

*A Service for  
Good Friday*

**A dramatised version of Luke's account,  
with prayers & meditations**

*J. D. West*

*This series of readings, prayers and reflections should run through, as far as possible, without introductions. People reading parts could remain either seated or standing in their places, to minimise movement and distraction.*

*Parts can be allocated as follows:-*

*Narrator  
Jesus  
Servant girl  
Peter  
Bystander 1  
Bystander 2  
{Chief Priest  
{Scribe  
Pilate  
Soldier  
Criminal 1  
Criminal 2*

*The Congregation as the crowd also join in at some points*

*Reflections and prayers may also be allocated to people.  
The worship leader reads the remaining parts.  
The hymns are suggestions.*



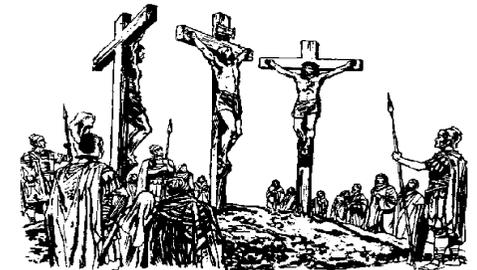
A panorama of perfect love.  
The pinnacle in time fulfilling a history  
of promises,  
of hopes,  
of expectations.  
The disappointments  
evils, sorrows,  
and failures of all time,  
dealt with in a moment of time.  
A moment set in time,  
setting the course for all eternity.  
The crossroad.  
The place to change direction...  
from death to new life  
from wrath to forgiveness  
from alienation to reconciliation  
from slavery to ransomed freedom.

There are many roads leading into this crossroad  
But only two paths leading away.

The canvas is finished  
The picture complete  
And two roads beckon,  
the old and the new.

And here  
is a place to marvel  
a place of wonder,

And, because it cannot be avoided,  
a place to decide.



*The service concludes here.  
Please feel free to continue in meditation  
and leave quietly when you are ready.*

**Father, we present to you our bodies, as a living sacrifice,  
holy and acceptable to you, as our reasonable worship.  
Transform our minds to know your will, and strengthen us  
by your Spirit to follow in the steps of Jesus in humility and  
self-sacrifice, to your praise and glory. We ask it in the  
name of your Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, who taught us to  
pray...**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name  
Your kingdom come, your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil,  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
Now and forever. Amen**

*A Reflection: ON JOHN 19:30*

"It is finished!!" cried Jesus.  
We understand that it was a CRY, a SHOUT.  
Not a moan or whimper of defeat.  
Not merely a plea in agony.  
But a cry of victory! A shout of accomplishment!  
What was finished was not just another life,  
but a work, a mighty plan, a masterpiece.  
Yes it was ugly and bloody,  
it was shameful and naked and painful.  
But it was a masterpiece,  
to move and to transform as none other before or since.  
For behind the garish, crude and savage foreground  
is a portrait,  
and image so profound,  
as to dazzle our imaginations,  
fill our vision  
and demand our attention.  
A drama to upstage the crudity, and take the higher ground.  
Triumphantly striding into the foreground.  
A vista of perfect obedience to

*All stand*                      The Lord be with you  
**And also with you**

You are invited this morning to go back in time, and relive the events of that first Good Friday. See again your Saviour dying upon the cross and appreciate the love of God poured out... for you.

**Sentence:** *Isaiah 53:5*

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

**HYMN: Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

*Everyone sits*

*Readings from The Gospel According to Luke.*

**Narrator** Then they seized Jesus and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance.

When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said,

**Servant Girl** "This man also was with him."

**Narrator** But he denied it...

**Peter** "Woman, I do not know him."

**Narrator** A little later someone else, on seeing him, said,

**Bystander 1** "You also are one of them."

**Peter** "Man, I am not!"

**Narrator** Then about an hour later still another kept insisting,

**Bystander 2** "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean."

**Peter** "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!"

**Narrator** At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times."

And he went out and wept bitterly.

**A Reflection: "PETER"**

I didn't believe him at the time...  
 Then I was brave, amongst friends.  
 I could have taken on the world.  
 Jesus' victory, and ours, was assured.

Deny him?!  
 It was unthinkable! unnecessary!  
 I was ready to fight,  
 Even to take on the soldiers who came to arrest him.  
 But he would have none of it,  
 ...What could I do?

As I stood in the courtyard, confused and uncertain  
 It was not the soldiers of Rome  
 But a servant girls and two bystanders  
 who defeated me utterly.

I, who had walked with him,  
 been taught by him  
 seen miracles and signs beyond imagining.  
 I, who had followed him,  
 been rescued by him  
 seen sights to overawe and heard words to transform and inspire.  
 I, who had finally realised  
 inspired by the Spirit, that this was the Christ, the Son of God,

I, who cursed and swore and said...

"I do not know the man."

*A time of meditation to consider the times we have denied our Lord by our words deeds and omissions and to bring them in confession to God in the quietness.*

**A Prayer:**

Father forgive us for the times that we have been more concerned with preserving our life, or our lifestyle, more concerned with maintaining our relationships with friends and family, than with proclaiming your Son in word and deed. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. **Amen.**

And here,  
 the meaning of the drama  
 captured in two dying moments  
 The grace of God in cameo  
 A gospel so simple (and how sweet the sound)  
 for all to understand.

*A time for quiet meditation.*

*Remain seated to sing*

**HYMN: AHB 258 When I survey the wondrous cross****Reflection: "WHEN YOU SURVEY"**

When you survey the characters in the Passion narrative  
 The Soldier inescapably faced with the Son of God  
 The women faithfully watching and waiting in despair  
 Pilate sitting on the fence but forced to choose  
 and Peter denying his Lord and Master  
 Where do you stand in this scene?

When you survey the wondrous cross  
 When you really see the Prince of Glory die  
 When his death challenges your life  
 What will you decide?

**A Prayer:**

Father as we have watched our Saviour's humility and obedience to the point of death, while we were still your enemies and had not even recognised our need, we thank you for your grace and love displayed more eloquently than in a profusion of flowers or a glorious sunset.

Save us we pray from shallow responses where we weep at the foot of the cross, but return to homes without turning to you. Give us the insight to understand how much you love us, that being overwhelmed by that knowledge, we may readily love you in return, with a gratefulness that expresses itself through obedience in thought word and deed.

But Jesus wouldn't play,  
ruined the interview,  
failed to make legs longer  
or even so much as make a headache vanish.

Frustrated, Herod made his own drama  
dress-ups and ridicule,  
a poor substitute, but better than nothing.

Later there were the sight-seers, and the wailing women  
lining death row  
mourning for, we know not what.  
Those who cared nothing,  
casting lots for the clothes of the undignified not-yet-dead  
hurled insults...  
    "why not come down!  
    prove yourself!  
    save us!  
    how can you let the world suffer?  
    why the pain, the death, the sin?  
    make it all right if you're really the Messiah!!"

And those who did care, but were uncertain now  
standing at a distance.  
caught between grief and doubt  
peering into the gathering gloom  
of growing disillusionment.  
    a night with no dawn, no hope...

And yet, there in the great drama of politics, religion, and a cast of thousands,  
A brief encounter, simple, but so profound.  
The drama within a drama...

An admission of guilt  
A recognition of the sinlessness  
of a naked, dying king,  
and of his kingdom beyond this theatre of death.

A simple deathbed request...  
    "Jesus, remember me  
    when you come into your kingdom"  
And a simple response...  
    "Truly I tell you  
    today, you will be with me in Paradise"

**Father, we confess our sins before you, acknowledging that we have often walked in our own ways, ignored and disobeyed you. Even as you have reached out to us in love, we have done and said things which have alienated ourselves from you and from others. Forgive and cleanse us, we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.**

If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*Stand to sing...*

**HYMN: AHB 138 And can it be (Verses 1, 4 & 5)**

**Narrator** Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept heaping many other insults on him.

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said,

**Chief Priest and Scribe** "If you are the Messiah, tell us."

**Jesus** "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

**Chief Priest and Scribe** "Are you, then, the Son of God?"

**Jesus** "You say that I am."

**Chief Priest and Scribe** "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

**Narrator** Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him...

**Chief Priest and Scribe** "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king."

**Narrator** Then Pilate asked him,

**Pilate** "Are you the king of the Jews?"

**Jesus** "You say so."

**Pilate** "I find no basis for an accusation against this man."

**Chief Priest and Scribe** "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

**Narrator** When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate.

**A Reflection: "HE SAID NOTHING"**

"Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter  
and like a sheep before its shearers is silent  
so he did not open his mouth".....

He said nothing.  
There was no point.  
The High Priest's mind was closed  
The way to the cross was arranged  
Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled.

He said nothing.  
Since it was not soldiers, nor the priests,  
not Pilate, nor Herod,  
who brought this about.  
There seemed nothing that could have changed the course of events  
For "It was the will of GOD to crush him with pain."

He said nothing,  
For he had already spoken the decisive words  
"Not my will but YOURS be done."

failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said,

**Jesus** "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

**Narrator** Having said this, he breathed his last.

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."

And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

*Remain seated to sing*

**HYMN: AHB 263 Glory be to Jesus**

**The Drama within the Drama  
- A Reflection on Luke 23.**

It's easy to get lost in the drama of the Passion.  
The parade of characters which jostle for our attention,  
with their fatal mix of expectations.  
The Assembly looking for a puppet Messiah of their own creation  
A charismatic leader, striding out to their tune  
Affirming the truth as God and they knew it to be true.  
Not some Nazarene carpenter from outback Galilee  
without credentials, from the wrong side of the tracks.  
A troublemaker, likely as not to stir trouble with Rome.

That's what Pilate had to know...  
But he found no freedom fighter, no trouble at all  
except in an ugly mob disappointed in a weak Messiah...  
"Crucify him"  
What can he do for us now?  
- he brings no deliverance from Rome  
- he's no use at all, except as a bloodsport, a spectacle.

Ah yes! A spectacle.  
Sport for Herod...  
Great expectations. Entertainment Tonight.

Jesus turned to them and said,

**Jesus** "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'

Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

**Narrator** Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

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,

**Jesus** "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

**Narrator** And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying,

**Chief Priest and Scribe** "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"

**Narrator** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying,

**Soldier** "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

**Narrator** There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying,

**Criminal 1** "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

**Narrator** But the other rebuked him, saying,

**Criminal 2** "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."

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

**Jesus** "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

**Narrator** It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light

And the only one  
who could have changed the outcome  
silently now  
became the obedient suffering Servant of God  
for all humankind.

**Narrator** Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them,

**Pilate** "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

**Narrator** Then they all shouted out together,

**Congregation** "Away with this fellow!

**Release Barabbas for us!"**

**Narrator** (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.)

Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting,

**Congregation** "Crucify, crucify him!"

**Pilate** "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him."

**Narrator** But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed.

So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

**A Reflection: "PILATE"**

Behind him stood the power of Rome  
 And here before, a wandering king  
 A man without an earthly home  
 No contest he appeared to bring.

Many powers on show that day  
 Religious Jews and influenced mob  
 Behind them all the real power lay  
 A power which mortals could not rob.

Pilate only wanting peace,  
 Prepared to perch upon the fence  
 While pulled by people, spouse and priest,  
 And washed his hands, in poor defence

Though powerless, never free from blame  
 Always free to choose the right  
 We too must choose who we will name  
 When faced with Christ, Eternal Light.

**A Reflection - "WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE?"**

**W**as it difficult to say the words, "Away with this fellow", and "Crucify him, Crucify him"?

It seems such a blasphemy, even though we were only playing a part.  
 We weren't there at the time were we?  
 We didn't say the words which actually persuaded Pilate.  
 We weren't responsible!  
 ... or were we?

The events leading to Jesus' death were full of people  
 failing in their loyalty,  
 avoiding responsibility  
 and excusing themselves for their behaviour...

The disciples who fell asleep when Jesus needed them.  
 Judas whose greed got the better of him so that he  
 betrayed the Son of God.  
 Peter who denied his Master... three times.  
 The religious authorities who thought Jesus was a  
 blasphemer, and pushed for his death.  
 Pilate who tried to wash his hands of the case, and in  
 doing so handed over an innocent man to die a

lingering and cruel death.  
 And the crowd which responded to the pressure of the  
 mob, and caused the decision to finally be made.  
 None of them could feel they were innocent at the end of that day.  
 They were all responsible in their own way.  
 But we were not there, were we?  
 We were not responsible?

After all, there was another player in this great tragedy.  
 An unseen player, and yet the most powerful one of all.  
 Surely it was *God's* responsibility that Jesus died?  
 After all it was God who sent his Son.  
 Jesus knew that he would die.  
 He had pleaded with God to see if there was some other way than the Cross  
 ... but it seemed there wasn't.

God sacrificed his Son.  
 All the others were responsible too. But God allowed it...  
 For the sins of the whole world.

... For you and for me,  
 and for every other person.

So although *we* were not there...  
 our sins were,  
 yours and mine.

Our sins cry out for his crucifixion.

We *are* responsible, you and I.

*Time for quiet meditation..*

*Stand to sing*

**HYMN: AHB 266 There is a green hill far away**

**Narrator** As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But