

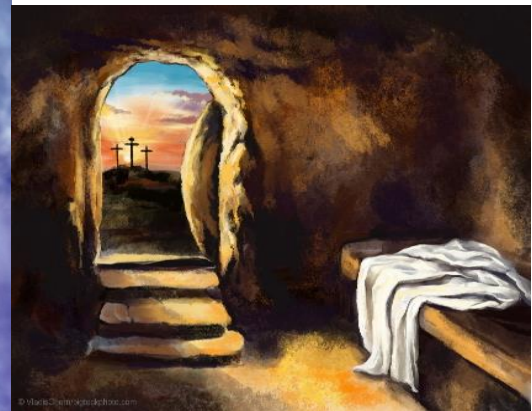
ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



29 & 31 MARCH 2024

GOOD FRIDAY

EASTER SUNDAY



GOOD FRIDAY

WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

THE GRACE

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all
And also with you

CALL TO WORSHIP – LET US WORSHIP GOD

(Psalm 22: 4-5 & 22-24)

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? **Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?**

⁴In you our ancestors trusted; **they trusted, and you delivered them.**

⁵To you they cried, and were saved; **in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.**

²²I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; **in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:** ²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! **All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!**

²⁴For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; **he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.**

HYMN TIS 339: O SACRED HEAD SORE WOUNDED

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION:

This is the day when life is raw,
quivering, terrifying:
The day of numbed emotions,
the day of blunt nails
and splintered wood,
of bruised flesh
and red blood.

The day we loathe,
when hopes are crushed.

BUT

The day we long for,
when pretences fall away—
Because the worst that we can do
cannot kill the love of God.

Gracious God,
your love is a light in our darkness,
vulnerable, yet unquenchable.
We would stand with Christ,
in the midst of the horrors of this world
where betrayal and death
constantly threaten your love and peace.

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READING: JOHN 18:1- 19:42

(dramatic reading with prayers – Nathan Nettleton)

After the supper, and after Jesus had prayed for his followers, they went outside and headed across town to the Kidron Valley gardens where they had often met together before. Judas had now betrayed Jesus, and of course, he knew they would be heading for the gardens. Judas showed the way to those sent to arrest Jesus – a detachment of Roman soldiers and some Temple security guards sent by the chief priests and the hard-line Pharisee party. It was now late, and so the heavily armed group carried torches and flood lights. Jesus knew what he had coming to him and so when they arrived he just stepped out in the open and asked, “Who are you looking for?”

They answered, “We’ve been sent to find Jesus of Nazareth.”

“Well you’ve found him,” he replied, “I’m Jesus.”

When he said that, they were so taken aback you could have knocked them over with a feather. Judas, the back-stabber, was still with them. Because they were looking so uncertain, Jesus asked them again, “Who are you looking for?”

And again they replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus answered, “Like I said, I’m Jesus. And since I am the man you’re looking for, you can let these others go in peace.”

In so saying, he backed up the promise he had made in his earlier prayer when he had said, “I didn’t lose a single one of those you entrusted to me.”

Suddenly Simon Peter pulled a knife and began slashing wildly. He struck a man named Malchus – a servant of the high priest – and cut off his ear. Jesus yelled at his, saying, “Peter, put that thing away. Do you think I’m going to back out now and refuse to drink the cup that God has poured for me?”

At that point, the soldiers and the Temple security guards surrounded Jesus and made the arrest. They handcuffed him, and dragged him off to see Annas, who had issued the arrest warrant.

PRAYER AT THE ARREST OF CHRIST

(RESPONDING TO THE READING OF JOHN 18: 1-12)

Again and again
we have bound you
and taken you captive, O Lord,

**Because it's easier,
easier than facing the reality
of what you ask of us.**

Again and again
you have been taken captive
and your voice silenced.

**Again and again
you have been dragged out
whenever it seems
that quoting your name will justify
our attempts to gain what we want
at the expense of others.**

Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year; and Caiaphas was the one who had persuaded the authorities that, for the sake of the rest of the population, it would be best if this one person died.

Simon Peter and one of the other disciples followed as Jesus was dragged off. When they arrived at the high priest’s residence, Peter was refused entry at the gate, but the other disciple knew the high priest and got in. Having got in, he spoke to the woman in charge of the security gate and had Peter let in too. As he came in, the woman looked at Peter and said, “You’re not one of that man’s disciples are you?”

He replied, “No, I’m not.”

The soldiers and guards were standing around an open fire in the middle of the courtyard warming themselves, because it was a cold night. Not knowing what else to do, Peter joined them.

Inside, the high priest was interrogating Jesus about his followers and about the things he had been teaching the people. Jesus answered him, saying, “Everything I’ve said has been out in the open. I have always done my teaching in the public places where the people gather – in the synagogues and in the temple. I’ve kept nothing behind closed doors, so what are you asking me for? Why don’t you ask the people who heard what I said. They can tell you what it was all about.”

When he said this, one of the security guards gave Jesus a whack in the face, saying, “You think you can get away with back-chatting the high priest, do you?”

But Jesus stood his ground, saying, “If you think there’s something wrong with what I’ve been saying, then put your evidence on the table. But if what I’m saying is correct, what are you smacking me around for?”

While this was happening, Simon Peter was still keeping warm by the fire with the guards. They asked him, “Aren’t you one of his disciples?”

“Not me,” said Peter, denying everything.

One of the Temple guards there was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off when he’d pulled the knife in the garden. He said, “Come on mate, you’ve got to be one of them. Didn’t I just see you with him in the garden when we picked him up?”

But Peter denied it again, and the words were barely out of his mouth when he heard the sound of the rooster crowing.

HYMN 340: BEFORE THE COCK CREW

Shortly after that, in the early hours of the morning, Jesus was transferred from the residence of Caiaphas to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. The Jewish officers themselves did not go inside the headquarters, because it was nearly time for the sacred Passover festival, and going into a gentile home would have ruled them out of participating. Pilate agreed to come out and meet their delegation, and asked them, “So, what have you charged this bloke with?”

They answered, “You can take it for granted that he’s a dangerous criminal – otherwise we wouldn’t have bothered you with his case.”

Pilate replied, “I’m sure you are quite capable of dealing with him yourselves. Get him out of here and deal with him according to your own local laws.”

But the Jewish officers said, “We don’t have the power to authorise an execution.”

Clearly the things Jesus had previously said about the sort of death he would die were coming true.

Pilate went back into his headquarters and had Jesus brought inside so he could interrogate him.

“Do you see yourself as the King of the Jews?” he asked.

Jesus replied, saying, “Is that your own question or has someone else been wording you up?”

“Give me a break,” Pilate retorted, “I’m obviously not one of the Jews, am I? It wasn’t my people who had you dragged in here. It was your mob, your own race, your own religious leaders. What in the world have you done?”

Jesus answered, “My reign is not tied to this world. If my power base depended on this world, those who have given their allegiance to me would be fighting tooth and nail to keep me out of the hands of that mob. But it’s not like that. My reign is not tied to this world.”

Pilate latched on to that: “So you are claiming to be a king then?”

“You’re the one who’s putting the ‘king’ label on me,” Jesus replied. “If you want to know what I’m on about, what I was born into the world for, it’s this: I’m the key witness whose job it is to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Everyone who has given their allegiance to the truth responds to my voice.”

“Truth,” Pilate sneered. “What is truth?”

Then he went back outside to the delegation from the Temple and told them, “I can’t find any basis for a case against this prisoner. It is customary for me to release a political prisoner for you at Passover time. How about I release this ‘king of the Jews’ for you? He seems harmless enough to me.”

But they shouted back, “No way! Not this man. Release Barabbas!” Barabbas was a convicted terrorist.

At that point, Pilate handed Jesus over to some of his own soldiers and told them to give him a flogging. The soldiers thought it was a huge joke. They hung a purple robe on him and wove a crown out of barbed wire and jammed it on his head. They took turns at coming up to him, saying, “Heil, King of the Jews!” as they saluted him, and then smashed their fists into his face. When they’d finished their brutal sport, Pilate went back out to the Temple delegation and said, “Look, I’m handing him back over to you and telling you that I can’t find any basis for a case against him.”

Jesus was dragged back out, still wearing the barbed wire crown and the purple robe. Pilate said “Here he is: the man!”

But the minute the chief priests and the Temple security guards saw him, they began screaming, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

We bow our heads in silence – 10 seconds

Pilate replied, “You take him and crucify him yourselves. I can’t see that he’s done anything wrong.”

The delegation replied, “The case against him is clear in our law. He claimed to be the Son of God and our law makes the death penalty mandatory for that.”

When Pilate heard this, he began to really worry, and went back inside his headquarters to interview Jesus again. “Where have you come from?” he asked him, but Jesus didn’t answer. Pilate said to him, “It’s no use claiming the right to silence. Don’t you understand that I can say the word to have you released or to have you tortured to death?”

Jesus replied, “You wouldn’t have any authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from a higher power. It is the one who handed me over to you who is going to have to answer for the greatest wrongdoing.”

After that, Pilate tried to have Jesus released, but the Temple crowd would have none of it. They insisted, “If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor, and we’ll see that he hears about it. Anyone who claims to be a king is setting himself up in opposition to the emperor.”

With that, Pilate capitulated to their demands. At noon on the day of Preparation for the Passover festival, Pilate sat down at the judge’s bench at the Stone Pavement Court – known in Hebrew as Gabbatha – and had Jesus stood in the dock. He said to the Temple delegation, “Here is your king!”

They shouted in chorus, “Get rid of him! Kill him! Crucify him!”

“Crucify him?” Pilate replied. “You want me to crucify your king?”

“We have no king but the emperor!” they shouted.

With that, Pilate passed sentence and handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

So, they took Jesus out to the place called Skull Hill, or in Hebrew, Golgotha. Jesus was made to carry his own cross on the way out there. When they got there, they hung him on the cross by nails driven through his flesh. They crucified a couple of other convicted men at the same time – the three of them in a row with Jesus in the middle. On Pilate’s orders, a sign was hung on the cross Jesus was on, saying, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Many people read the sign because the crucifixion occurred in a public place on the main road into the city and the sign was written in three languages – Hebrew, Latin and Greek. The chief priests from the Temple went to Pilate objecting to the sign. They wanted the sign changed from “The King of the Jews” to “This man claimed to be the King of the Jews” but Pilate told them that what was written was written and that was the end of the story.

POEM: JESUS the KING By Jordan Legaspi

You are the King of kings
born in a manger
(so as) to offer the beautiful places to us
You are the King of kings
who road to the temple on a donkey
to offer us horses for our journey
You are the King of kings
crowned with thorns
to offer us the royal precious stones
You are the King of kings
seated on the tree
to offer all the comfort we can own
You are the King of kings
whose reign is without end
to offer us salvation
- the life everlasting

When the soldiers had hung Jesus up on the nails, they divided up his clothes between the four of them. His robe was left over, and when they saw that it was woven from a single piece of fabric, with no seams, they decided that rather than tear it, they'd have a round of two-up, and award it to the winner. This backed up what the scriptures had said long ago:

“They divided up my clothes,
and tossed for my coat.”

While the soldiers tossed coins, a group of women stood near Jesus' cross. They were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus saw that his mother was standing with the disciple with whom he was most intimate, and so he said to his mother, “Woman, this man is your son.” And then he said to the disciple, “This woman is your mother.”

From that day on, Mary moved into the home of that disciple.

After that, Jesus knew it was all over. He did one more thing that the scriptures had spoken about. He said, “I'm thirsty.”

Someone had half a bottle of wine that had turned to vinegar, so they poured some into a sponge and held it up to his mouth. He drank it and then said, “Everything is finished.”

With that, his head dropped and he gave up his spirit.

PRAYER AT THE DEATH OF CHRIST

(responding to the reading of John 19:25-30)

God, why did you let this happen,
why do our greatest hopes
seem to flicker out and die?

***We search for meaning in life
and before we find it, it is gone.
We search for meaning in death***

***but its horrible reality drives us back
and we are afraid to look.***

God, we shudder at the way this life ended:
surrounded by cold brutality,
rejected and betrayed by a friend,
deprived of justice,
and loved by only a frightened few
who watched in fear.

***Inside we are afraid that this is all there is,
a flickering light snuffed out, no meaning,
no future, no love.
Evil triumphs yet again.***

Evil triumphs so often.
Yours was one of thousands of deaths.
From those times to now
thousands die in loneliness and fear,
victims of the cruelty and oppression of this world.

***Remind us with every death,
that there is still so much to be done,
before love reigns
and fear is driven away.***

Because it was the day of Preparation for the Passover, the Temple authorities wanted to make sure the bodies were not left hanging up on the sacred festival day. They went to Pilate and got him to authorise the soldiers to break the legs of the three crucified men, so that they'd die quicker. The soldiers broke the legs of the other two crucified men, but when they came to Jesus, they saw that there was no need – he was already dead. Just to make sure, one of the soldiers drove a spear into his side, and blood and water gushed out.

The eyewitness to these things has given a sworn account of it all. His report is true and can be trusted. Scripture was again shown to be true, because it was written that not one of his bones would be broken. Similarly in another place the scriptures said, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”

THE REQUEST FOR THE DISPOSAL OF THE BODY

(responding to the reading of John 19:31-37)

Once again we don't want to face up
to what we have done.

**We quickly seek to clean up the mess,
to hide the evidence,
to get life normal again.**

We want it finished
and the body put out of sight.

**And yet that broken body,
if we would only face it
is the evidence of the love we crave
and the source of
the healing we cry for.**

Give us courage
to see beyond the blood and the horror.

**Give us the hope that in this death
we may find our own life.**

When it was all over, a man went to Pilate and got permission to take the body of Jesus for burial. His name was Joseph of Arimathea, and he had been a closet follower of Jesus, because he was afraid for his reputation with the Temple hierarchy. He and Nicodemus, who had first spoken to Jesus in the quiet of night, removed the body. Nicodemus supplied the embalming spices, and as was the Jewish custom, they wrapped the body with the spices in linen cloth. There was a memorial garden not far from the place where Jesus was crucified, and there was a tomb there which had not yet been used. Because it was the day of preparation and there was little time, they buried Jesus in that tomb.

HYMN TIS 341: MY SONG IS LOVE UNKNOWN (V 1, 4, 5, 6 & 7)

REFLECTION: *Archbishop Justin Welby 10/04/2020*

“When I was at primary school, in our RE lessons we learned about the crucifixion and resurrection. This being a very long time ago, at the beginning of the 1960s, there were tests on such things as remembering all of Jesus’ words in the course of his walk to execution and during his crucifixion. I never could remember them all.

However, I do remember the teacher saying how remarkable Jesus was because he cared for others even while he was being crucified. Being 8 years old and not very nice – some people might say only one aspect of that has changed – I was unimpressed. Surely this was JUST a story, and he JUST HAPPENED TO GET his lines right.

Age may not teach us much, but for many it teaches us the nature of risk. We learn that we are not immortal; that things can go wrong. With age, we learn to be more cautious, much more aware of disappointment and pain and therefore more able to identify with the depths of a story: the complex realities of human suffering.

So, it is with the crucifixion. Jesus was in physical agony to an indescribable extreme. He was also in spiritual and emotional agony. He had seen his community of disciples torn apart by outright betrayal as well as cowardice and desertion. He could see his mother watching him die; is it possible to imagine her anguish? He was mocked and told he was a failure.

His sense of God the Father's presence was gone. There was no earthly or heavenly help in his hour of need. Like every human being he had to rely, in his agony, on what he could find within himself. Jesus could not call on God for help because he was choosing to enter into the fullest hell of all: separation from his loving heavenly Father, and therefore bearing the weight of the wrongs of our world.

Jesus would bear our sins, taking the whole darkness of human history and cosmic chaos, and die under their weight. The resurrection was promised, but in the absence of God the Father it could only be taken in faith.

These were not lines to be spoken in some school play: this was God's love in action, even to the point where the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - that deep mystery - was separated, out of love for God's creatures.

As we wait at the cross, and bring the darkness of bereavement, of isolation, of confinement, of insecurity and homelessness, or the sufferings of others, we place them all at the feet of Jesus. We can do nothing else. But at the feet of Jesus, at the cross, we also find the sign of our hope and the faithfulness of God-in-Christ, crucified. This is Jesus Christ who bears our sins and our suffering, that we may hear the whispers of resurrection: of new life, forgiveness, freedom and healing.

We too may call out: "Oh God, where are you?" The answer will come, "With you, in your suffering and fear, knowing every aspect of it, for I drank it to the dregs. With you, if you take my hand, to lead you to new light and life."

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND LORD'S PRAYER

Title of Prayer: In the silence

Explanation: This prayer is titled 'In the silence'. Normally following our prayers for others, we say the LP together. But with Jesus' death even that is SILENCED. So, at the conclusion of this prayer you are welcome - if you feel able - to pray the 'Our Father' in silence.

Let us pray

Lord God

We meet beneath the cross this day.

We meet – friends, strangers, mourners –
grieving for the loss of love in the world.

We meet because we want to understand the awful things that happened.

We meet because we want to be with you; with you at the cross.

And in our gathering and in our departing, we keep silence.

We keep silence at a time when words fail us.

We keep silence as you kept silent on the cross.

And so we keep silence with those crucified today,
with those who live in darkness, in despair, in pain.

We keep silence with those treated as today's scapegoats: single parents, gay and lesbian men and women, asylum seekers, people who seem different, strange; those who keep themselves to themselves, we know not why ...

Silence – 10 seconds

We keep silence with those robbed of a sense of belonging in our society:
Families bled dry by money lenders,
the needy, disillusioned by the empty promises of the powerful,
mothers whose sons have been sacrificed to a lust for power ...

Silence – 10 seconds

We keep silence with the folk of Gaza, and the west bank and Jerusalem,
with the meek, oppressed by other races,
with the war-weary of the Middle East and of too many places in Africa, in Ukraine, in Russia –
exhausted from living under the spectre of violence and death ...

Silence – 10 seconds

We keep silence with all who mourn a loved one ...

Silence – 10 seconds

we keep silence with those rebuilding their lives against great odds in places of conflict,
Their plight is out of the headlines, but the struggle and the slaughter go on.

Silence – 10 seconds

We keep silence with those known to us today who live in darkness; who find it hard to see
anything hopeful.

In the pain, misfortune, oppression and death of the people - God is silent.

God is silent on the cross - in the crucified.

And this silence is God's word, God's cry.

In solidarity, God speaks the language of love.

Silence – pray the LP silently, if you feel able

Amen

NB: EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE (HOLY COMMUNION)

4.00PM 31/3/24

WORD OF MISSION

Go now, even in the midst of your lament! Go in love, the love apparently conquered by death,
here on the cross. Go, IN FAITH, IN FAITH – the faith in which St Paul declares NOTHING, nothing
in all creation can separate us from God, who is love, EVEN when that love dies!

NOTHING!?!?

This story has not reached its conclusion. The mystery of the God of love dying, the God who
declares we are so precious, God would rather die for us than have a single one of us thrown
away as so much useless dead garbage; that mystery still has more to reveal. There can be no
Benediction today, so, as you finish, do so, not just with grief in your heart, but also with faith and
hope in your heart - there is rumour of more!

HYMN TIS 342: WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS

EASTER SUNDAY

WE GATHER

GREETING:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

And also with you

CALL TO WORSHIP:

This is the day

hope tiptoes us awake;

light guides us through the shadows.

This is the day the Lord

plants joy in our winter hearts;

drowns out despair's cries with laughter.

This is the day the Lord has made,

the day grace does cartwheels in graveyards;

resurrection wonder outshines the brightest sun; an empty tomb fills us with good news.

Let us worship the Risen Christ!

HYMN TIS 370: Christ the Lord is risen today!

PRAYERS: ADORATION, CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

Let us pray

Each morning,
we put on those
comfortable garments
of burdens and worries,
but now they are gone!

Each day,
we walk through life,
our good and faithful
friend, death, at our side,
constantly whispering
in our ears,
but now he has disappeared!

Each evening,
empty our fears
out of our pockets, leaving

them on top of the dresser,
but now, they have been taken away!

We could continue to live
in the same old ways, the same old days,
but now, resurrection life is ours,
and we can sing, dance, and rejoice with you,
God in Community, Holy in One, Everlasting Lord of Love.

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

We are Easter people, yet we also know how often we live in the shadows, afraid to follow the light. We wander in the gardens of the world, looking for you, never noticing you at our side. Let us confess how we have failed to be God's people, as we pray together, saying,

PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

We come on this day, Dispeller of fears, walking through the shadows of our lives. Too often, we believe our foolishness is hidden from you; too often, we stand before the open door of hope, wondering if we dare enter. Uncertain of the good news offered to us, we would rather return to the comfort of our familiar ways rather than trusting in you. Yet you come, as persistent as Mary at the tomb,
Joy of our hearts,
to open the gates of hope,
so we might walk in the gardens of hope;
you come, to open the gates of grace,
so we might plant peace in the wilderness of the world;
you come, to open the gates of resurrection,
so we might know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

This is the day of resurrection and new life. This is the day God offers us steadfast hope and love which will never end.

We will sing and dance on this day! We will rejoice and give thanks to the God who saves us. Amen.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: (Read by Dianne Richter)

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;
A light to our path

ISAIAH 25:6-9

⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. ⁸Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ²through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. ³For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

HYMN TiS 380: Thine be the Glory

JOHN 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The gospel of the Lord

Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ

HYMN TiS 382: Now the Green Blade Rises

SERMON:

The Lord is Risen
He is risen indeed!

Title: 'There's something about Mary!'

When I was 14 or 15, I went to a camp in the Adelaide Hills. It was organized by the SA Church of Christ. For a short time, I had attended the Black Forest Church of Christ Christian Endeavour Group. The lady who lived next door to us was a brilliant soul. She was a member at Black Forest Church of Christ and encouraged me to attend their Christian Endeavour group and when the camp came up, she encouraged me to go. To be honest I genuinely cannot remember my intentions in agreeing to attend the camp. But I am pretty sure I did not attend the camp with the best of intentions. Namely, as a young man with a bit of an eye for the other gender, I think I most probably thought this could be quite a productive time! And it was!

But not in the way I thought it might be!

You see, I did not 'find' any young ladies, but I 'found' Jesus! Or rather I encountered Jesus face to face, or even more accurately, Jesus found me, encountered me, touched me deeply. That experience was one of, if not the, most formative in my life! I cannot recall much about the camp. I cannot recall any of the other attendees, including the young ladies that I am sure I must have met, but I can vividly recall meeting Jesus!

Previously I had been to a Billy Graham 'crusade' and vowed I would never go again. It was just awful and really put me off! But the evangelist who spoke at the camp was amazing! Not pushy, not imposing a pre-formulated Jesus on his listeners, no, he introduced me and many others to a man of grace and substance, a person who truly, genuinely loved me and offered me a transformed new life! One who, if I can borrow Mary's word when she met Jesus in the garden after she was addressed by name' by the Risen Lord; 'Mary': nails it! '*Rabbouni!*' '*Rabbouni!*'

Now, the translation of '*Rabbouni*' in the NRSV as 'Teacher,' simply does not do justice to the intimacy of Mary's utterance. In its original Hebrew or Aramaic, it is a form of address which expresses close familiarity, warmth and personal endearment – it is very personal. I really can't think of an English equivalent. Perhaps, 'My Dear Close Friend' or 'Wonderful, marvelous friend and teacher!' Hmmm! They both feel a bit thin and weak!

At any rate, her utterance of warm familiarity and endearment indicates she knew, against all her human logic (He's Dead! How can he be here, but he is!!!), she knew, dramatically, and with intense emotion, who she was with! Her experience was profound! Brendon Byrne suggests in his commentary, that this scene in John '*is possibly the most poignant and heartwarming in the whole Gospel.*' I agree!

Well, I am no Mary, but my experience in the Adelaide Hills approximately 65 years ago, was a *Rabbouni* encounter which has transformed my life and driven me ever since. It was a highly emotional experience and, without being too dramatic, a foundational event in shaping my entire life. I remember coming home after the camp and having a shower, and finding myself crying, weeping for joy! In fact, my Mum came into the bathroom because she heard me weeping and wondered what was 'wrong!' I blurted out something like, 'I met Jesus and feel completely changed, I feel totally and completely and utterly loved.' I remember this because Mum reached across and took my face in her hands, looked me in the eyes with warmth, acceptance and love and said, 'That is fantastic, I am so happy for you!'

I do hope this Easter is a *Rabbouni* one for you. That you meet, face to face again, with him, the one who loved you enough to die for you. The one who the Father honoured by granting new life in response to his son's utter and complete human faithfulness to his Heavenly Father. And out of that utter grace and pure love, for his Son, the Father extended that gift of new life to ALL CREATION! Including you! The preposterous and astonishing, 'unbelievable' truth of the Christian Gospel! 300 years ago, Charles Wesley reflected on his own *Rabbouni* encounter with these words.

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused his pain -
for me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

It's a pity, but it is little wonder, that folk seek to reduce this profound truth of Easter to a culture of chocolate, eggs and holidays!

Rabbouni encounters stretch our human credulity – “how can it be! Dead people don't come back.!” That stretch of human incredulity is far too much for so many who measure all things in terms of what can be controlled and seen and understood and measured and TOUCHED! TOUCHED! But, that human incredulity and dismissal of the divine does not mean God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit withholds their love of each and every one of us and of the whole creation! Oh NO! Our God IS not only triumphant, but ever-loving and has already made everything new; and simply, with infinite patience, waits, waits for all his daughters and sons (and all of creation) to declare with bursting thankful Hearts ‘Rabbouni!’ ‘Rabbouni!’ And when that declaration of faithfulness is made, the Lord of all creation looks each of us in the eye with warmth, acceptance and love, holds our faces in his hands and declares to each of his children: ‘That is fantastic, I am so happy for you!’ And in the meantime, the Risen Christ sends us his own Spirit, into the world for whom he died, to reveal again and again and again, the love of the Father for all his children and all creation. Until his love is ‘complete,’ ‘finished,’ ‘accomplished,’ on earth as in Heaven. Amen

HYMN TIS 361: The day of resurrection

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Warwick Barry

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

Light the candle.

Let us Pray.

Praise and honour to you, Jesus Christ, for you have triumphed gloriously.
We pray for your world: for the welfare of all your people and for your creation entrusted to our care; for all in positions of authority; for men and women in their daily work.
Roll away the stones of hatred and greed.
Transform us with your spirit of justice and
Righteousness, that all your people may share in the freedom of your risen life.
Risen God, in your mercy.
hear our prayer.

Praise and honour to you, Jesus Christ, for you have cancelled the power of sin.
We pray for your worldwide church: for our brothers and sisters in Christ, for the people of this parish and for all who make or renew baptismal vows today.
Roll away the stones of discord and unbelief.
Transform your church with your spirit of wisdom and truth, that we may be in the world a witness to your risen life.
Risen God, in your mercy.
hear our prayer.

Praise and honour to you, Jesus Christ, for you show us the mighty power of love.
We pray for the communities in which we live and work; for our families, our friends and all whom we love; for the forgotten and undervalued people of society.
Roll away the stones of apathy and selfishness.
Transform our lives with your spirit of love and forgiveness, that we may share in the joy of your risen life.
Rise God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Praise and honour to you, Jesus Christ, for you bring us hope when all seems lost.
We pray for all who suffer; for the hungry and the homeless, the lonely and friendless, for the sick and the sorrowing and all who care for them.

Roll away the stones of pain and despair.

Transform the lives of all who suffer with your comfort and balm, that they may share in the hope of your risen life.

Risen God, in your mercy.

hear our prayer.

Praise and honour to you, Jesus Christ, for you have broken bonds of death. We give you thanks for your faithful people of every age; for Mary Magdalene, Peter and John and for all who have seen you and believed.

May we, following their example and yours, cast off all that binds us in death.

Transform our lives by your risen power, that we, with all your saints, may come to share forever in the glory of your risen life.

Risen God, in your mercy.

hear our prayer.

Janet Nelson (p 130-131)

SENDING OUT

HYMN TIS 389: Here the Bells Ringing

DISMISSAL:

Let us go with God into the world.

We will offer healing and hope to all
who wander in the shadows of life.

Let us go with Jesus to serve others.

We will listen to the ignored;

we will speak out for the forgotten.

Let us go with the Spirit to share steadfast love.

We will hold on to the fallen;

we will rebuild shattered communities.

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BLESSING:

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

The deathless joy of Christ Jesus will uplift you,

the everlasting love of God will embrace you,

the inner warmth of the Spirit will encourage you, today and ever more.

Today and evermore. Amen!

WORD OF MISSION:

Go in peace to love and serve the Risen Lord.

In the name of the Risen One, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

POSTLUDE

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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NEWS & NOTICES