

Good Friday 2020: A Service of Surrender

Introduction

Welcome

This is not a typical Good Friday service. We are not together, at least not physically. And our focus today is not on our sin and brokenness as we reflect on Jesus' death on the cross, but on the love he has for us in our distress. He did not come to condemn us or shame us... he came with gospel, good news about our transformation, about the love of the Father, about life and its abundance. End the dark day of his crucifixion is for us the central part of that good news. So today we share gospel for people in need of it...which is all of us.

At various points along the way we'll stop and invite you to listen to a song. And then return here, following the next link on the webpage, and so on, until we have concluded the service. And note that whether we are praying alone or with others in the room, we will use the plural because we are all connected together as one body of Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Let us begin with an opening prayer...

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy,
in love you gave your Son, Jesus,
not to condemn the world...
but to save, to rescue, the world through him...
that we all might be reunited
and live with you forever.
Bless us as we reflect in Your Spirit
on our Savior's suffering and death
that we may learn from his example
the way we should live.

Response: Amen.

Meditation:

This past Sunday... Palm Sunday... we did not talk about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem... the story in which the people of the city waved palm branches and laid their coats on the road as he passed by them. It's a good story, and important one in the Bible and in the Christian story... and important one even in the story of this congregation. But, as we've noted in the past, it's also a sad story. The entry was not triumphal for Jesus... it was a pre-emptive funeral procession, although most who were cheering him on at that moment were unaware of it. Jesus was five days from this death on that Sunday, and it's likely that some who shouted out "Hosanna!" on Sunday also cried out "Crucify him!" on Friday. People are fickle like that, like the weather.

The weather was what we talked about last Sunday instead—a storm on the Sea of Galilee, earlier in Jesus' ministry—and what it has to say to a world that has encountered a global storm of our own, one we never imagined when we began this new year, one for which we have not yet counted the cost, one for which the winds are still blowing. We sit uncomfortably in our small boats, wondering what will happen to us, whether this storm will do us in somehow. And we spoke last Sunday of how we are experiencing all the normal human emotions and reactions that accompany such an experience.

And so did Jesus. In the early stages of our faith we can get so enthralled with his power... with his divinity... that we forget his essential humanity. But there's a reason he referred to himself most often as "Son of Man"... a Hebrew phrase that's hard to interpret well in English but means something like "one of you." He came to be with us in our predicament, just as he walked out across an angry sea in the early hours one morning to be with his friends in their own predicament, in their fear and frustration and fatigue. And to be with us is to be somehow like us, to do life as we do it, to experience what we experience, to know what we know...even now.

And that's the Jesus we see during Holy Week. The one who shouted "Courage!" to the disciples in the storm-soaked boat was one who had to draw on courage himself when confronted with his own weariness, when saddened by the betrayal of his friends, when carrying the weight and burdens of his responsibility, when suffering the wounds of his enemies, when feeling the insecurity of his future, and, most especially, when encountering death itself, the greatest enemy of all. Jesus' path during those difficult five days is indeed one of courage... and as we noticed last Sunday... that kind of bold, gentle courage does not come from shame, not from will power, not even from action, but from surrender... a surrender to love... a letting go in trust to the One who holds us, who calms our storms, who shouts above the din of the world, "Peace! Be still." And, indeed, by the end of the week, the lips of Jesus were still. His heart was still. His body was still. But that stillness in death was merely the passage to peace, life, and joy... for death on a cross, a storm at sea, a virus at loose in the world, a stock market in turmoil, or a heart beset with fear.... none of that can or will defeat the love of God.

And so in this service today we, like the disciples, will walk with Jesus through those difficult days. We will watch him experience what we, too, have experienced in our own walk through life... what we may be experiencing this very week, this very day. We will hear his story, and reflect on our own experience each step of the journey. We will pray, sing, and listen. And, hopefully, we will finish this service together with a bit more stillness, a bit more peace, a bit deeper trust... as we surrender more fully into his all-encompassing, trustworthy love. He is truly in the boat with us. He is in our world with us. And even though the story we share today is sad, even though our hearts may yet be heavy... we know that today is not the end of the story...his or ours.

Surrender in Weariness

Scripture

Then Jesus led his disciples to an orchard called Gethsemane. He told them, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." He took Peter, James, and John with him. However, an intense feeling of great sorrow plunged his soul into deep sorrow and agony. And he said to them, "My heart is overwhelmed and crushed with grief. It feels as though I'm dying. Stay here and keep watch with me." Then he walked a short distance away, and overcome with grief, he threw himself face-down on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." (Matthew 26:36-38 TPT; Matthew 26:39 NRSV)

Personal Reflection

- *In what ways are you weary from intense sorrow and grief?*
- *In what ways are you weary from your own or others' overwhelming pain?*
- *In what ways are you weary from holding tight to anger or bitterness or fear?*

- *In what ways is God inviting you to surrender to his love for you... so you can experience hope in even your most exhausting times?*

Prayer

God of Rest, help us to surrender our weariness into your love...that our souls can experience the sufficiency of your grace, especially when we feel most weak.

Song

“Hungry” Video by MercyMe <https://youtu.be/OH0EeVmU2Ns>

Surrender in Betrayal

Scripture

At that moment Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, along with a large crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent to arrest Jesus by order of the ruling priests, the religious scholars, and the Jewish leaders. Now, Judas, the traitor, had arranged to give them a signal that would identify Jesus, for he had told them, “Jesus is the man I will kiss. So grab him and take him safely away.” Judas quickly stepped up to Jesus and said, “Rabbi, my Teacher!” and he kissed him affectionately on both cheeks. Then the armed men seized Jesus to arrest him. (Mark 14:43-46 TPT)

Meanwhile, Peter was still sitting outside in the courtyard when a servant girl came up to him and said, “I recognize you. You were with Jesus the Galilean.” In front of everyone Peter denied it and said, “I don’t have a clue what you’re talking about.” Later, as he stood near the gateway of the courtyard, another servant girl noticed him and said, “I know this man is a follower of Jesus the Nazarene!” Once again, Peter denied it, and with an oath he said, “I tell you, I don’t know the man!” A short time later, those standing nearby approached Peter and said, “We know you’re one of his disciples—we can tell by your speech. Your Galilean accent gives you away!” Peter denied it, and using profanity he said, “I don’t know the man!” At that very moment the sound of a crowing rooster pierced the night. Then Peter remembered the prophecy of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows you will have denied me three times.” With a shattered heart, Peter went out of the courtyard, sobbing with bitter tears. (Matthew 26:69-75 TPT)

Personal Reflection

- *In what ways are you feeling betrayed by the world, people, or life right now?*
- *In what ways are you feeling betrayed by God?*
- *In what ways are you feeling betrayed by yourself...or your own betrayal of others?*
- *In what ways is God inviting you to surrender to his love for you... so you can experience acceptance in even your most distressing times?*

Prayer

Faithful God, help us to surrender our betrayals and our betrayers into your love...that our souls can trust securely in your constant presence and steadfast devotion.

Song

“Here’s My Heart” video by Casting Crowns <https://youtu.be/qkSBmRAVXNc>

Surrender of Burdens

Scripture

No sooner did the high priests and the temple guards see Jesus that they all shouted in a frenzy, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate replied, "You take him then and nail him to a cross yourselves! I told you—he's not guilty! I find no reason to condemn him." ... But they screamed out, "Take him away! Take him away and crucify him!" Pilate replied, "Shall I nail your king to a cross?" The high priests answered, "We have no other king but Caesar!"

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them. So the soldiers seized him and took him away to be crucified. Jesus carried his own cross out of the city to the place called "The Skull," which in Aramaic is Golgotha. (John 19:6, 15-17 TPT)

Personal Reflection

- *What heavy burdens are you carrying that have been placed on you by others?*
- *What heavy burdens are you carrying that feel like they have been placed there by God?*
- *What heavy burdens are you carrying that you have placed on yourself?*
- *In what ways is God inviting you to surrender to his love for you... so you can experience rest in even your most overwhelming times?*

Prayer

Compassionate God, help us to surrender the weight of our burdens into your love...that our souls can experience the unforced rhythms of grace.

Song

"Come as You Are," Video by Sarah Reeves <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2jH0ycUEpU>

Surrender in Woundedness

Scripture

Then Pilate ordered Jesus to be brutally beaten with a whip of leather straps embedded with metal. And the soldiers also wove thorn-branches into a crown and set it on his head and placed a purple robe over his shoulders. Then, one by one, they came in front of him to mock him by saying, "Hail, to the king of the Jews!" And one after the other, they repeatedly punched him in the face. (John 19:1-3 TPT)
When they came to the place that is known as The Skull, the guards crucified Jesus, nailing him on the center cross between the two criminals. While they were nailing Jesus to the cross, he prayed over and over, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." (Luke 23:33-34 TPT)

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of deep sorrows who was no stranger to suffering and grief. We hid our faces from him in disgust and considered him a nobody, not worthy of respect. (Isaiah 53:3 TPT)

Personal Reflection

- *What wounds are still painfully open within you?*
- *What wounds have been re-opened recently?*
- *What wounds are fresh in your life?*

- *In what ways is God inviting you to surrender to his love for you ... so you can experience healing in even your most pain-filled times?*

Prayer

God of Comfort, help us to surrender the pain of our wounds into your love...that our souls can experience the hope of your healing presence.

Song

“Were You There” Video by Andrea Thomas <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpSScICWJ9M>

Surrender in Insecurity

Scripture

And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46 NRSV)

Personal Reflection

- *What insecurities, anxieties, or fears seem always present in the depth of your being?*
- *What insecurities, anxieties, or fears have been intensified what you’re going through now?*
- *What insecurities, anxieties, or fears are new in your life?*
- *In what ways is God inviting you to surrender to his love for you... so you can experience peace in even your most chaotic times?*

Prayer

Ever-present God, help us to surrender our feelings of insecurity, fear, and isolation into your love... that our souls can experience the reality that, in Christ, nothing can separate us from your unconditional love.

Song

“Oh, the Deep Love of Jesus” Video by Simon Khorolskiy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLTu1xv2-Us>

Surrender in Dying

Scripture

It was now only midday, yet the whole world became dark for three hours as the light of the sun faded away. And suddenly in the temple the thick veil hanging in the Holy Place was ripped in two! Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, I surrender my Spirit into your hands.” And he took his last breath and died. (Luke 23:44-46 TPT)

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:40-42 NRSV)

Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid. (Mark 15:46-47 NRSV)

Personal Reflection

- *Has something died, or is something dying, in your life or soul that might still come to life if given a chance?*
- *Has something died, or is something dying, in your life or soul that needs to die so that you might live more fully?*
- *Have you been trying to live while enclosed in a tomb of your own, or another's, making?*
- *In what ways is God inviting you to surrender to his love for you... so you can experience release in even your most desperate times?*

Prayer

God of Life, help us to surrender our every dying... this day, and every day, until our last day... into your love...that our souls can experience the safety of your embrace... and the peace that passes all understanding.

Song

"All to Jesus" Video by Simple Hymns <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuKZbWZFWNg>

Closing

Meditation

Earlier in his ministry Jesus had looked at the faces of the eager crowd gathered around him... people who were so much like us in their experience of life. They were weary, had been betrayed, carried painful wounds, were insecure, and knew they would die. He had compassion on them, for he loved them. He had come to them in their distress with the good news of the kingdom of God. And so he "en-couraged" them... he gave them courage, he gave them hope, he gave them himself...

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG)

Today, we have kept company with Jesus on his journey to the cross... so that we might love him more dearly... and learn from him more clearly... how we might follow in his footsteps on our own journey through life... inspired and empowered by his courageous surrender to love to risk our own surrender to God's love... and, perhaps, the surprise that rather than falling... we will float... and experience what it truly means to live freely and lightly... no matter what circumstances we may find ourselves in.

There is freedom in that choice to let go... to let what needs to die, die... so that what God desires to live, might live. This requires courage, indeed. *(will be edited...And in those who cared for him in his dying there was courage as well. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two Pharisees, members of that group that so often missed the point, asked for the body of Jesus. They publicly took him down from the cross and buried him, following Jewish custom. in doing so, these Pharisees who had courageously chosen the narrow way, who had opened their hearts to the love of God, declared through their actions*

that they were followers of Jesus... and were willing to die for Him, if necessary, as he had died for them.)

This kind of courage, this kind of surrender, is beyond our normal human abilities. It's a gift from God for those who will receive it. And with it comes a freedom that only those who have lived it can ever explain. For there is a wind of freedom blowing in our sick world... and on this day, this holy day, this GOOD Friday, we can let it fill our lungs to give us new breath for a strong faith.

Personal Reflection

- *How do you see God offering you courage today?*
- *How do you see God inviting you to surrender to His love?*
- *How will you respond?*

Prayer

Courageous, Suffering Savior,
your passion and death... your surrender in and to love...
is the sacrifice that unites earth and heaven...
and opens the door to eternal life for the whole world.
May we who have prayerfully reflected on these mysteries today
follow in your steps... and live out your example...
so that the whole world may come to surrender
and share your glory... on earth, as it is in heaven
Response: Amen.