

Call to Worship

Let us pray: Christ says with his final breath -

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

I am thirsty. It is finished. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

With Jesus we can say: In your hands our lives are safe, come what may. Even though there may be difficulties and dangers ahead, we are in your hands, faithful God. We come to worship today, because in Christ, God declares and lives out his love for us. Amen.

Hymn – STF 276 – Lift High the Cross: -

*Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.*

1 Follow the path on which our Captain trod,
our King victorious, Christ the Son of God:

2 Each new-born soldier of the Crucified
bears on their brow the seal of him who died:

3 Led on their way by this triumphant sign,
the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine:

4 From farthest regions let them homage bring,
and on his cross adore their Saviour King:

5 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw the world to thee:

6 Set up thy throne, that earth's despair may
cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace:

Michael Robert Newbolt (1874–1956)

Thanksgiving Prayer:

Gracious God, in him you came and lived amongst us, fully part of the world.

Through him you revealed your grace, your mercy, your will, your kingdom.

By him you identified yourself with the sin and suffering of our world, opening the way through his death and resurrection to forgiveness and eternal life. **Receive our thanks.**

Gracious God, you have given to us without counting the cost, not just a little, but all. **Receive our thanks.** You emptied yourself, taking the form of a servant, sacrificing your only Son for our sakes.

And the wonder is you ask so little in return; you make no extortionate demands, you set no stringent conditions to your love, you ask simply that we love you in return. **Receive our thanks.**

Gracious God, teach us to offer you our willing and joyful discipleship, and to play our part in working for your kingdom. **Receive our thanks for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: -

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;

On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading 1: The Cross

He carried a large wooden beam, just one half of a cross.

He held the rough wood in his hands, gripped it, felt its shape, tested its weight. He imagined the axe striking its base, the weight of leaves fluttering in the air.

He felt its destiny. This was the hull of the boat, the rafters of a house, the handle of a plough or the shaft of an axe. AND now a grim vocation: to be the place where death is distributed.

It would make a cross, and then his feet and arms would be nailed in place.

But first there was a journey to make. From Pilate's palace, through the crowded street, to the hill of the skulls about half a mile. He was already battered. The crowd that welcomed him just days earlier, now bated for blood. To get through this – he emptied himself of all but love. As he carried this weight through the streets Jesus knew what was in store for him. In the humid heat of that Friday afternoon, we smell the rank odour of blood and sweat. With horror, we see our hands upon him too, our fingers pointing, our voices jeering. He is reaching into the bloody mess of our world, in order to redeem it. He carries the purposes of God. That will be shaped into a cross. And they nailed him.

Reflective Prayer:

When I am puffed up with my own self-importance. When I am empty of grace. When I cannot see your vision because of my narrow thinking. Look at me with love. Dispel my foolish pride. Let me not make hasty decisions. Let me not make excuses for my faults. See inside me. Believe in me. And help me start again. Amen

Reading 2: Judas

I didn't get Jesus anymore. We didn't need him to wash our feet, we didn't need him to be our servant. What we needed was him to be our leader. Loving one another is ok but the world doesn't need more love, it needs change, leadership, action. I don't recognise him anymore. He was someone else. He was saying all that suffering and dying stuff again: 'this bread is my body, this wine my blood.' For me it was the last straw. Did he want to be killed? I couldn't take it anymore. I left. I needed to bring things to a head, to find out what he really thought. And, yes, Caiaphas and Annas had already been in touch with me. I'd spoken to them. But I'm not on their side; surely you can see that. I'm not on anyone's side; I did this so that the truth could come out. And I know it's hard, but the truth is he's not what he thinks he is, not the Messiah he was meant to be. Not the Messiah we need. What, it was my fault Jesus was put to the cross? Have you looked in the mirror lately? Don't heap it all on me. You were the ones – each of you – who cheered and sang Hosanna and waved your branches, you were that pleased to see him. Only a few days ago: you lifted him up and now you have brought him down. You were the ones who cried for his blood. You were the ones who wanted him dead. It was your sin, your pride, your refusal to love just as much as mine that put him there. Don't deny it. You hammered in the nails: every one of them, every one of you.

Reflective Prayer

Lord, when darkness overwhelms me. When there is no one to turn to, all my bridges burnt, my last hand played, seek me out, overtake me, be there for me. Amen

Prayer of Confession –

Let us Pray:

Lord Jesus Christ

Today of all days we are reminded

Just how much we owe you,

How great a price you were willing to pay

To give us the gift of life.

Forgive us for giving you so little in return,

For shying away from discipleship
When there is any suggestion it may be costly,
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We are reminded how you stayed true
To those who were to fail you,
More concerned for their own safety than your
welfare.

Forgive us that we so readily put self-interest
Before the interests of others,
Our loyalty depending on how much is asked of
us.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We are reminded how you endured ridicule and
violence

Without any attempt at retaliation,
Praying instead for those who persecuted you.
Forgive us that we lash out at the slightest
provocation,
That we are more often concerned with exacting
revenge than offering forgiveness.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,
We thank you for this day and for all it calls to
mind.
Help us to hear its message
And respond to its challenge.
Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.
For in your name we ask it. Amen.

Reading 5: Mary Magdalene

Everyone will be looking for someone to blame for this stupid waste of life, this killing of the man who showed me humanity, showed me God in a way I had never known God before. Everyone is queuing up to say it wasn't their fault, that they are not to blame. But you see it was my stupidity, my pride, my envy, my spite that got in the way, that got it wrong, that put him up there. Each one a nail hammered home. And I don't just mean me, but all the 'mes' that make up a crowd, that make up a world. But I can only take responsibility for my part of it. That is why I am watching. That is why I am still waiting. We didn't know what to do with a love like his. So we destroyed it. But as I looked at him on that cross, I was at the same time convicted and at the same time released. It was for my sins that he hung and suffered there. And somehow by the tenacity of his loving, I am free to love again. So, please, don't point the finger anymore, but wait with me. Imagine the nail in your hands. Receive this astonishing gift of tenacious love, all poured out in his dying. Broken for you.

Reflection - Offering of Nails

It is in Mary's waiting and in Jesus' reply to the robber 'today you will be with me in Paradise', that God's offer of life and forgiveness is there for everyone. It is the meaning of the cross. It is the promise of Easter. All you need to do is reach out and grab it.

let us pray: -

Lord Jesus Christ,
Broken on the cross,
Tortured there in body, mind, and soul,
You know what it means to suffer.

So now we pray today for the broken people of our world,
All those whose have experienced something of your pain.

Reach out in love, and make them whole.

We pray for the broken in spirit –
Those whose dreams have been destroyed,
Those whose love has been betrayed,
Those whose faith has been crushed.

Reach out in love, and make them whole.

Lord Jesus Christ,
You came to make us whole,
To mend broken lives.
To restore broken people.

Reach out in love, and make them whole.

Loving God, your son Jesus Christ carried us to the cross, shed his blood for us and brought us into a new community with you. Help us to follow in his way, deny ourselves and take up the cross he gives us. And when our hearts are broken, and when the burdens of this life feel too great to bear, take us to the cross and enable us to see there the great weight that Jesus carried, for here we receive the affirmation of your love, the assurance of your promise, and the strength to persevere. For in your name we ask it. Amen.

Hymn – STF 338 – There is a redeemer

1 There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.

*Thank you, O my Father,
for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit
till the work on earth is done.*

2 Jesus my Redeemer,
name above all names,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain.

3 When I stand in glory
I will see his face,
and there I'll serve my King for ever
in that holy place.

Blessing

Loving God, lead us out into the world renewed in vigour, in hope, In faith, and in purpose.
This Good Friday, we have reflected on the worst of humanity, and the unconditional love and hope of God.

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love, and those you are called to love, now in the name of Christ. Amen.

