


The First Presbyterian Church of Berthoud

April 10, 2020

Good Friday Prayer Vigil



*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.
~ Isaiah 53:5*

Invitation to Silent Prayer

Scripture says that while Jesus was on the cross, “From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon” (Matthew 27:45–46). We mark this time of darkness with a silent prayer vigil today from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Below you will find prayers to pray, Scriptures to read, and artwork to meditate on during this time of silence. Take your time. Move slowly through the readings and allow generous time to pause for reflection.

You are welcome to remain as long as you like.

Opening Prayers

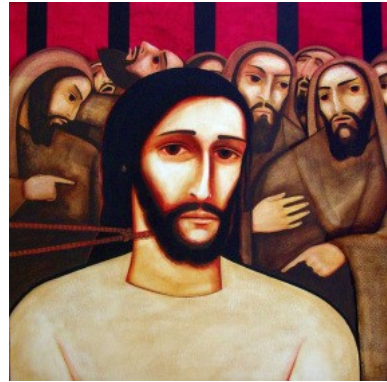
Blessed be the name of the Lord our God,
Who redeems us from sin and death.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.

Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms. Grant that all peoples of the earth may be drawn to your redeeming love, for your kingdom’s sake. Amen.

Behold the cross on which was hung the salvation of the world.

Jesus Is Silent Before Pilate



When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. . . . Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, **“You say so.”** But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

~ Matthew 27:1-2,11-14

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

~ Isaiah 53:7

See, my servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.
Just as there were many who were astonished at him
so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals —
so he shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

~ Isaiah 52:13-15

Jesus remained silent before his accusers, refusing to justify himself.

This amazed the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

What about Jesus amazes you?

Sit in silence now, worshiping in wordless wonder and awe.

Jesus Is Silent While Mocked

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

~ Matthew 27:27-31

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

On God rests my deliverance and my honor, my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

~ Psalm 62:5-7

Jesus continues to remain silent, even as physical mockery and torture begin.

Ponder how his silence reflects trust that God the Father will deliver him and honor him. Where might God be calling you to similar trust?

Offer your silence to Christ now in solidarity with his suffering.

Jesus Remains Silent on the Cross

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way. From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

~Matthew 27:32-45

They crucified my Lord,
and He never said a mumbalin’ word.
They crucified my Lord,
and He never said a mumbalin’ word.
not a word, not a word, not a word.

~ “He Never Said a Mumblin’ Word”
(African American spiritual)

Silent through those three dread hours

Wrestling with the evil powers

Left alone with human sin

Gloom around You and within

Till the appointed time is night

Till the Lamb of God may die.

~ “Throned Upon the Awful Tree” (Hymn)

*For hours Jesus quietly endured the physical pain of the cross,
the emotional pain of continued mockery,
and the spiritual pain of accepting the consequences of all our
sin.*

*In your silence, offer to Christ the pains you are carrying this
day.*

**Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our
diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down
by God, and afflicted.**

**But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed
for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that
made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.**

**All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned
to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the
iniquity of us all.**

~ Isaiah 53:4–6

*Where have you gone astray?
What transgressions, iniquities, and sins of yours
is Jesus bearing silently upon the cross?*

Jesus Breaks His Silence

Then Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not
know what they are doing.”**

~Luke 23:34

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, **“Woman, here is your son.”** Then he said to the disciple, **“Here is your mother.”** And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

~John 19:25-27

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, **“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”**

~Luke 29:39-43,46

*Notice how Jesus’ words to others from the cross express
mercy and compassion.
Listen for his voice to speak mercy and compassion to you
as well.*

Jesus Experiences the Father’s Silence

About three o’clock, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, **“Eli,
Eli, lema sabachthani?”** that is, **“My God, my God, why have
you forsaken me?”**

~Luke 23:34

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

**Why are you so far from helping me, from the words
of my groaning?**

**O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.**

~Psalm 22:1-2

O Lord, why do you cast me off? Why do you hide your face from me?

~Psalm 88:14



St John's drawing of 'Christ, Crucified', preserved in the convent of the Encarnación at Avila

This sketch of Christ on the cross was made by St. John of the Cross, the 16th century Spanish mystic who famously wrote the *Dark Night of the Soul*. Writing in the voice of God the Father, John asks those who gaze on the picture, “If I have already told you all things in my Word, my Son, and if I have no other word, what answer or revelation can I now make that would surpass this? . . . Fasten your eyes on him alone because in him I have spoken and revealed all, and in him you will discover even more than you ask for and desire. . . If you desire me to answer with a word of comfort, behold my Son subject to me and to others out of love for me, and afflicted, and you will see how much he answers you.”

Where have you felt forsaken or abandoned by God?
Where have you cried for help and felt no response?
What might it mean for you that God has already answered through Christ on the cross?

Jesus Dies Into Silence

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, **“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”**
~Luke 23:46

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), **“I am thirsty.”** A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, **“It is finished.”** Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

~John 19:28-30

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

~Matthew 27:50-52

Death is marked by silence. The Word of God spoke, and then ceased. But the earth did not remain quiet. Matthew tells us the curtain in the temple was torn in two, the earth shook, and others who were dead came to life. As Jesus entered the silence of death, creation itself groaned in response.

In silence, contemplate the reality of death. Psalm 89:48 asks, “Who can live and never see death? Who can escape the power of Sheol?” The Apostle Paul asks, “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

The Heidelberg Catechism asks, “What is your only comfort in life and in death?”
The answer it provides: “That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.”

Do you take comfort in belonging to Christ who has done all this for you?

The Silence of Burial

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

~Luke 23:50-56

Holy Saturday, the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, is a day when God is silent. Scripture tells us only that the disciples rested.

After the resurrection, the Church taught that Jesus “descended into hell” (The Apostles’ Creed) and “made a proclamation to the spirits in prison”

(1 Peter 3:19). Christ’s descent to the dead fulfilled the promise of Psalm 139:8, as well: “If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.” But while Jesus did this on the first Holy Saturday, his followers on earth remained perplexed.

They rested. They waited, unsure of what came next.

As you spend the next day awaiting the resurrection, consider making Psalm 62:5 your repeated prayer: “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.”