

Good Friday at the Government Center

Friday, April 7, 2023

Opening Hymn | “What Wondrous Love is This” (Verse 1)

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

Welcome & Opening Reflection | “Grey Days” by Ann Siddall (Part 1)

Today is one of the grey areas of the Christian year:
a day when the lights are dimmed
and the sky feels overcast even if it isn't:
a day when theologians and poets
feel as if a heavy veil is drawn over heart and mind.
An inexplicably sad day.

We resist the grey areas,
prefer to see everything in black and white,
look for cloudless, sunny skies,
try not to read between the lines;
throw in a bright colour or two
to try and enliven the scene.

In the grey light of early morning -
after a night in the ecclesiastical high court,
and denial by one of his own circle -
Jesus found himself at the gates
of the reluctant Pilate, who promptly
tried to hand him back to the Jews.

And though the sun rose that morning,
the whole world turned grey for One
who found himself without friend or helper,
faced with drinking a cup he'd prayed
would be turned away from him,
knowing that life was about to be drained out of him.

Opening Hymn | “What Wondrous Love is This” (Verse 2)

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
To God and to the Lamb, who is the great I Am,
While millions join the theme I will sing, I will sing;
While millions join the theme I will sing.

The first candle is extinguished.

Opening Reflection (Continued) | “Grey Days” by Ann Siddall

We are invited to accompany Jesus through this grey day:
to be witnesses to his suffering,
to keep silence before his cry of dereliction.
In our imaginations, let us trudge through Jerusalem,
until we come to the place of the Cross:
and then, let us not turn our faces away.

In this grey day lie all the sorrows and failings
of a humanity that strives for high success,
yet comes up against human limitations,
and falls to the ground in despair.
A humanity whose peace plans
give way to guns, and whose political promises
become papers in filing cabinets.

Here is a day marked by the brokenness of the world.
But it is not a day to wallow in misery,
or to indulge in morbid thoughts about the crucifixion.
It is simply a somber, dignified day
when we remember how it was for Jesus,
and find at the foot of the cross
a place to lay down ours and the world's sorrow.

On grey days it is hard to see clearly,
difficult to understand things that aren't clear.
Yet all we are asked to do today is to be present
to the sacred story as it is retold, and
to the inexplicable, mysterious, wondrous
transformation that was, and still is taking place.

Gathering Song | “What Wondrous Love is This” (Verse 3)

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And through eternity I'll sing on.

The second candle is extinguished.

Prayer of Confession

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, is it possible that I, who call you friend – Messiah, Savior, King – still stand with the crowd, the betraying disciples, the violent soldiers, and the religious leaders? I confess it is possible. I confess it is true. Because I say I have taken up my cross, but I put it down when its not convenient. And I claim I stand up for the least, but I sit down when its uncomfortable. *Silence*

Precious Lord, how did you bear it? The pain of the nails. The tearing separation of the Trinity – even if just for a moment - and the betrayal of friends who would rather stand with the crowd than with you. So you hung there with arms outstretched to all the world, even as each of us turned away from perfect love. *Silence*

And how to do you bear it now? When I make your kingdom into one of comfort, and shift the blame for today's darkness to anywhere – anyone – but me. Lord Jesus, is it possible that I, who have betrayed you, served myself and pursued my own agendas am still welcomed by those arms stretched out wide? Treasured by the one who says, "Come weak and heavy laden – come to me?" *Silence*.

Only here will I find the way to carry your easy burden that costs the world for the sake of love. Help me Lord Jesus to come – to leave the crowd and replace our deafening chant with a silent prayer of surrender that speaks "Anything for you, my Savior and my friend." Amen.

Song | "Look to the Lamb"

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There's only one Name that is worthy, there's only one King on the throne
He is the light of our salvation, all praise belongs to Him alone

There's only one way to the Father, one love that melts a heart of stone
He is the life and resurrection, all praise belongs to Him alone

*Look to the Lamb, see the Son of God the Savior crucified
See the crown of thorns the nails His wounded side; He is worthy
Look to the Lamb, see the One who is forever glorified
There is love and there is fire in His eyes; He is worthy; He is worthy*

He is the Alpha and Omega; He was and is and is to come
He will return to shouts of glory, His name is Jesus Christ our God.
His name is Jesus Christ our God.

The elders bow the creatures cry; saints and angels glorify
The anthem echoes day and night: worthy
Eyes like fire hair like wool; voice like many waters roar
Matchless and most beautiful; worthy

The third candle is extinguished.

Scripture | John 18:1-14, 28-40; 19:16-26

The fourth light is extinguished.

Sermon | Jesus is the Question | *Who is it that you want?*

Rev. Michelle Matthews

The fifth light is extinguished.

Song | "Thou You Slay Me"

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I come God I come, return to the Lord; the one who's broken, the one who's torn me apart
You struck down to bind me up, you say You do it all in love; that I might know You in Your suffering

*Though You slay me, yet I will praise You; though You take from me, I will bless Your name
Though You ruin me, still I will worship; sing a song to the one who's all I need*

My heart and flesh may fail; the earth below give way; with my eyes, with my eyes, I'll see the Lord
Lifted high upon that day, behold the Lamb that was slain, and I'll know every tear was worth it all

Though tonight I'm crying out; let this cup pass from me now
You're still more than I need: You're enough for me, You're enough for me

The sixth light is extinguished.

Holy Communion & Veneration of the Cross | "O Praise the Name (Anástasis)"

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I cast my mind to Calvary; where Jesus bled and died for me
I see His wounds His hands His feet; my Saviour on that cursed tree

His body bound and drenched in tears; they laid Him down in Joseph's tomb
The entrance sealed by heavy stone; Messiah still and all alone

*O praise the Name of the Lord our God! O praise His Name forevermore!
For endless days we will sing Your praise, Oh Lord oh Lord our God!*

Closing Song | "Were You There"

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

The seventh light is extinguished.

Benediction | "A Blessing for Good Friday" by Kate Bowler

O dear God, we are in darker places than we've ever known, than we ever wanted to be.
Our usual strategies of coping aren't working. We are lost. We are afraid. We are fresh out of answers.
Oh God, light the way for this whole heart-heavy earth: for the helpless and hopeless, for those drowning in grief or fear or depression;
For the tired and harried and the at-the-end-of-their-rope; for those weary of their sins and those who aren't, and for me, too.

The thick dusk has fallen and betrayal seemed the order of the day.
The night when Love itself was handed over to brutal ignorance and cunning that loves deceit.
Oh God, you chose to feel what we feel – to be spit on, ridiculed, tortured, and to die all alone.
And in your outstretched arms of the cross, are you gathering to yourself every hideous thing? Every failure, travesty, and wrong?

Blessed are we who say: "Yes! Take this pain. Turn things right side up again."
We can see, only now, that you will follow us to the end and beyond.
The day love died, something new was born. And may we be a people, open to the grief, the loss, and then, yes, the rising of the Son.

Silence.