

Good Friday Scripture Interpretation: Seven Last Words Dialogue

Last revised: March 27, 2024

Pre-service *Sanctuary is dimly lit...preset 2*

Prelude String Quartet

Were You There?

Welcome and Offering

(Pr. Lauren)

Opening Hymn #353 vs 1-4

Were You There?

Opening Narration: (Narrator A: Pr. Lauren Narrator B: Joel)

Narrator A: Were you there? Were you there when Jesus was taken in the early hours of the morning to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. When Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" When asked this by the Jewish leaders, Jesus had not answered. But then Jesus said to the Roman Governor, "You say so." Unsatisfied with Jesus' response, Pilate remarked "Don't you have anything to say for yourself?" But Jesus didn't defend himself. Were you there when Jesus kept silent, confusing Pilate and those listening?

Narrator B: Were you there at the Passover Festival, the Jewish celebration remembering their deliverance? The Governor was accustomed to a special practice of setting one prisoner free. At that time, they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So, after the crowds had gathered, Pilate said: "Which one do you want me to release to you, Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

Narrator A: Even though personally Pilate didn't think Jesus was guilty of any political wrongdoing, he knew the people were jealous of Jesus' sway with the Jewish people. While deciding what to do, Pilate's wife sent him a message, "Don't have anything to do with this innocent man, for I had a prophetic and frightening dream about him." But Pilate didn't listen to her.

Narrator B: Were you there when the crowds roared, "Crucify Jesus, the one who claims to be the Messiah!" When Pilate asked "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" So, when Pilate saw that a riot was about to ensue, he set Barabbas free and ordered Jesus to be executed. Were you there when Pilate took some water, washed his hands saying... "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves." All the people responded: "Jesus' blood be on us and on our children!"

Narrator A: Were you there when Pilate had Jesus whipped? Were you there when the soldiers stripped him of his clothes and covered him in a scarlet robe? Were you there when they spat on him and struck him and after putting a crown of thorns on his head, they knelt before Jesus, mocking him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"? Were you there when they stripped him of the insulting robe and put his own clothes back on him, and led him away to be crucified?

Song of Response #350 vs 1-3

They Crucified My Lord

Narrator B: It was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus was despised and rejected ... a person of great sorrow and familiar with suffering ... oppressed and afflicted ... led like a lamb to the slaughter...never saying a word. For Jesus was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. And by Christ's wounds we are healed.

Come now to the cross. See Jesus' body pierced by thorns and nails. Stand with those who loved Jesus, those that hated Jesus, and those who didn't understand; for we are the ones who did this to Jesus. So, hear and ponder the last words of the One who came to save us.

FIRST WORD

"Father forgive them ..." Luke 23:32-38

Scripture (*Reader 1*)

"Two criminals, were led out with Jesus to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals-one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. 'And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One.' The soldiers also came up and mocked him, placing a written notice above him,. reading: 'This is the King of the Jews. '"

(pause) **Snuff 1st candle and lights dimmed**

(continue with reflection on next page)

Reflection (*Reader 1*)

For three years Jesus spoke to us, taught us, and healed us.

But on the cross Jesus' first words are not to us, but rather to God.

In this moment we are given a glimpse into God's own struggle.

And of all the things Jesus might say, he prays a word of incredible grace... "forgive them," our Savior pleads with God, "for they do not know what they are doing."

Thank goodness our relationship with our Creator does not rely on our knowledge, our wisdom, or us doing the right things-for half the time we don't even know what we are doing.

Unbelievably Jesus' words for us are a kind of pre-emptive forgiveness.

To think that Jesus, body wracked with pain, lungs yearning for air, would speak words of forgiveness to us even before we ask for it.. has there ever been such mercy and grace, such love?

Cross Scene – Dice brought to the cross

Song of Response #351 vs 1, 3, 4 *O, Scared Head, Now Wounded*

Nail Sound FX

Second Word

"I tell you the truth ... " Luke 23: 39-43

Scripture (*Reader 2*)

"One of the criminals who hung their hurled insults at Jesus saying 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what we deserve. But this person has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered the criminal, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

(pause) **Snuff candle and lights dimmed.**

(continue with reflection on next page)

Reflection (Reader 2)

Having spoken with God, Jesus now speaks with the criminal next to him.

The guilty one boldly asks the innocent one Jesus, "Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

Recognizing something special in the One hanging next to him. The criminal feels hope in his eleventh hour, and with a vulnerable cry reaches out to Jesus who responds, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

In the midst of the hell of crucifixion, Jesus grants this undeserving person the presence of the divine... heaven. Even in the worst of circumstances, the worst in us is not beyond the saving grace of Jesus. Has there ever been such grace, such love?

Cross Scene – Nails brought to the cross

Song of Response #616 3X

Jesus Remember Me

Nail Sound FX

Third Word

"Woman, behold your son ... " **John 19: 23-27**

Scripture (Reader 3)

"When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, all but his undergarment; and divided it into four pieces, one for each of them. 'Let's not tear it but decide by lot who will get it,' they said to one another. This happened that scripture might be fulfilled; so this is what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother Mary, 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. "

(pause) **Snuff Candle and lights dimmed**

(continue with reflection on next page)

Reflection (*Reader 3*)

Mary, Jesus' mother, has watched him grow up. The hair at her temples is now gray. Her hands are calloused from hard work; raising a houseful of children there's been enough cooking, cleaning, and laundry to go around.

There was faithful Mary at the cross. Even while in her womb she understood his mission but the profound love she had for her son broke her heart and filled her with unspeakable agony. All of this runs through her mind as she stands at the cross, watching her child die.

Jesus looks at his mother; the one who raised him, taught him, corrected him, nurtured him and he says a painful good-bye; knowing that his mission was for the whole human family, and not just his earthly family. The tears he shed were tears of grace. Has there ever been such grace, such love?

Cross Scene – Prayer Shawl brought to the cross

Song of Response #349 vs 1,2, & 5 *Ah, Holy Jesus*

Nail Sound FX

Fourth Word

"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27: 41-43,45-46

Scripture: (*Reader 4*)

"The chief priests and the teachers of the law mock Jesus saying 'He saved others why doesn't he save himself? He's the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross, and we will believe.

He trusts God, let's see God rescue him now, for he claims to be the Son of God.'

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. Then Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lemma Sabachthani? 'which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? '. "

(pause) **Snuff Candle and lights dimmed**

Reflection: (*Reader 4*)

The most gut-wrenching cry in history comes not from a prison, a college dorm room or a hospital bed. It comes from the outskirts of town, where a cross is pounded into the ground... the cry comes from the Savior of the world.

Throughout the course of our lives---in times of deep despair, there is no valley we walk as lonely as the one Jesus experiences. And to hear these words come from the lips of Jesus, is strangely comforting. For even Jesus asks the "why" question, 'My God, my God...why have you forsaken me?' Has there ever been such grace, such amazing love?

Cross Scene – Dirt brought to the cross

Song of Response v 1 - Choir, vs 2 & 3- All *Amazing Love*

Fifth Word

"I Thirst ..." John 19:28-29

Scripture (*Reader 5*)

"Later, knowing that all was 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. "

(pause) **Snuff Candle and lights dimmed.**

Reflection (*Reader 5*)

We are reminded that the One to whom we pray knows our needs. Feeling discouraged, hungry, sleepy and tired, Jesus knows temptation. And from the cross, with his last remaining strength, we hear words of humanity in the midst of divinity. Jesus says, "I thirst." This is no ghost or spirit on the cross. This is God in flesh, expressing human need; a God in flesh who saves us. Here we are reminded of a God who thirsts for us! A God whose wounds reveal the character and heart of God! Has there ever been such grace, such love?!

Cross Scene – Sponge & Stick brought to the cross

Song of Response #803 vs 1-4 *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

Nail Sound FX

Sixth Word

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"It is Finished ..." John 19: 30

Scripture (*Reader 6*)

"When Jesus received the drink, he said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. "

(pause) **Snuff Candle and lights dimmed.**

Reflection (*Reader 6*)

Finished with what?

What is finished is God's Salvation history-long plan for redeeming the world. The mission of Jesus to bring the outsiders in, to heal the wounded, seeking and finding and saving the lost... this is now passed on to us.

Jesus did not say, "I am finished." He said, "It is finished." These are not words of defeat, but victory over death and defeat over everything we think that keeps us from God, from life that really is life. Christ has done it all for us--even experiencing separation from God so that we will never have to. Has there ever been such grace, such love?

Cross Scene – Crown brought to the cross

Anthem Choir and Orchestra

The Ground

Nail Sound FX

Seventh Word

***"Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit "* Luke 23: 46-53**

Scripture (**Reader 7**)

" Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last.

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this person was innocent. ' When all the people saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But those who knew Jesus, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stayed watching at a distance.

Now there was a man name Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and plan of action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. He took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in linen cloth and placed him in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid."

(pause) Snuff Candle

Reflection (**Reader 7**)

Jesus did what we must do; using his life, even his death, to bring about God's reign of justice, peace and welcome for all people. Into God's hands Jesus entrusts his whole being, just as he trusted God with his life. It seems that it is only in the complete surrender of ourselves to our Creator do we begin to see the greatness of God's love pouring out into our lives. God our Maker, into your hands, we commit ourselves, our lives. Only because of Jesus do we experience God's amazing grace, God's astonishing love.

Cross Scene – Grave clothes brought to the cross

Song of Response #353 v 5

Were You There?

The Christ Candle is carried from the sanctuary.

(This is symbolic of Jesus' death and three days in the tomb)

Conclusion: *After the Christ Candle is removed, the bell will toll thirty-three times in remembrance of Jesus' life.*

We depart in silence.

Our journey to the cross continues with Holy Saturday.

Prayer Walk (Shepherd's Garden during daylight hours)

<i>Stripping of the Altar</i>	<i>Josh Norem, Nader and Debra Ayoub, Joel Timmons</i>
<i>Communion Class</i>	<i>Rhodes Martin, Teddy Johnson, Violet Chedsey, Finley Dertien, Evelyn Murry</i>
<i>Readers, Acolytes</i>	<i>Sawyer Dertien, Jonathon Davies, Owen Wegner, Alex Nuernberg, Andrew Nuernberg, Keaton Robertson, Isaac Bishop</i>

