



the grainery church

GOOD FRIDAY

Reflections

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Would it matter
if there had been two crosses not three
that day on the dry Judean hills
when they hung you out to die?
Would the world be a different place
if you'd been standing with the murmuring crowd
or stretching your legs by the lake, rather than
panting for breath, your arms
stretched out on wood?
Would it matter?

What follows is a selection of bible readings and prayers, focused around the gospel accounts of the death of Jesus. Please adapt these to suit your situation. After each bible reading, spend some time reflecting on what you've read. Ask the Lord to use these passages to speak to you: to remind you of his love; to reassure you and to fill you with hope and joy, knowing that Christ died for you.

In the final section, you'll find some poems and hymns that may be helpful.

Good Friday Prayer

Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Confession

Christians down through the centuries have found confession to be a very important aspect of their meeting together. Here are some reasons why this can be both helpful and encouraging.

When we confess our sin together, it helps to keep us:

Honest

It's a reminder that we're not perfect. When life seems to be going well for us, or we've experienced some particular blessing from the Lord, or we are able to use our gifts in a way that people appreciate, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking these things are good measures of our spiritual health. So, it's important to remain grounded by allowing the Holy Spirit to search our hearts. Corporate confession is a great way to do that.

And then, there may be particular issues – actions, or words we've spoken, or things we haven't done or said - that the Lord wants brings to our attention. Again, it's so important that we listen to the Holy Spirit, and times of Corporate confession can be a way the Holy Spirit speaks to us about such things

Humble

Confessing our sins alongside our sisters and brothers in Christ is a way of saying, "I'm no better than you."

Focused

Confession takes us back to Jesus and his death for us. It reminds us that we are forgiven people - sons and daughters of the Living God - only because of Jesus and his death for us.

Thankful

As Christians, those who've put their trust in Jesus Christ, we need to understand that we don't stop being God's children, even when we sin. We are forgiven because of Jesus, not because of anything we do, (or don't do). In fact, it isn't even the depth or rigour of our repentance that is the basis for our forgiveness. Repentance, which is when we turn away

from our own ways and turn to God, is vitally important. But it's not repentance that saves us. It's Jesus! So, when the Holy Spirit reminds us of ways in which we have failed to be the people God has called us to be, and sin has crept into our lives, it's not because he wants to leave us wallowing in feelings of guilt or inadequacy, but so that he can remind us that even though we have sinned, we are still forgiven and still his precious sons and daughters. Confession then, should lead us to new joy, enabling us to say, "The truth about me, despite my history, is that God says I am good enough, because Christ is good enough."

On track

Finally, every corporate confession is an invitation to renew our journey with Jesus. To walk away from the things we see are wrong, that dishonour the Lord Jesus and hold us back; and to affirm again our commitment to Jesus – to following him in every area of our life. And because we do this together, it means that, we are spurring each other on.

Even if corporate confession hasn't been something you're familiar with, I'd encourage you to try this out.

Read out this verse as an introduction:

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9

OR

If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

[All] Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed our own ways and desires and not loved you as we should. We have failed to do many things that we should have done, and we have pursued those things we should not have done

Father, we are truly sorry. For the sake of Jesus Christ who died for us, forgive us. By your Spirit turn our hearts to love you and to love our neighbour. Help us to live a godly and obedient life to your honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Conclude with this prayer of encouragement and affirmation. You could turn “you” into “we” if you’d be more comfortable with that, as in “When we are confronted... etc”

When you are confronted with your own inadequacy,
may you be reminded that Christ is enough.

When you are confronted with your weakness,
may you find strength in Christ

When you are confronted with your past, and all of the ways
you aren’t good enough,
may you be confronted with your present and future in all of
the ways in which Christ is good enough

When you are confronted with despair,
may you have the hope of Christ.

May you truly come to see that in Christ you are a new creation.

Bible verses

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

Luke 22:39-46

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.”

But the whole crowd shouted, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!”(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.” But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

Luke 23:13-25

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: “the king of the Jews.”

They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

Matthew 27:33-46

Praying for each other and beyond

Spend some time praying for each other; share prayer requests. Other things you might like to pray for:

- Sue and the leadership at The Grainery Church
- The government
- Medical and ancillary staff
- Those who live alone
- Those who have lost jobs or facing financial distress
- People who are ill and those caring for them
- Your neighbours
- Our witness as followers of Jesus: That we will look for opportunities to help our neighbours, speak to them about Jesus and pray with them.
- That, as Christians, we will discern and also respond, to the lessons God has for us in this crisis
- That the Lord will use this experience to turn many people's hearts towards Jesus, in repentance and faith.

You might like to conclude with everyone praying the Lord's prayer.

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Final reflections

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.
Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

From Isaiah 53

Although written hundreds of years before Jesus, these verses from Isaiah should make us think of Jesus and especially his death for us. You might like to begin this prayer time with silence.

If you are with someone else, before the final prayer, why not share something that's struck you as you've read these passages together: something that is new to you, or has struck you with new force, or something that's encouraged or challenged you.

Then pray this prayer. If there's someone else with you, you might find it helpful to pray this together.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we remember with heartfelt gratitude the darkness and shame your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ endured for us at Calvary. Instil in us a deeper understanding of your mercy and grace, and renew our love and devotion to you. Through Jesus Christ, who is our only Mediator and Lord. Amen

Final prayer

You might like to finish with someone praying this prayer by Richard of Chichester (1197-1253)

Thanks be to you O Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given us; for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us. O merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, now and for evermore. Amen.