

A Meditation *“Good Friday”*

By Heather Johnston

What’s good about it?
Outside Jerusalem
On a hill called Calvary
Three wooden crosses
Filled with pain and misery.
Then God himself
Turned out the light
Mourning for his only son
The day was blacker than night.
The world stood still and waited
‘It is finished,’ he cried
Bowed his head in obedience
And Died.
What’s good about it?
He is good.



Good Friday Service

March 29, 2024 : Noon

PRELUDE *“Prelude” Opus 11, #15* Alexander Scriabin

THE CANDLE IS LIT

GREETING

We gather again on this Good Friday at the foot of the cross which calls us on, not in shame, not in fear but more deeply into the costly journey towards life.

There is wounding, there is weeping.

In Jesus as the Promised one,

God is not separated from that.

HYMN *“A Man of Ancient Times and Place”* Tune ‘Tallis’ Canon’

A man of ancient time and place with foreign speech and foreign face,
reveals the glory, power and grace of costly, unexpected love.

A rabbi, schooled in Moses’ Law, a male, amending Herod’s flaw,
arouses wonder, rage and awe with costly, unexpected love.

By teasing word and healing deed, a leper touched, an outcast freed,
he bears the fruit and plants the seed of costly, unexpected love.

The cost we barely can surmise when, lifted up before our eyes,
the face of God we recognize in crucified, unfathomed love.

May faith and hope within us grow, the way of Christ to tell and show,
and may the Spirit breathe and blow in costly, unexpected love.

READINGS (FROM LUKE 23:1-32) & REFLECTIONS

READING 1

The elders of the people and the chief priest and scribes rose, and they brought Jesus before Pilate. They began their accusation by saying, “We found this man inciting our people to revolt, opposing payment of tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ, a king.” Pilate put to Jesus this question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “It is you who say it,” Jesus replied.

REFLECTION 1

I remember a man who had dreams of what might be; that people would be set free from ideas and images about God that enslaved them, that people would be-

lieve that through their everyday acts of human kindness they are intimately connected with the sacred, that people would live ‘in peace, in God’s presence all the days of their lives.’

I remember a man driven by his dreams.

SILENCE

READING 2

Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no case against this man.” But they persisted, “He is inflaming the people with his teaching all over Judea; it has come all the way from Galilee, where he began, down to here.”

REFLECTION 2

I remember a man who had his moments of breakthrough, when it must have seemed his dream was being realized: the times people really listened and responded, the men and women who were prepared to walk with him and support him, times when he spoke better and more convincingly than other times.

I remember a man enthused by his successes.

SILENCE

READING 3

When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilean. And finding that he came under Herod’s jurisdiction, he passed him over to Herod who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was delighted to see Jesus; he had heard about him and had been wanting for a long time to set eyes on him; he was hoping to see some miracle worked by Jesus. So Herod questioned Jesus at some length, but without getting a reply.

REFLECTION 3

I remember a man who learned of the cruel death of his cousin. He got into a boat seeking a lonely place, where he could be with his friends to absorb the shock, to grieve quietly, and to calm the feelings of powerlessness and frustration and fear for his own future. I wonder what he prayed about that night? I wonder what helped him leave that lonely place and go forward to confront life, rather than retreat into isolation and safety?

I remember a man driven by his convictions.

SILENCE

READING 4

Then Herod, together with his guards, treated Jesus with contempt and made fun of him; Herod put a rich cloak on Jesus, and sent him back to Pilate. And though Herod and Pilate had been enemies before, they were reconciled that same day. Pilate then summoned the chief priests and the leaders and the people. “You brought this man before me,” Pilate said, “as a political agitator. Now I have gone into the matter myself in your presence and found no case against him in respect of all the charges you bring against him. Nor has Herod either, since he has sent him back to us. As you can see, the man has done nothing that deserves death, so I shall have him flogged and then let him go.”

But altogether they howled, “Away with him! Give us Barabbas!” Pilate was anxious to set Jesus free and addressed them again, but they shouted back, “Crucify, crucify him!”

REFLECTION 4

I remember a man whose dream was shattered: who broke down and cried over what could have been, who knew the pain of failure and powerlessness, who knew what it was like to feel broken and terribly alone.

I remember someone human like all of us.

READING 5

Pilate then gave a verdict: their demand was to be granted. Pilate released Barabbas whom they asked for and who had been imprisoned for rioting and murder, and handed Jesus over to them to deal with him as they pleased.

REFLECTION 5

I remember a man who knew he was going to die: who gathered with his friends knowing it was for the last time, who spoke to them about what he really believed, who wanted them to remember him and to keep his dream alive.

I remember a testament to love.

SILENCE

We remember all this. And we remember all the hard things in our own lives. I invite those who wish to lay down those hard life issues to take a stone and lay it at the foot of the cross... Which is able to bear the weight and the wounding for us.

SILENCE

READING 6

When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left.

REFLECTION 6

I remember a man crucified. He was a failure, abandoned by his male friends, taunted, despised, enduring a shameful and agonizing death, no consoling or heartfelt presence of his God to help him.

I remember a man whose faith in all he believed was tested to the limits.

“There Is a Green Hill Far Away” Luigi Zaninelli
~ Offered by *Suzanne Parmly* ~

REFLECTION 7

I remember a man of extraordinary religious insight: utterly convinced of the connectedness between human loving and living in God, determined to give people personal authority in their relationship with God, wanting to set people free from fear of the unknown, setting his heart on breaking down barriers between people...

We give thanks for the ways in which the life, teaching, and death of Jesus, have set us free.

SILENCE

“Were You There” American Folk Hymn
~ Offered by *Suzanne Parmly* ~

AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

It is now time for us to leave this place. Let us commend ourselves into the hands of God. We believe in God around us, Dreamer and Sustainer of life.

**When there was nothing but an ocean of tears,
God sighed over the waters and dreamed a small dream:
light in the darkness, a small planet in space.**

We believe in God beside us, Jesus as the Christ, dream made flesh.

**When hate and fear were raging, when love was beaten down,
when hope was nailed and left to die, Christ entered into our deep secret places
and went down into our death to find us.**

We believe in God within us, Spirit who empowers the dream.

**Who weeps with us in our despair, who breathes on prison doors,
never admitting it's hopeless, always expecting the bars to bend and sway
and break forth into blossom.**

SILENCE

SENDING OUT

Now. . .go in peace and faith, for nothing can separate you from the love and source of
life - God.

THE CANDLE IS EXTINGUISHED

~ Depart in Silence ~