgotten.

But there was a crucifixion. There was that ghastly parade, there was the perfunctory legal process, there were the nails through the hands and feet.

And there were those many hours, hanging there, as life ebbed away.

And as a consequence of that day, nearly 2000 years ago, we are here now. Because without it, there would have been no faith, no Church, no Christian witness which has moderated the violence to which peoples and countries are otherwise given. And, although it is true to say that many terrible things have been done in the name of religion, there have been worse things done in its absence.

So, this terrible day of sadness is also a day of gratitude, because without it, what would we be, and where would we be?

And we have to credit Jesus with the foresight – perhaps the divine foresight - of knowing that this would be the outcome. He knew what he was going towards – both the suffering and the long-term outcome. It was because he knew where he was heading, that his journey would take him into extreme suffering and that he would lead the world out, in a better direction, that he did what he did. He did not annoy all those people and pit his own life in jeopardy regardless of the consequences, but because of the consequences.

So for us, today is a solemn day for sure, a day when suffering is remembered, but it is also a day when we stand in awe of Jesus's vision; at the plan he had which he had the courage to stick to, despite the agony, the humiliation and the desolation.

That is why this is truly Good Friday, not Dreadful Friday. We grieve at his suffering, but, let us not pretend, we already know the outcome, and we stand at this low point and cannot help but look up through the darkness at the mountain top which is Easter; so high above us and so bright; the new presence which, once we see it, dominates the world. It is that bright vision which guided Jesus through this dark day, and we thank God for it.

### **Prayers for Others**

O Jesus, your cross speaks both to us and to our world. In your dying for us you accepted the pain and the hurt of all people.

The sign of the cross stretches out across the broken world as a mark of reconciliation. You have made peace with us, help us to make peace with you by sharing in your reconciling work.

Be in us, work through us, and enable us to bring peace wherever we find conflict, help wherever we find suffering, and hope, even the hope which you bring to the world, wherever we encounter despair.

Guide us, and guide all your people, in every corner of the world, to live as you lived, and you would have us live, not for ourselves alone, but for the holy truth that where God is, love is, and that all the power, all the aggression, and all the selfishness in the world will never undermine that truth.

And as you, Lord Jesus, were true to that truth, even to the point of death on the cross, so may all your friends and followers be good and loyal and hold to this precious truth.

So, with this intent, we pray for all your poor, all who suffer, all caught up in conflict and civil strife; all who have fewer of the blessings of life than we have, all who are in misery, or afraid. Bless, we pray, all such. Bless the weak, the disregarded and the persecuted who were your particular focus in your ministry on earth, and give us the grace to continue it as you would have us do.

*Amen*

### **Reading: John 19:17-42**

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

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<sup>19</sup> Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. <sup>21</sup> The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

<sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

<sup>24</sup> “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

“They divided my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.”

So this is what the soldiers did.

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

<sup>28</sup> Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

<sup>31</sup> Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. <sup>32</sup> The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

<sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. <sup>35</sup> The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,” <sup>37</sup> and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”

<sup>38</sup> Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. <sup>39</sup> He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. <sup>40</sup> Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. <sup>41</sup> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.

<sup>42</sup> Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

## Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.**

**Amen.**

## **Blessing**

Lord Jesus, forgive us for failing you, as even the disciples did. Through thoughtlessness we betray you; through fear we run away from you; through cowardice we deny you, not wanting people to know that we are your followers. Have mercy on us, as you had mercy on people and the others, and when the cock crows in our hearts, and we realise what we have done, help us to bear your gaze of love.

May the cross of our Lord protect you who belong to Jesus,  
And strengthen your hearts in faith to Christ,  
In hardship and in ease, in life and in death, now and for ever.

*Simon, Bishop of Iran [d.339]*

**Postlude: HYMN: This is your coronation [Passion Chorale].**