

Good Friday Service 2nd April 2021

with Peter Widdess

We begin in a time of silent prayer

The Collect

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus
we see the cost of our sin
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear
may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A reading

from the Prophet Isaiah chapters 52 and 53

See, my servant will act wisely;
he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.
Just as there were many who were appalled at him—
his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any
human being
and his form marred beyond human likeness—
so he will sprinkle many nations,
and kings will shut their mouths because of him.
For what they were not told, they will see,
and what they have not heard, they will understand.
Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been
revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces

he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.
.....
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Silence is kept.

We pray together with words from Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.
In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
To you they cried out and were saved;

in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.
All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
“He trusts in the Lord,” they say,
“let the Lord rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him.”
Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s
breast.
From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother’s womb you have been my God.
Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

Silence is kept.

Song

My God, my God, why, why have you forsaken me?

(3x)

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Finally Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

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

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. 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. 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.”

Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

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.

“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.

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

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

This is the Passion of the Lord.

Silence is kept.

Homily

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

This sentence is from the beginning of St. John's Gospel. It is John's key to understanding the life, ministry and death of Jesus. Without it the crucifixion is just one of many judicial murders and has no special meaning.

With the help of three pictures of the crucifixion I want to explain what I mean and help us to think about which picture or understanding we have of the crucifixion.

The first picture is from the workshop of Baldung Grien. ([View it here](#)) You may know his work from the High Altar which is in the Freiburger Munster. My wife and I saw this particular picture in the Museum for Christian Art in Esztergom in Hungary. As we went through the galleries of the museum we had the impression that this form of picture of the crucifixion dominated. At least 70% of the pictures in the museum consisted of Jesus on the cross, a devoted Mary and John, the disciple. In some pictures there was a town somewhere in the background. Other people, hardly any! Jesus was often serene and not particularly uncomfortable. There was often little suffering and less reason for the death of Jesus. The crucifixion was reduced to a personal sadness on the part of Mary, a sense of loss by John. Possibly a still confidence, come Easter everything will be alright. There is the sense of the Christian faith as a personal relationship, me and Jesus.

What these paintings do not show is what John's Gospel tells us. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. God becomes a human being and lives a completely genuine human life. John and the other evangelists place the story of the crucifixion in the context of a life full of relationships with other people. Jesus makes friends and enemies. His words about God inspire many to change their lives. Through his actions and deeds many sick people receive healing, others see a perspective for the transformation of society, socially and politically. It is important for us that we do not reduce the crucifixion alone to "the loving Jesus dying for me on the cross".

We see now a picture of the crucifixion from a very different perspective. ([View it here](#)) The Brewers Livery Company in London commissioned this picture from Stanley Spencer for Aldenham School. Spencer said that he cannot stand suffering. May be this is the reason why Jesus is facing away from us. I know of no other picture of the crucifixion where we do not look at Jesus, but rather we look with him, over his shoulder as it were. We see with the eyes of Jesus what John describes in his gospel, and what is missing in the Baldung Grien picture. We see the other men who were crucified with Jesus. We see the horrible pleasure of the soldiers who are nailing them to the crosses. We see the passionate pain of Mary throwing herself to the ground at the foot of the cross, the onlookers curious, amused, detached, possibly thinking about such important things as what comes on the table for supper this evening. The word became flesh and lived among us, and John writes further some of us realised who Jesus is and others didn't. Spencer places this picture of the crucifixion in the streets of Cookham in Berkshire. If he was painting here, it would have been the Kaiser Joseph Strasse or Loretto Strasse. The crucifixion is never beautiful and is uncomfortably near. In our own personal picture of the crucifixion do we only look at Jesus, blending out everything else? Try in your mind's eye to look from the cross with Jesus.

The final picture, the Menorah from Roger Wagner, ([View it here](#)) takes us a long way from Golgotha, a dusty hill near Jerusalem. The word became flesh and lived in south Oxfordshire. Jesus and his two companions are crucified near Didcot Power Station. But the picture is more than that. Wagner brings together in his picture photos of the battle grounds of Passchendaele, images of survivors from Nazi concentration camps, the power station as power source for the development of british nuclear weapons and at the same time as symbol of the menorah, the jewish seven arm candelabra. The crucifixion is the confrontation between the word of God in human form and all these political evils. The Shoah is the political evil which requires us to remember that when Jesus

cries out from the cross, it is as a Jew to a Jewish God, who is also the God who loves all people.

Three pictures, three different situations and ways of understanding the crucifixion. None are exclusively right or wrong, but they open our eyes to attempt a wider view of the crucifixion as our own personal view. This can be disconcerting, disturbing. The word became flesh and lived among us, and we discover in Jesus the fullness of life even in death, on the cross. While thinking about the crucifixion and the fullness of our lives as the Anglican Church in Freiburg 2021 I realised that there is one part of John's narrative which I have never seen in visual form. It is not the pandemic, which is devastatingly represented in the Grünewald's Isenheimer Altar (to be seen in Colmar).

It is Jesus asking them to form a new relationship, a new community.

Jesus speaks from the cross with Mary and John: "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

In this short word from Jesus John's narrative breaks out of the present time of the crucifixion into the future, into that which will happen, or may happen, afterwards. The crucifixion becomes resurrection for us in the way in which we form new relationships, develop community anew, open ourselves to others, allow change in ourselves and accept change in others. Is this the challenge from the cross of Jesus to us at this time when we take up a new minister into our community?

Silence is kept

The Prayers of Intercession

God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved through him.
Therefore we pray to our heavenly Father
for people everywhere according to their needs.

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world:
for unity in faith, in witness and in service,
for bishops and other ministers, and those whom they
serve,
for David, our bishop, and the people of this diocese,
for all Christians in this place,
for those to be baptized,
for those who are mocked and persecuted for their
faith,
that God will confirm his Church in faith,
increase it in love, and preserve it in peace.

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church
is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful
people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth
to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Let us pray for the nations of the world and their
leaders:
for the Parliaments of this land,
for those who administer the law and all who serve in
public office,
for all who strive for justice and reconciliation,
that by God's help the world may live in peace and
freedom.

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Most gracious God and Father,
in whose will is our peace,
turn our hearts and the hearts of all to yourself,
that by the power of your Spirit
the peace which is founded on justice
may be established throughout the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for God's ancient people, the Jews,
the first to hear his word:
for greater understanding between Christian and Jew,
for the removal of our blindness and bitterness of heart,
that God will grant us grace to be faithful to his
covenant
and to grow in the love of his name.

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord God of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar,
bless the children of your covenant, both Jew and
Christian;
take from us all blindness and bitterness of heart,
and hasten the coming of your kingdom,
when the Gentiles shall be gathered in,
all Israel shall be saved,
and we shall dwell together in mutual love and peace
under the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Amen.

Let us pray for those who do not believe the gospel of
Christ:
for those who have not heard the message of salvation,
for all who have lost faith,
for the contemptuous and scornful,
for those who are enemies of Christ and persecute
those who follow him,
for all who deny the faith of Christ crucified,

that God will open their hearts to the truth
and lead them to faith and obedience.

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Merciful God,
creator of all the people of the earth,
have compassion on all who do not know you,
and by the preaching of your gospel with grace and
power,
gather them into the one fold of the one Shepherd;
Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for all those who suffer:
for those who are deprived and oppressed,
for all who are sick,
for those in darkness, in doubt and in despair, in
loneliness and in fear,
for prisoners, captives and refugees,
for the victims of false accusations and violence,
for all at the point of death and those who watch beside
them,
that God in his mercy will sustain them
with the knowledge of his love.

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Almighty and everlasting God,
the comfort of the sad, the strength of those who suffer:
hear the prayers of your children who cry out of any
trouble,
and to every distressed soul grant mercy, relief and
refreshment,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us commend ourselves and all God's children to his
unfailing love,
and pray for the grace of a holy life,
that, with all who have died in the peace of Christ,
we may come to the fullness of eternal life
and the joy of the resurrection.

Silence is kept.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
look favourably on your whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery,
and by the tranquil operation of your perpetual
providence
carry out the work of our salvation:
and let the whole world feel and see
that things which were cast down are being raised up
and things which had grown old are being made new
and that all things are returning to perfection
through him from whom they took their origin,
even Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Song: SoF 446: O sacred head once wounded

O sacred head, once wounded
With grief and pain weighed down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown!
How pale art Thou with anguish
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!

Be near me, Lord, when dying;
O show Thyself to me;
And for my succour flying,
Come, Lord, to set me free:
These eyes, new faith receiving,
From Jesus shall not move;
For he who dies believing,
Dies safely through Thy love.

Words and music: Public Domain

The Lord's Prayer

Standing at the foot of the cross,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father in heaven ...

O Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the living God,
set your passion, cross and death
between your judgement and our souls,
now and in the hour of our death.
Grant mercy and grace to the living,
rest to the departed,
to your Church peace and concord
and to us sinners forgiveness,
and everlasting life and glory;
for, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
you are alive and reign,
God, now and for ever.

Amen.

We depart in silence.

Notes:

- a) The form and texts of this liturgy for Good Friday is a strongly shortened version of the Liturgy for Good Friday to be found under Liturgical Resources on the website of the Church of England

Common Worship: Times and Seasons, material from which is included here, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2006 and published by Church House Publishing.

- b) Further information about the Museum in Esztergom is to found on its website: <https://www.keresztenyzeum.hu/>
- c) The source of the pictures from Spencer and Wagner is a book by the former Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries "The Passion in Art". ISBN 0 7546 5011 1