

I Wonder..... The Cross

Lent 2022



The picture above was taken from our Reflecreate Day in March 2016, entitled "From the manger to the Cross and beyond" A day of reflection and creative response looking at the events leading up to the cross, the resurrection and ultimately Jesus coming again. At this point, the blood of Jesus covers the way to the cross and no doubt you will recognise many items that have been building up in the Prayer Corner and which have been covered in a mini-series of short thoughts for Lent.

A warning comes with the video posted below. Images are graphic but they chart the entire journey that Jesus takes to the cross for us.

<https://youtu.be/QoIMl8LGdaM>

The Power of the Cross by Casting Crowns

Jesus Crucified

²⁶ The soldiers led Jesus away, and as they were going, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon who was coming into the city from the country. They seized him, put the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

²⁷ A large crowd of people followed him; among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned to them and said, "Women of Jerusalem! Don't cry for me, but for yourselves and your children. ²⁹ For the days are coming when people will say, 'How lucky are the women who never had children, who never bore babies, who never nursed them!' ³⁰ That will be the time when people will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Hide us!' ³¹ For if such things as these are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³² Two other men, both of them criminals, were also led out to be put to death with Jesus. ³³ When they came to the place called "The Skull," they crucified Jesus there, and the two criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing."^[a]

They divided his clothes among themselves by throwing dice. ³⁵ The people stood there watching while the Jewish leaders made fun of him: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah whom God has chosen!"

³⁶ The soldiers also made fun of him: they came up to him and offered him cheap wine, ³⁷ and said, "Save yourself if you are the king of the Jews!"

³⁸ Above him were written these words: "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹ One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰ The other one, however, rebuked him, saying, "Don't you fear God? You received the same sentence he did. ⁴¹ Ours, however, is only right, because we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong." ⁴² And he said to Jesus, "Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!"

⁴³ Jesus said to him, "I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me."

Take time to read through the passage above making note of any words, phrases or parts of the story that seem to be lingering with you. Go back to that point in the passage and re read it asking the Holy Spirit what He is saying to you through it.

Maybe you will find that you go no further than the first verse – Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus, maybe by circumstance than by freewill.

I wonder.....have you found yourself in a similar position – volunteered without being asked. How did that feel and what was the outcome?

Perhaps it is the sorrow of the women and subsequent response from Jesus. What did this mean?

Or the actions and reactions from the soldiers and the two criminals.

I wonder if this evokes emotions of anger at the injustices carried out here?

Or perhaps there is something else?

Please pause and pray for those in similar positions in our world today. For the needs of the world for food, shelter, water, and basic commodities. For injustices carried out against women, especially those who are living in countries where ethnic cleansing seems to be taking place and for the value of women in some countries and finally for those who are imprisoned for their faith and those who hold them captive.

Below is a link to a poem. Please read.

[Forgiven At The Cross, The Crucifixion, Easter Poem \(familyfriendpoems.com\)](http://familyfriendpoems.com)



The death of Jesus

⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵ *It was about twelve o'clock when the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the whole country until three o'clock; and the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" He said this and died.*

⁴⁷ *The army officer saw what had happened, and he praised God, saying, "Certainly he was a good man!"*

⁴⁸ *When the people who had gathered there to watch the spectacle saw what happened, they all went back home, beating their breasts in sorrow. ⁴⁹ All those who knew Jesus personally, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance to watch. Luke 23:44-49 GNT*

Take some time to imagine the scene. The sun had stopped shining, nothing but darkness covering the land. Perhaps the only sounds were of the men dying in pain, or the mockery of those standing against Jesus in direct comparison to the stifled cries of anguish of those who truly loved Him. Whatever the cacophony of noise, Jesus' voice cuts across it all as He places His spirit into the Father's hands.

I wonder.....where are you in this scene?

I wonder what Jesus's Holy Spirit is whispering into your hearts and minds as the reality of the extent of what He has done for you unfolds before your eyes.

I wonder.....how did God the Father feel at this moment?

<https://youtu.be/SUvpBphq5og>

At the Cross by Chris Tomlin

The burial of Jesus

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ *There was a man named Joseph from Arimathea, a town in Judea. He was a good and honourable man, who was waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Although he was a member of the Council, he had not agreed with their decision and action. ⁵² He went into the presence of Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took the body down, wrapped it in a linen sheet, and placed it in a tomb which had been dug out of solid rock and which had never been used. ⁵⁴ It was Friday, and the Sabbath was about to begin.*

⁵⁵ The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee went with Joseph and saw the tomb and how Jesus' body was placed in it. ⁵⁶ Then they went back home and prepared the spices and perfumes for the body.

On the Sabbath they rested, as the Law commanded. Luke 23: 50-56 GNT

The following account of the role of Joseph of Arimathea was written by Brenda Lord.

Reckless Love April 2022b

It was a reckless thing to do; going to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. Joseph knew that.

And why act now? Now, when it was all over!

It was too late to help, to take a stand, to change anything, exert any influence, or make a difference.

He would have to sacrifice so much.

And to what purpose? Why alienate yourself for what seemed a lost cause? No one at that point had any hope of a resurrection. It was the end, as far as they were concerned.

Joseph had known how much Jesus was feared and hated by the most powerful Jews in the country. Of course he did, he was a prominent member of the very council that had condemned Jesus to death. All this time he had kept quiet. He now regretted that bitterly.

He had not known about the hasty, abrupt trial, that had taken place overnight. A majority of the seventy strong council of the Sanhedrin had assembled at short notice. Anyone suspected of being sympathetic to Jesus had not been contacted.¹

As the news of the full extent of their actions circulated, Jesus was already being led out to be crucified. Joseph stood looking on in shock and disbelief, as did many of Jesus' disciples. The outrageous injustice of it all angered him. Only now did he realise how much Jesus meant to him. How much he loved this man. Was Jesus *really*, only a man? He seemed so much more. Never had Joseph met a man like this before.

Surely God would not allow this to continue. Any moment now He would intervene. There would be some dramatic 'act of God' as in former times. But the hours went by, and there was nothing. Except darkness, for at noon it went dark for several hours.

¹ 'Joseph had not consented to their decision and action.' Luke 23:51

He either was not present or he did not support the vote to condemn Jesus. Mark and Matthew write of the 'whole council' and say the decision was supported by 'all'. The likelihood of all 70 members of the Sanhedrin being present at such short notice is remote and anyone suspected of being sympathetic to Jesus, such as Nicodemus who had previously spoken up for him, would not have been informed of the meeting.

Finally, at 3pm, the ground began shaking with an earthquake. At the exact moment of Jesus' death. Yet the last shout that came from his dying lips, sounded more like a cry of victory than of defeat. 'It is finished', followed by a prayer of committal.

Sometimes you have to take a stand, no matter what the cost. In Joseph's case against your party, your government, even if you're a member of it. He wanted to distance himself from them. He was desperate to do something, any personal cost now paled into insignificance. Suddenly the realization of the one thing that he could do, hit him.

There was much uncertainty about whether bodies of the executed would be released to the families for burial. Many were dumped on the rubbish heap outside Jerusalem. Joseph could not and would not allow that to happen to Jesus. He could ensure that Jesus was given an honourable Jewish burial in his own tomb, at least for now.

The potential consequences of his actions seemed trivial now to Joseph. He would be expelled from the Sanhedrin at the very least, but it was far more important to him to fear God, than to fear his colleagues; whom he wanted nothing more to do with.

One question was whether Pilate would be prepared to release the body to him? His status as a member of the Jewish ruling council would help there.

Joseph couldn't take care of all the practical arrangements alone. He needed an appropriate volunteer to assist him.

Although he was a rich man with servants, it did not seem right to instruct them to do this. Handling a dead body would make them ceremonially unclean and exclude them from celebrating the Passover. More importantly, such a task was usually undertaken by those closest to the deceased, whom he did not know and time was against him. The utmost respect was needed. He would undertake this service himself.

As he looked around, he spotted Nicodemus, also a member of the Sanhedrin, looking equally troubled. He had once spoken up for Jesus in public. Who better for an ally? They exchanged looks. Only a few words were needed. There was not a moment to lose. The soldiers would soon start to speed things up, because at twilight,² the Passover, one of the holiest days of the Jewish year began. The bodies had to be disposed of beforehand.

The decision made, the two men headed towards the palace³ at an almost undignified pace, to seek an audience with Pilate. No problem there. Pilate didn't care one way or the other. He had officially washed his hands of the whole case that morning, quite literally.

Joseph bought the linen needed to wrap the body, whilst Nicodemus procured the expensive spices; 34 kilograms of myrrh and aloes. This would be a kingly burial indeed!

The garden tomb was close by; not far to carry their precious burden. Water was needed too, to wash the body before it was carefully wrapped with the spices and linen bandages, and a linen cap placed on the head. The family could pay their respects after the Sabbath.

² Sunrise was just before 5.30 am and sunset at 6 pm

³ The Praetorium, the Roman Governor's residence when in Jerusalem, previously Herod's palace.

As the sun was setting, they laid Jesus' body in the cool of the newly carved tomb. They bowed their heads in prayer, rolled a large stone across the entrance to seal the tomb, then slowly walked away.

Surely this act of service is one of the most beautiful expressions of worship in the whole of the Bible. For what is worship, if not such an expression of love and devotion?

References

John 19:38-42
Mark 15:42-47
Matthew 27:57-61
Luke 23:50-56
Mark 14:55,64;15:1,16;
Matthew 26:59
John 7:52

The mouths of tombs were sealed with either a disc-shaped stone that ran in an inclined groove in front of the cave or with a boulder that fell into the access hole beneath it. Once in place it was very difficult to move. The body was washed and usually wrapped loosely in a linen cloth and carried to the burial place the same day, unless it was a sabbath or holy day. Covering the body in spices was exceptional. The spices were held in place with layers of white roller bandages and a cap was placed on the head.

Writer: Brenda Lord

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Final Prayer

*In humility we come to you Lord Jesus
on this auspicious day.
We look upon your bruised body,
the ultimate sacrifice that You made, for us.
We can only wonder at how
You managed to bear all the pain of the world
throughout the generations,
but we come to you with gratitude and praise.
As we look at this bruised and battered world
full of suffering and pain,
mainly of our own making,
sorry seems such an inadequate word
and yet
You love us to lengths
beyond our understanding,
and so in response
the little we have,
we offer to You.
Amen*

There is only one hymn that we could possibly end our time together with:

When I survey the Wondrous Cross

[https://youtu.be/ Hm-aES_HUs](https://youtu.be/Hm-aES_HUs)

May God bless us all this Easter.

Amen