

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, April 10, 2020 – Good Friday

207 South Brodie St. Thunder Bay  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

## Call to Worship

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

For us and for our salvation,  
Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Blessed be the name of the Lord,  
Now and forever. Amen.

## Hymn      When I survey the wondrous cross

1. When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

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## Opening Prayer

We come to the foot of your cross and we bow with the disciples. We ponder the mystery of your life and death with Mary, and proclaim the truth of who you are with those who witnessed your love in action. We come to you this day, because you first came to us, We come loving you, because you first loved us, We come to serve you, because you first served us, We come to worship you as the Creator, Christ and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and always.

You are a God of loving-kindness. You sent Christ into the world that we might have life and have it abundantly. Yet we live lives that are often deadly, certainly less than you would have them be:

We allow your world to be filled with violence and terror, our trust in you is shallow and our faithfulness falters. In the face of uncertainty and trouble, we forget your loving kindness governs all things. Forgive who we have been, amend who we are and direct who we shall be through Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Source of wisdom and understanding,  
In the midst of our distractions, let us experience stillness in this moment.  
In the midst of competing voices, let us hear your Word.  
In the many choices we encounter, help us follow your will.  
In the name of Jesus, our teacher and saviour, we pray. Amen.

## **Assurance of Pardon**

Jesus Christ was betrayed and abandoned, yet from the cross he asked God to forgive us. Know that no matter what you have been or what you are now, forgiveness is offered to you this day in Christ Jesus. Accept this forgiveness and share it with others for his sake. Amen.

## **Scripture Reading**

*Please read from a Bible of your choice. Read the scripture as a story, like in a novel. Using your imagination, bring to life all the characters and the different scenes.*

❖ John 18:1-19:42

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Reflection**

There is no getting around it. At some point conversations, texts, and emails, cover the topic of isolation. We are self-isolating by choice, but also by government order. We are keeping our distance in order to care for one another, but the truth is, it is difficult. Some people living alone in their homes, apartments, or senior's homes are completely cut off from the physical touch of another. They may see a designated person bringing their medications or food, maybe even caring for some of their physical needs, but not much touch except to get the job done. Many of us are fortunate enough to be living with at least one other family member, so physical touch is possible. Though there are those who are living in fear because of who they have to isolate with. All are isolated from friends and extended family who give us that extra hug, hold our hands, and dry our tears.

Isolation is not something new in the history of the world. There have been other pandemics, and world wars have made people hide in order to be protected. Many of us grew up with the stories of Anne Frank and her book *The Secret Annex* in which Anne documents her life in hiding from 1942 to 1944. There was also the story of Corrie Ten Boom's life as depicted in *The Hiding Place*. Again, a story of a girl and her family's experience during the Second World War.

Though most of us have plenty of food to eat, warm homes, and cozy beds so our isolation is pretty comfortable, there are many organizations that are feeding those

who have little to no food. With the loss of employment there are those who are afraid of their very uncertain future. Still others are essential employees and are tired, frustrated, and fearful, also feeling isolated though they are with others as they work behind plastic walls and come home hoping they have not placed their families in harm's way.

Isolation is not new, but it has never been easy. People were made to be in relationship with others and not just over the phone, but in physical proximity. That is what makes this time so challenging for all of us, we were made to be human beings interacting physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually with others. Having said that, it is interesting to observe how even before Covid 19 online gaming and text messaging had slowly been replacing face to face interactions for some time. Also, many people have felt isolated as younger generations, busy with their own work and leisure have forgotten how important it is to spend time with older generations.

We may be wondering how can our faith, our belief in Jesus speaks into these moments of isolation. It is with this in mind that we come to the scripture reading for Good Friday which revealed something that I had not really thought much about before now...just how isolated Jesus was in that last day. He was physically close to people, but in all other ways, he was very much alone. First in the Garden, he was betrayed by Judas, one he had loved for three years, had journeyed, taught, prayed, stayed, ate, and laughed with. Think of moments when you have felt the sting of betrayal and how isolating that was. Betrayal wounds and it takes a whole lot of trust and love for that betrayal to be healed.

Then Jesus goes before the High Priest and later Pilot, the governor. No one comes to Jesus' rescue. He is utterly alone. Abandoned by those who had been by his side, had said they would always be there. Peter was close by, but denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples. Fear of facing the same punishment as Jesus and lack of understanding of Jesus' teaching and ministry held Peter back. He and the others had not signed up for a loser king. They were all about strength, might, power. In the course of three years they had not understood Jesus' talk about another kingdom, one that was different from the lived experience of the Jewish people. So, Jesus stood there alone, accused, beaten, mocked, betrayed, abandoned, isolated.

Then Jesus is taken to the Place of the Skull. They took him there and he was "carrying the cross by himself" (John 19:17). He was about to die in the most horrific way the Romans knew how to punish people, and he was by himself. They crucified him between two others, but those men were not concerned for Jesus. They were busy trying to breathe. The soldiers took Jesus' clothes and divided them up. So now Jesus was abandoned, nearly naked, and isolated. There was no one coming to his rescue.

Jesus understands our need for love, for someone to come to our rescue, to know we are not alone even when it feels like we are. Jesus understands abandonment and

isolation. These feelings are stronger for some than others, but each of us can only do this alone thing for so long and then it takes a toll. We were made for relationship.

And yet there is hope, a glimpse of what is to come even while Jesus hangs, gasping for each breath, on a cross. There, “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)

There were those in that moment that were suffering, one feeling the loss of a child, others a friend, a mentor, and so much more. Jesus looks at them and even though he too was suffering, he made sure that his mother was cared for. That she would not feel abandoned, isolated, alone. And the disciple who took her in would also be comforted, knowing that one he had loved had not forgotten him, had given him purpose and meaning. Moments later Jesus says, “It is finished.” His own work and purpose in life complete.

Throughout this reflection I have stated that Jesus was isolated, alone, abandoned, and he was by those physically near him, those who we would hope would have his back, but he was never abandoned by God. Jesus trusted that God was present even when it felt like he had been forgotten, forsaken. Yet, we do see and feel some hope as the story closes. We see it in the fact that people who loved him were nearby, even if they didn’t understand his mission and were afraid. Finally, Jesus’ body was lovingly prepared, wrapped, and placed in a new tomb.

In these fleeting moments of Jesus’ last day, we find people of courage, trust, and love who will do their best to honour Jesus’ life and death. In those moments they were doing what they knew to do in the worst circumstance, however we know there is more to the story. In three days, they and all the disciples would begin to understand what Jesus meant when he cleansed the temple and said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). He was talking about his own body and from that point on, every teaching they could recall from Jesus, every story, every action, would be understood in a new way.

But for now, we sit with the stillness, the isolation of Good Friday knowing that Jesus gets it. Jesus understands our isolation and need for relationship in ways that we may not have ever comprehended. Jesus the King of love, trusted the God of love. He knew he was not alone, isolated, or abandoned in spirit, and neither are we. God goes with us and is always present. May you know God with you in this time of isolation as we learn how to be in relationship with one another in new ways and anticipate the day we can once again show our love by touch and word.

In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

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## **Closing Prayer**

O God of Peace,

Within our lives and relationships, in our communities and this world, we face conflict and antagonism. Today we pray for all places where violence and cruelty seem to win the day; for countries where war cuts down people; and for relationships marked by cruelty. Loving God, give us peace in our time.

O God of Hope,

Whenever the world is confusing and bleak, you pierce the darkness with hope and renewed vision. We give you thanks for lessons learned, for changes of heart, for new discoveries made and hope restored. As we mark Jesus' death this day, we pray for those who are ill and dying, for those who are bereaved or feel any burden of loss. Renew our trust in your resurrecting love. We give you thanks for those who have died and abide with you; keep us united with them and bring us to you at the last. Loving God, give us hope in our time.

O Spirit of God,

We pray for the Church of Christ here and throughout the world: unite it in witness and service. Where it is in error or in thrall to idolatry or cruelty, restore its vigor and grace. Nurture our calling to unique ministries wherever we serve.

Loving God, give us courage in our time.

O Creator of Joy,

We thank you for our moments of joy and celebration, for pleasure given and received, for times of quiet reflection. We remember before you those who feel lonely or bitter, and those who must walk through dark valleys. Be their light and their warmth. Melt our hearts to love anyone in difficulty more deeply.

Loving God, give us joy in our time.

O Love from heaven to earth come down,

You call us to live in communion with you and one another. We remember before you our families, whether we are close or estranged, and our friends, whether nearby or far away. Bless all the relationships that sustain us and bring your love close by. Loving God, give us love in our times.

Hear us as we pray...

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is 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 forever and ever. Amen

## Hymn      What wondrous love is this

1. What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of bliss  
to lay aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,  
to lay aside his crown for my soul.

2. To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,  
to God and to the Lamb, I will sing.  
To God and to the Lamb, who is the great I AM,  
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,  
while millions join the theme, I will sing!

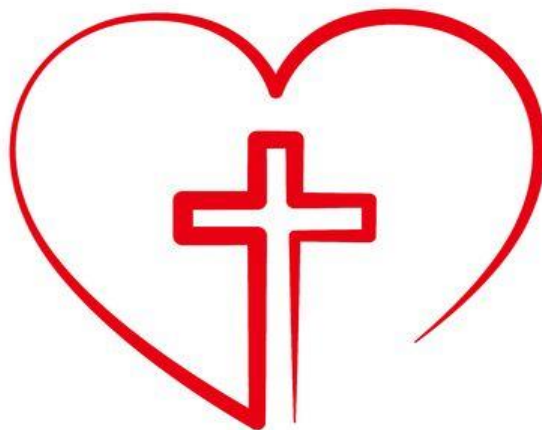
3. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on.  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,  
and through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
and through eternity I'll sing on!

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## Benediction

May you find in the cross a sure ground for faith,  
a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven.  
And may the blessing of God go with you,  
now and for ever more. Amen.

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Worship Planner. Good Friday, April 10, 2020 Year A