

Mount Eliza Anglican Church — Good Friday, 10 April 2020

A service to read through at home

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, we kneel at the foot of your cross to watch with you.
Help us to see the cost of our forgiveness
so that we may be made new through your love. **Amen.**

READ PSALM 55

CONFESSION

If while we were God's enemies we were reconciled
by the death of God's Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
Romans 5:10

Let us confess our sins.

**O Christ, we are stripped bare by your suffering.
You see our dreams, our demons,
and the secrets we keep even from ourselves.
Forgive all that needs to be forgiven,
healed all that needs to be healed,
awaken all the good that sleeps in us,
banish all the fears that paralyse us.
Put the power of your cross into our lives for ever, and clothe us with hope and love.**

I have turned my heart to God in repentance and my sins are laid bare before the cross of Jesus Christ. In the name of the living God, I claim my forgiveness. Amen.

READING: MATTHEW 26:14 - 27:61

SERMON by Rev Jennie Savage — [Available as an audio download](#)

Good Friday; 10 April 2020 — Matthew 26:14-27:61

*Let us pray,
May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts,
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our rock and our redeemer. Amen.*

The universal reaction to Christ on the cross

Particularly in Matthew's gospel,
the story of Jesus' crucifixion is connected with a group of events in nature: Darkness covers the land;
the curtain of the temple is torn in two;
the earth is shaken
and the bodies of saints rise out of their graves.

It is as though nature, with trembling, participates in the decisive event of history.
The sun veils its head;
the temple makes the gesture of mourning;
the foundations of the earth are moved;
the tombs are opened.
Nature is in an uproar because something is happening which concerns the universe.

So too, *the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus,
saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said,
'Truly this man was the God's son!'*

Paul Tillich, an influential theologian of last century,
reflected upon these abnormal events surrounding the crucifixion, he said:

We should *not* ask whether clouds or a dust storm darkened the sun
on a special day of a special year,
whether an earthquake happened in Palestine just at that hour,
whether the curtain before the holy of holies in the temple at Jerusalem
had to be repaired
or whether the raised bodies of the saints died again.

But we *should* ask whether we are able to feel
with [what has been depicted in word and in art]
that the event of Christ crucified is one which concerns the universe,
including all nature and all history.

The story and its images are powerfully symbolic.
They are stories within the story.

I continue with Tillich's reflections.

The sun

First of all, the sun at its highest at noon,
became blotted out by the darkness which came over the land.
The sun veiled its face because of the depth of evil and shame
which it saw under the Cross.

But the sun also veiled its face because its power over the world had ceased
once and forever in these hours of its darkness.
The great shining and burning god of everything that lives on earth,
the sun who was praised and feared and adored by innumerable human beings
during thousands and thousands of years,
had been deprived of its divine power
when *one* human being in ultimate agony
maintained His unity with that which is greater than the sun.

Since those hours of darkness, it is shown that not the sun,
but a suffering and struggling soul
which cannot be broken by all the powers of the universe
is the image of the Highest,
and that the sun can only be praised in the way of St. Francis,
who called it our brother, but not our god.

And the great curtain:

"The curtain of the temple was torn in two."
The temple tore its gown as the mourners did
because Christ, to whom the temple belonged more than to anybody else,
was thrown out and killed by the servants of the temple.
But the temple—and with it, all temples on earth—also complained of its own destiny.
The curtain which made the temple a holy place, separated from other places,
lost its separating power.
Christ who was expelled as blaspheming the temple,
had cleft the curtain and opened the temple for everybody,
for every moment.
This curtain cannot be mended any more,
although there are priests and ministers and pious people who try to mend it.
They will *not* succeed because Christ, for whom every place was a sacred place,
made even the Cross a holy place.

And the earth

Trembling and shaking the earth participated in the agony of the man on the Cross and in the despair of all those who had seen in Christ the beginning of the new eon. Trembling and shaking the earth proved that it is not the motherly ground on which we can safely build our houses and cities, our cultures and religious systems.

Trembling and shaking the earth pointed to another ground on which the earth itself rests: the self-surrendering love on which all earthly powers and values concentrate their hostility and which they cannot conquer.

And death

Since the hour when Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last, the rocks were split, the earth not only ceased to be the solid ground of life; but also ceased to be the lasting cave of death.

Resurrection is not something added to the death of Jesus the Christ; but it is implied in His death, as the story of the resurrection before the resurrection, indicates. The tombs were opened and bodies were raised when one man in whom God was present without limit yielded His spirit into His Father's hands.

Since this moment the universe is no longer what it was; nature has received another meaning; history is transformed and you and I are no more, and should not be any more, what we were before.ⁱ

Veneration of the cross.

This shattering of our world and our understanding leads us into wordless worship. You might like to pause here and play some music as you sit and contemplate the cross.

And as you do, hear the echoes of words from St Paul:

Our old self was crucified with him ... we will also live with him ...

Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life ...

Creation itself will be set free ... the freedom of the glory of the children of God

*Neither death, nor life ... nor anything in all creation, can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.*ⁱⁱ

Amen.

INTERCESSIONS by Rev Eddie Millar

Although at home, we pray together for the world and the Church.

Father, we pray for your holy catholic Church, and especially for the Mount Eliza Anglican Church and the rest of the Anglican Communion. Grant that we all may be one in Christ, and grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you: that your name may be glorified by everyone. Father, hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grant that the light of your gospel may so shine in the world:
that those who do not know your Christ may turn to him.
Father, hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for all bishops, priests and deacons:
that they may be faithful ministers of your word and sacraments.
Father, hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for all who govern and exercise authority in the nations of the world:
and we pray especially for all who have the responsibility of advising and leading us all
through this COVID-19 pandemic.
Father, hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Have compassion on those who suffer or are in grief or trouble (especially those with COVID-19):
that they may be delivered from their distress.
Father, hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for all who have died. And we praise you for all your saints who have entered into joy.
May we also share in your heavenly kingdom.
Father, hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:
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.

FINAL PRAYER

Most merciful God,
we commit ourselves to you
and pray for the grace of a holy life,
that, with all who have died
and are alive in Christ,
we may come to the fullness of eternal life,
and the joy of the resurrection
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ⁱ The New Being; by Paul Tillich; <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=375&C=36>

ⁱⁱ Romans 6:6a, 8b, 13b; 8:21a, 38-39