

PRAYER

King of glory,

We adore You, our Savior and our Lord. You suffered on the cross and gave Your life for our redemption, our reconciliation. We offer our worship tonight out of unspeakable gratitude. Amen

HYMN #76 My Song is Love Unknown vs 1-2, 5

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Psalm 22.1-3

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

People: Empty, broken, lifeless, I give my spirit, Lord.

Leader: Psalm 22.4-7

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads

People: Empty, broken, lifeless, I give my spirit, Lord.

Leader: Psalm 22.9-13

Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

People: Empty, broken, lifeless, I give my spirit, Lord.

Leader: Psalm 22.14-18

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.

People: Empty, broken, lifeless, I give my spirit, Lord.

All: We come before the cross to worship Christ, our Lord, empty, broken and lifeless.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Suffering Christ,

Even as the world turns silent as Your last words fall from Your dying breath, even as the world turns dark as the light fades from Your eyes, illuminate us with Your grace. By the power of Your self-giving love, be with us Lord Christ, who reigns from the cross. Amen

Introduction: In the person of Christ, our God is revealed to us in our own flesh. As we followed Him through His life and ministry we meet our God, we gathered to hear His words, we came to His table. Tonight we follow Jesus to the cross, the center of the Christ event. The beautiful and offensive cross, the cross which saves us and the cross that we desperately want to turn away from. As Jesus hung from the cross, our God was revealed to us fully and completely. In the flesh, nailed to the cross, the God that is revealed is a God who is for us, a God who suffers for my sake. So as we meditate on the seven last words of Christ, let us ask ourselves what does the cross have to say to us today? Who is the Christ, who we meet on the cross for us, today?

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

First Word: Jesus came into the world to speak a word of forgiveness. Jesus came to speak the love of God, words we could not let Him speak, not in this place. Not in the place where we speak vengeance and injustice. Jesus came not to pronounce wrath but the limitless mercy of our God, and we led Him to death, we killed Him. To the One who came to speak gently we responded in anger. By our hands He was led to the cross. But even as Christ went to the cross, He speaks forgiveness to us, He announces God's forgiveness to us all. Even as our voices call out to mock the one who hangs from the cross, Jesus assures us of our deliverance.

Silence

HYMN #83 O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High vs 1, 3, 5

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Second Word: In the cross we find the strange and marvelous strife, the mighty clash, death itself is led off to die, death itself hangs on the cross, awaiting its final defeat. As we read this passage we recognize ourselves in the thieves, we hang alongside Jesus, awaiting our death, calling out to Christ, telling Him to save Himself and more importantly, us. Even as we call out in a mocking voice, that is exactly what He is accomplishing. He will do more than just remember us. He will call us from the sentence of condemnation that we die under, and call us into His salvation, into life. As we find Christ crucified between these criminals, we find the paradoxical center of our lives, we find life among the dead. We find something more than an old story told year after year.

Silence

HYMN #101 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

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.

Third Word: Jesus announces to those few who were able to overcome the offense of the cross, to look upon their crucified Lord, that from now on they will be family, the community that bears faithful witness to the death of Christ. They will be the Church. As we look upon the God who is dying to love us, we are called into a new relationship with the One who hangs from the cross, we are called into a new relationship with our God. God will establish a new relationship, a new reality, the reality of the cross. In this moment, our alienation from our Creator is destroyed, the estrangement, the walls of hostility between each other is destroyed. In the cross the old boundaries are put to death, from the cross the Church is created. We are gathered around this instrument of torture and death, brought into the community of witnesses, so we may forever testify to what we have seen. To the incredible grace we have witnessed.

Silence

HYMN #85 What Wondrous Love is This?

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Fourth Word: Death on the cross was the cruelest, the most barbarous manner of death that the ancient world could come up with. But the Gospel writers do not give us the gruesome details that such a death ensured, because those are not what lie at the center of this event. The terror, and torture involved in such a death was a given, the loneliness, the forsakenness, the abandonment is what makes this word so heart wrenching. In this word, Jesus calls out as the faithful Son, to the God who has seemingly abandoned Him. He takes on the voice of the Psalmist, the voice of our own hearts, and makes it His own. So that all may know, never again

will they have to feel alone, never again will you have to feel abandoned and forsaken, Christ has taken on your suffering, Christ is with you as a living presence.

Silence

HYMN #80 Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley vs 1 X2

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.”

Fifth Word: Christ announced to His disciples that He identified with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned. In the Christ of the cross, we find Him imprisoned, stripped, tortured and thirsty. As He hangs from the cross, He has made the cries of those who suffer, His own. He cries out, not to fulfill Scripture, but because He experiences the suffering and pain of the horrors of human life. It is precisely in the weakness of the world, the suffering of the cross that we find our God. This is where our God has chosen to reveal Himself, among those who experience physical hunger, among those who thirst for something more than suffering. It is this voice that echoes from the cross, which keeps us from retreating from the world, away from the needs of those who suffer. This voice draws us deeper and deeper into the pain of the real world, and it is this voice that reminds us of the Kingdom this voice ushers in. It is in this voice that we hear the Kingdom announced to those who suffer, the Kingdom which pours forth from the cross, the Kingdom which we still await.

Silence

HYMN #95 He Never Said a Mumbalin’ Word vs 1-3

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.

Sixth Word: Jesus announces that it is finished, it has been completed, peace has been made, you have been made whole. God has been revealed, the mission of the Messiah has been accomplished, the world has been reconciled, we have been made free. In this horrific act, this death which stand at the center of our worship, the center of our lives, we declare that Christ accomplished our salvation. That Christ calls us from death into life. That this death does not just have historical significance but has meaning for us today. We declare that as darkness hangs over the land, though my Lord is lifeless, I will not fear for I know that Christ has conquered. I look upon the cross, and see the work of love accomplished.

Silence

HYMN # 98 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Having said this, he breathed his last.

Seventh Word: Jesus died for you. He refused to do anything else. Christ was beaten, spit upon, mocked and ultimately wasted. Christ's work is the realization of the immovable will of God to have mercy unconditionally, to have love without limits. Christ has died once for all, Christ breathed His last and hangs truly dead. This is what the cross means for us today, this is who Christ is for us, today and forever. The deed is done, it is finished!

Silence

HYMN #78 Alas! And Did my Savior Bleed vs 1-3

HYMN RESPONSE Isaiah 53.4-9, 12 #102 *Were You There?*

Leader: Surely He has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

People: Were You There? Vs 1

Leader: But 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. 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.

People: Were You There? Vs 2

Leader: He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By a perversion of justice He was taken away. Who could have imagined His future? For He was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

People: Were You There? Vs 3

Leader: They made His grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in His mouth. He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

People: Were You There? Vs 4

BENEDICTION

May you find the cross a sure ground for hope, a firm foundation for faith, and the assurance of sins forgiven. May the blessing of God go with you, now and forevermore. Amen