



# Good Friday - April 2nd, 2021

## The Fig Tree Worship Resource



### **Gathering gently**

*Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

On Good Friday we are invited to enter the story of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion and burial. It's hard and it's horrifying to imagine the suffering of the one we love so much. It may fill us with grief, and connect with the grief we carry because of others we have loved and lost. Be gentle with yourselves; approach boldly, and with care. If you need to lean on someone, make sure you do, as we walk together on this pilgrim path.

*Preparation: You may choose to gather a bowl of rosemary sprigs for the Prayers of the People.*

### **Call to worship & Lighting the Candle**

We light the candle as a reminder that Jesus the Christ is the light of the world. Today we retell the story of when that light was extinguished. Today we will wait, in the darkness, bearing the burden of grief, knowing we are not alone, longing for the breaking of the dawn.

### **Acknowledging**

As we gather, we acknowledge the First Peoples of this land, the traditional custodians, and we pay our respect to elders. We commit ourselves to entering the hard stories of our past, and to working for justice and peace for all people.

### **Singing - Here hangs a man discarded TiS 356**

Here hangs a man discarded,  
a scarecrow hoisted high,  
a nonsense pointing nowhere  
to all who hurry by.

Can such a clown of sorrows  
still bring a useful word

when faith and hope seem phantoms  
and every hope absurd?

Can he give help and comfort  
for lives by comfort bound,  
when drums of dazzling progress  
give strangely hollow sound?

Life, emptied of all meaning,  
drained out in bleak distress,  
can share in broken silence  
our deepest emptiness;

and love that freely entered  
the pit of life's despair,  
can name our hidden darkness  
and suffer with us there.

Christ, in our darkness risen,  
help all who long for light  
to hold the hand of promise,  
and walk into the night.

Words: Brain Wren 1936-, Music: Peter Cutts 1937-  
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### **Prayer**

Hold our hands, God of promise  
**as we walk into this night space,  
this dark place, this hard time.**

We remember with gratitude all those times  
when you have held us in the darkness:  
the darkness of fear, doubt and grief.  
You held us like a mother  
cradling a frightened child,  
soothing, rocking, keening us into calm.  
*(silence)*

Hold our hands, God of promise  
**as we walk into this night space,  
this dark place, this hard time.**

We remember with gratitude all those times  
when you have sent us to sit beside others  
in their dark and troubled times.  
When our hands were your hands,  
when our hearts held their pain,

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when our tears fell together, as you wept with us.  
*(silence)*

Hold our hands, God of promise  
**as we walk into this night space,  
this dark place, this hard time.**

We confess the times:  
when we refused to let you sit with us  
in the darkness of our despair,  
when we refused to surrender  
to your outstretched arms of love ,  
when we turned our backs  
on the cries of pain from others.

Hold our hands, God of promise  
**and forgive us for turning away,  
forgive us for shutting you out,  
forgive us for failing to share  
the compassion of your forgiving embrace.**  
*(silence)*

Sisters and brothers in Christ,  
know this, in your hearts,  
and live as if you believe it:  
that you are loved by the God  
who surrendered all to bring you to life.  
You are forgiven,  
**Thanks be to God, Amen.**

### ***Listening***

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These are long readings, don't hurry,  
let the words do their work in you.  
Listen, listen, listen:

Read: Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12  
John 18 & 19

For these words of faith  
and for Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

### ***Reflecting - Rev. Ian Brown***

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*'a destiny, a change'*

Without our accustomed biblical introduction,  
reading even a sketchy account of this day would  
churn the stomachs of the toughest among us. It  
should come with an MA violence rating. No one

there, including the Romans who did the deed,  
would ever have agreed to call it "Good Friday." It  
was a terrible day by any standard. That day  
represents humanity at its worst, but it also shows  
God at God's best.

Good Friday is a theological statement about the  
pending of human destiny.

Jesus came with a vision that put him on a collision  
course with the authorities. His vision was shared  
with many; that God's new way would restore  
justice and freedom to people. His form of  
revolution was to teach and live out an experience  
of God as love.

But Good Friday was not a good experience for  
Jesus or those with him. It was not just another  
day to the family and followers of Jesus. Not only  
did they lose a dear friend, their faith and hope  
were lost as well. It was another horrible day, like  
other horrible days, for people all over our  
suffering and broken world. It was just one man's  
death, except for the scope of this loss. It was not  
a "Good" day! They were much too upset to  
remember that he had said to them earlier that it  
was to their advantage that he was leaving. He  
promised that he would be more with them in his  
absence than when he was there. They didn't  
understand this when he said it, and if it crossed  
their troubled minds on that Friday, it was no  
comfort.

"Who has believed what we have heard? To  
whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" It's  
a good question for us to ponder. What do we  
believe when we come to such a day as this?

Some say Isaiah was prescient; given foresight by  
God. Some say the gospels wrote Isaiah's details  
into Jesus' story. Some will say Jesus learnt the  
truth and character of his mission in the lines of  
the Isaiah scroll. Some will say yes to all these and  
some shake their heads and won't believe  
anything.

"he was wounded for our transgressions,  
crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the  
punishment that made us whole, and by his

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bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

“Wounded”, said Isaiah, but Jesus was killed. Then both texts have good arising, paradoxically out of suffering and brutality.

Life and death issues are the most divisive, the most profound and difficult to deal with of all the problems we face. Symbols that remind us of these are often seen as offensive in themselves, but the cross is so familiar that it has lost its symbolic shock.

The cross, symbol of brutal Roman power, was also the epitome of Jesus powerlessness. And within the symbol lurks something subversive. The cross reminds us that Jesus defeated death by entering into it. Jesus subverts brutal power by submitting to it. The cross that we gather around reminds us that God stands with those who are victims of brutality. And through the cross, ultimate destiny is changed forever.

At the very centre of our faith is this story of suffering, death and resurrection. Here we face the darkness, the endings, the reality in front of us. We are assured here, in the painful bloody detail, that God stands with the suffering. We are invited through this story, to be people who are prepared to face our own pains before God. Messy, unvarnished and uncomfortable as the subject is, it has the ring of truth for us and it helps us to be alongside others in their times of need. When faced with Isaiah’s question of ‘what do I believe?’, this is the direction I look for answers, to this cross shaped sign of God with us, and a changed destiny because of it.

#### ***Responding:*** ***Prayers for World & Community***

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*If you have a basket of rosemary sprigs, invite people to come forward during the prayer, when they are ready, and take one or two to keep in their pocket, or to give to someone,*

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*as a reminder of the presence of God in our darkest times.*

*They may also add a phrase of prayer, with people responding: **Jesus, remember them.***

God who knows suffering and death, you are here, in the suffering of our world present in the places of death, in the hard spaces, in the pain.

*(The following are suggestions for your prayer, you may like to leave a space for people to add something that is on their hearts.)*

We pray for those who are filled with grief,  
**Jesus, remember them**

We pray for women who have been abused  
**Jesus, remember them**

We pray for men who have been accused  
**Jesus, remember them**

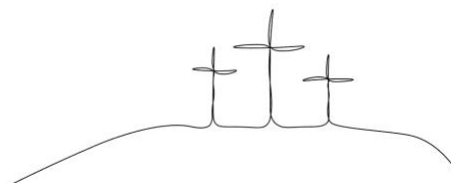
We pray for creatures struggling to survive  
**Jesus, remember them**

We pray for the dying, struggling to breathe  
**Jesus, remember them**

We pray for people overwhelmed with pain  
**Jesus, remember them**

We pray for children who are alone  
**Jesus, remember them**

*(Quiet space for people to add their prayers)*





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We pray for ourselves, and all of humanity  
**Jesus, remember us**  
**as we pray the prayer you taught us:**

*The candle is extinguished. This liturgy does not conclude with a word of mission or a blessing, as the worship is held open until Easter morning.*

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

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### ***Singing -***

#### ***When I survey the wondrous cross TiS 342***

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When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Melody adapted by Edward Miller 1735-1807,  
Words: Isaac Watts 1674-1748  
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