

## A GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION

*Drawn from Luke 22 and 23; Matthew 6; 1 Peter 3*



In this meditation we take some time to recall and reflect upon certain moments in the last day of Jesus' life, from Thursday evening when he shared supper with his friends, to the hour on Friday when 'the Sabbath was about to begin.'

As Jesus and his friends shared wine and bread, so do we: remembering them and reading the story told by Luke.

### **Luke 22: 17-18**

*Then taking a cup of wine, Jesus gave thanks and said, "Take this and share it among you. I tell you, I will not drink wine from now on, until the reign of God comes."*

**Pour and drink some wine.**

## **Luke 22:19**

*Then Jesus took bread and gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*

**Break and eat some bread.**

## **Matthew 6:9-13: “The Prayer of Jesus”**

*Abba God in heaven,  
hallowed be your name!  
May your reign come;  
may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven:  
give us today  
the bread of Tomorrow.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we hereby forgive those  
who are indebted to us.  
Don't put us to the test,  
but free us from evil.*

## **Luke 22:39-46**

*Then Jesus went out and made his way as usual to the Mount of Olives; the disciples accompanied him.*

*When they reached the place, Jesus said to them, "Pray that you not be put to the test." Then Jesus withdrew about a stone's throw from them, knelt down and prayed, "Abba, if it's your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." When Jesus rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, exhausted with grief. He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Wake up, and pray that you not be subjected to the trial."*

We pray that we may be spared the test.

The cup of suffering is too bitter, the sacrifice too great. We can scarcely imagine the agony of the choice: for comfort and a life of self-preserving compromise, or for integrity and a truthful death.

We pray that we may be spared the test.

And when a courageous soul struggles, in anguish of spirit, to be true, do we watch with them or do we sleep?

We pray that we may be spared the test.

## Silence

### Luke 22: 47-48

*While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd suddenly appeared with Judas, one of the Twelve, at their head. Judas came over to Jesus to embrace him, but Jesus said, "Judas, are you betraying the Chosen One with a kiss?"*

This moment of infamy resounds down the centuries. Even those who don't know the story know the name: Judas Iscariot, the traitor above all traitors. But we don't know why he did it. Why, with a kiss, he marked for death the man he had loved and followed from Galilee to Jerusalem. But that isn't the point. Betraying Jesus didn't end with Judas.

Whenever we claim allegiance to the Way of Love whilst, in our lives, we follow the ways of selfishness, cruelty and greed, then we too betray Jesus, sometimes even with a kiss.

## Silence

## **Luke 22:66-23:1**

*At daybreak the Sanhedrin—which was made up of the elders of the people, the chief priests and the religious scholars—assembled again. Once they had brought Jesus before the council, they said, “Tell us, are you the Messiah?” Jesus replied, “If I tell you, you’ll not believe me. And if I question you, you won’t answer! But from now on, the Chosen One will have a seat at the right hand of the Power of God.” Then all of them said, “So you are God’s Own?” Jesus answered, “Your own words have said it!” “What need do we have of witnesses?” they said. “We have heard it from his own mouth!” Then the whole assembly arose and led Jesus to Pilate.*

Who did Jesus claim to be? That we’ll never know for certain.

Messiah? God’s Chosen, commissioned and sent to proclaim the Kingdom that surpasses all kingdoms yet is found in the humblest heart?

The apocalyptic Son of Man? The first member of a transformed humanity, sent to lead us all to renewed fellowship with God?

Son of God? At one with the Divine, as few – if any – have ever been, sent to call us back to wholeness and to love?

Or, perhaps, simply a human teacher? A wise rabbi with a radical vision of a more just and loving world for all?

We must decide for ourselves, as Jesus intended. He never made it easy.

His judges made up their minds and condemned him; handed him over for torture and for death. But what is our judgement? He stands before us still.

## **Silence**

### **Luke 23:26-28**

*As they led Jesus away, they seized Simon—a Cyrenean who was just coming in from the fields—and forced him to carry the cross behind Jesus. A large crowd was following, many of them women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. At one point, Jesus turned to these women and said,*

*“Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t weep for me! Weep rather for yourselves and for your children!”*

Even now we may weep for Jesus, staggering and falling on his way to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull. And even now he turns to us and says, ‘Don’t weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.’ The future can look bleak, as it did for those daughters of Jerusalem. Many millions walk the path of suffering. Hatred, folly and destruction blight the present and threaten the future. There is much to weep over.

We pray for compassion and wisdom, courage and resolve.

## **Silence**

### **Luke 23:32-38**

*Two others were also led off with Jesus, criminals who were to be put to death. When they had reached the place called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there—together with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, “Abba forgive them. They*

*don't know what they are doing." Then they divided his garments, rolling dice for them. The people stood there watching. The rulers, however, jeered him and said, "He saved others, let him save himself—if he really is the Messiah of God, the Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him. They served Jesus sour wine and said, "If you are really the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was an inscription above Jesus that read, "This is the King of the Jews."*

The story comes to its grim climax. Humiliation, mockery and cruelty: and in response, forgiveness. The way is open for healing and reconciliation, if only we will take it. But if we are to be saved by the forgiveness that is offered, then we must open our hearts and accept it.

May we be always willing to forgive. And may we always be willing to repent and be forgiven.

## **Silence**



## Luke 23: 39-46

*One of the criminals who hung there beside him insulted Jesus, too, saying, "Are you really the Messiah? Then save yourself—and us!" But the other answered the first with a rebuke: "Don't you even fear God? We are only paying the price for what we have done, but this one has done nothing wrong!" Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your glory." Jesus replied, "The truth is, today you'll be with me in paradise!" It was about noon, and darkness fell on the whole land until three in the afternoon, because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the curtain in the sanctuary was torn in two, and Jesus uttered a loud cry and said, "Abba, into your hands I commit my spirit." Saying this, Jesus breathed for the last time.*

The redeeming death of Jesus wasn't some magic trick dependent on blood sacrifice. Rather, innocent suffering and death for the sake of others challenges our consciences, our self-satisfaction and our selfishness. It calls on us to repent, to turn our lives around and walk the Way of Love in human solidarity as Jesus did, remaining faithful to the end.

One crucified criminal turned a deaf ear to that call, the other did not. He responded to Jesus with humility and contrition. He was redeemed, freed, 'bought back' by love and not by blood, though blood was shed. He was recalled from the depths where his comrade chose to stay.

We pray to be freed from our follies and betrayals, from the lies and self-deceptions that imprison us.

May we walk the Way of Love that Jesus walked, and be granted the integrity to be faithful to the end, whatever that might be.

## **Silence**

### **Luke 23:50-56.**

*There was a member of the Sanhedrin named Joseph, who had not consented to their action. Joseph was from Arimathea and lived in anticipation of the reign of God. He approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Joseph took the body down, wrapped it in fine linen and laid it in a tomb cut out of rock, where no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the*

*Sabbath was about to begin. The women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph, saw the tomb and watched as the body was placed in it. Then they went home to prepare the spices and ointments. But they rested on the Sabbath, according to the Law.*

Without hope the friends of Jesus laid his broken body to rest.

We pray that even where hope is gone, love will remain strong. Out of such love new life, new hope, will rise on some bright morning.

## **Silence**

### **1 Peter 3: 18-20a**

*The reason Christ died for sins once for everyone—the just for the sake of the unjust—was in order to lead you to God. Jesus was put to death in the flesh but was given life in the Spirit. And in the Spirit, Jesus went and preached to the imprisoned spirits. They had refused obedience long ago, while God waited patiently in the days of Noah.*

What happened between the burial of Jesus and Easter morning? According to ancient Christian myth, Jesus descended in spirit to the dark depths of the cosmos. There lay the souls who had refused God's call. Now he gave them another chance: to be restored to fellowship with all transgressions forgiven.

May the fellowship of loving, faithful living have no barriers in time and space.

May wholeness and harmony be restored to all God's children.

This is our prayer.

Amen.



Original liturgy arranged and written by Cliff Reed with a few minor additions/alterations by Andrew James Brown.

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