

“This Isn’t What it Looks Like: The Crucifixion”

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

April 10, 2020 (Good Friday) – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

Hymns for Worship Video

“Alas, and Did my Saviour Bleed” Vs. 5 #235 in the Book of Praise

But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe

Here Lord I give myself away;

'Tis all that I can do

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“Were You There” Vs. 5 #233 in the Book of Praise

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb

O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb

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Scripture Texts

John 18:1-14

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

² Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)

⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." ⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

¹² Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

***As Jesus was led away, Peter and another of the disciples followed, which is when things started going badly for Peter. As he stood in the high priest's courtyard, he denied he was one of Jesus' disciples – for the first time.

Inside, the high priest began to question Jesus, and Jesus' answers did not sit well. He was bound and sent to Caiaphas.

Meanwhile, Peter remained in the courtyard. Again he was asked if he was one of Jesus' disciples, which he denied – a second time. Then, when asked if he had not been seen in the garden with Jesus, a third denial. Then the rooster crowed. And Peter was devastated.

Jesus was then taken to Pilate, the Roman governor, where he endured more questioning. Pilate could see no reason to charge him, but the Jewish officials insisted. They reminded Pilate that they did not have the authority to execute anyone, so they were handing Jesus over to him. Pilate continued to ask questions,

including whether Jesus was a king. Again, Jesus' response did not sit well, even though he spoke the truth. When Pilate asked if the Jews wanted him to release Jesus, as was the custom to release a prisoner during the Passover, they declined. In fact they shouted that they wanted the other prisoner being held, Barabbas, to be released. So Pilate did what they asked. We re-enter the biblical story in the 19th chapter of John... ***

John 19:1-18

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

⁴ Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." ⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

⁶ As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

⁷ The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹ and he went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

¹² From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

¹³ When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). ¹⁴ It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

¹⁵ But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

***As Jesus hung in agony on the cross, a sign was put over his head. “King of the Jews” it read. The Jews didn’t like it, but Pilate would not take it down. The soldiers that had nailed him to the cross cast lots for his clothing. And all the while, Jesus’ mother, her sister, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, and a disciple known only as the one Jesus loved stood at the foot of the cross. I cannot imagine what they were feeling. It was their worst nightmare, and it was real. There was nothing they could do to help him. They could just stay, and watch, and pray.

Jesus gazed down at them and with love he brought his mother and the disciple together as family. She would be looked after. He would remain connected to Jesus in a unique and special relationship. In his last moments, Jesus continued to do what was needed to care for his people. Even in the agony and humiliation of the cross, Jesus knew what was needed, and he met that need. Truly, truly, this was the personification of love and grace. He was, without question, the Word made flesh... the Son of God. John 19 continues... ***

John 19:28-30

²⁸ *Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished."*

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

*** To make sure he was dead, a soldier pierced his side. There was no question.

He had breathed his last breath. John continues with the description of Jesus'

burial... ***

John 19:38-42

³⁸ *Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.* ³⁹ *He was accompanied by*

Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰ *Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance*

with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹ *At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.*

⁴² *Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

*** He was betrayed.

He was arrested.

He was handed over to the Roman authorities.

He was beaten, mocked, humiliated.

He was crucified.

He was mocked some more.

He died.

He was buried.

Those who loved him were plunged into grief and fear.

It was over. Their hearts were broken... their dreams were shattered.

He was dead.

It looked like the end of the story.

But...

This isn't what it looks like. The story is far from over.

Meditation

This isn't what it looks like.