

Good Friday: An Hour At The Cross - 7th April 2023

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Preacher: Matt Wallace

[0 : 00] Good afternoon everyone and a very warm welcome to our Good Friday service. We're calling this an hour at the cross because we're going to spend the next 60 minutes up to 3 o'clock reflecting and meditating on all that Jesus went through, all that Jesus won and all that Jesus has done for us by his death on the cross.

It's going to be by nature, as I'm sure you're already aware, a quiet hour together, at times perhaps a necessarily sobering one, since the resurrection of Easter Sunday that we're looking forward to only really makes sense with the death of Good Friday.

So there'll be times of silence, times where I'll lead us in some reflections, times when we'll listen to some music which seemed appropriate for today, we're not going to sing any hymns today, although one or two hymns will make an appearance as we go through.

Just so you know where we're going now, we're going to split this next hour into three parts and each section is going to be based around some words from a classic Easter hymn when I survey the wondrous cross.

So do please feel free to sit, to kneel if you'd like, to stand, but I encourage you to come aside really from the rest of the day and the weekend that is to come and spend this next hour being led by the Holy Spirit in the thoughts, the contemplations, the feelings we might encounter as we go through our time together.

[1 : 40] And so as we begin, can I just lead us in a prayer and let's commit ourselves and our time to the Lord. So dear Father God, thank you for Jesus and for all that this day means.

Thank you for the opportunity we have this afternoon to think about, to consider, to in some way enter into the suffering and the passion of Jesus as he was crucified.

Lead us, we pray, that we may appreciate in a deeper way all that his death meant then and means for us and our world today.

May we know, please, your loving presence with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

So we're going to begin with a short time of silence and then we'll start by listening to a version of that hymn, When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.

[2 : 44] When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And poor contempt On all my pride
Forbid it, Lord That I should boast

Saving the death Saving the death
Of Christ my God All the vain things
That charm me most I sacrifice
I sacrifice Them to his blood
See from his head His hands, his feet
Sorrow and love Sorrow and love

Flow mingled down Did e'er such love
And sorrow meet Or thorns Or thorns
So rich So rich A crown
Were the whole Realm Of nature
Mine That were That were
An offering Far too small
Love So amazing So divine
Amazing So divine Divine
Demands My soul Demands My soul
Demands My soul Love Demands
My soul My life My all My all
My all Lord Jesus One of the
Abiding images Of that first

Good Friday Is of Your head
Crowned in a ring Of thorns
A head Carrying a crown
Which the soldiers Made to mock
The claim that You were a king
Someone of Royal blood
A head Carrying a crown
Whose thorns Pierced your skin
Causing blood To drip down
Your face Leaving trails
Of red In their wake
A head Carrying a crown
Which was Thrust upon you
And with your hands Bound
And then nailed To the cross
A head Obligated To carry
This crown Until it Slumped forward
From exhaustion Unable
To hold Its own weight
I wonder Jesus As your
Neck muscles Gave way
And you realised You could no longer
Look up to the heavens Did you

[7 : 51] Fleetingly recall Those
Happier times Maybe When
Your gaze Was lifted
And your head Was Raised high
Did you recall Maybe the time
When you Looked up to the heavens
At your

baptism When the Holy Spirit Descended on you In the form of a dove Or how you must have Longed for another Experience Like that An experience Of being filled Of being Called Of the excitement Of an adventure Just beginning Or perhaps You recall The time You looked up To the heavens When giving Thanks Just before You broke The bread And fed The five Thousand With just A few Loaves And fish Or what About the time You looked up To see The faithful Generosity Of the widow Putting her Only two coins Into the temple Treasury All times

When you were Free to Lift your Gaze Above your Surroundings And see Clearly The way In which Your father In heaven Was working Whether In the Miraculous Or in the Mundane But now That ability To lift Your eyes To the hills As the Psalmist Said Now that Ability Was gone You had No strength Left to Look up No strength Left to Cast your Eyes Heavenward And yet I wonder Was it As your Head Slumped Low Jesus That you Noticed Below The faithful Few Who had Stayed At the Foot Of your Cross Your Mother Mary Your Friend Mary From Magdala Some Other Women Who maybe You couldn't Quite make Out as The blood From your Pierced

Head Welled In your Eyes But then A glimpse Of Young John Yeah He was There Too And for A moment Your spirit Lifted Once more As you Realised That with John With Mary Magdalene The Others Not all Of your Disciples Had abandoned You And then I wonder Jesus Was it Seeing them Together John Next to Your mum That prompted You to Say something Or had They been On your Mind Like this For a While Dear Woman You said Here is Your son And to John Here is Your mother You see Even in The midst Of such Pain Such Weight On your Shoulders That meant You could No longer Raise your Head You were

Still looking For ways To reach Out and Help those Who needed You most Ways to Bring the Light And life Of God Into reality And I Wonder Jesus Did you Say a Quiet Prayer Of thanks There and Then To your Heavenly Father That even Though you Could no Longer raise Your head Heavenwards By looking Down from The cross You could See that His love His ways His compassion Was still At work Working Through you As it Always Had done Even to The end Even as Your head Slumped So that Your chin Hit your Chest Your heavenly Father Our heavenly Father Was drawing People to Himself And to Each other Through you Lord it's

Impossible for Us to Know what Was going Through your Head as You hung There on The cross In a way I imagine We're glad That we Can't read Your mind As it Would be Too much For us To bear Thoughts Too lofty For us To attain And yet The accounts We do Have Reveal you To be Someone who Even in These final Breaths When you Were thinking Of others Whether that Was the thief Being crucified Alongside you Or those Grieving on the Ground Beneath you Lord Jesus Thank you That even On the cross You didn't Change You didn't Give up You didn't Stop living The life Of perfect Love Love which Puts others First Love which Meets people's Needs

[12 : 56] Love which Ultimately Lays down Its life For the Sake Of others Thank you Lord Jesus For your Willingness To go Through What you Did To wear That crown Of thorns To let Your head Hang low To die For us And so Help us Lord To understand In our Heads Our minds All that it is That you've Done For us Oh Sacred Head Now Wounded With Grief And Shame Weight Down Now Scornfully Surrounded

With Thorns Thine Holy Crown How Pale Thou Art With Anguish With Sore Abuse And Scorn How Doth Thou Visage Languish Which Once Was Bright As Mood What Thou My Lord Has Suffered H entender

I deserve thy place Look on me with thy favour Thou shave to me thy grace What language shall I borrow To thank thee, dearest friend For this thy dying sorrow Thy pity without end O make me thine forever And sure thy fainting be Lord let me never ever Outlive my love for thee See from his hands Being a carpenter, I'm sure Jesus You'd have been used to blisters, splinters, calluses You had hands that showed the marks of years of hard work Hands that ate at the end of a difficult day Hands that made large items of farming equipment And hands that delicately chiselled out detailed carving Hands that, having spent the week creating, rested Rested I wonder if you missed those days Those simpler days, maybe

Of life in the workshop Working alongside your dad in the family business Him teaching you how to use the plane How to do joinery It was good to create Good to make things Perhaps something in your soul echoed With the joy, the wonder, the satisfaction of creativity And yet Working with wood I wonder, did you ever get Pangs of unease A strange sense of your future Of the suffering you'd endure Of how the same wood that you'd love to work with Would one day be used against you You know, picking splinters from your palms Were you aware that the same hands

[18 : 07] Would be pierced From front to back Only a few years later I hope for your sake You didn't know But I suspect for our sake You probably did What was it that drove you on, though?

Destiny Duty Determination Maybe Although it was more than that It had to be Only love The purest Holiest of love Could be the reason The motivation The justification For what you went through A love that wanted That needed To open the way Between us And yourself Between us And God Because Of love Today, Jesus As we remember your death On the wood of the cross We have no idea No ability To comprehend What it must have been like And yet we are so intricately Intimately Involved Each of us

Through Negligence Through weakness Through our own deliberate fault Have helped cut And chisel And shape the cross From which you hung Each of us Has contributed To the need For nails To pierce Your hands And feet Each of us Have In our own ways In our own times Denied you Abandoned you Betrayed you And from your cross You look at us We want to look back But sometimes We just can't We want to hold Your gaze But it's Virtually impossible Because Lord Jesus You know To times like this That words can't express Our feelings of sorrow

Or regret Of repentance But we are So sorry You are our God And you became Sin For us Almighty God Became Sin Became everything He hated Because of his Fantastic Overwhelming Eternal Love For us And so Jesus Once again We ask for you To help us Help us to grasp To wrestle with To understand afresh What you did for us No one has greater love Than if he lays down his life For his friends And you call us Your friends We are not Worthy But in response

Help us Help us to love you Help us to live To the full The life That you've given us That you've won For us Jesus we know We'll never repay you For what you've done For us We can't even begin And yet perhaps You don't want us To try and pay it back Rather you want us To pay it forward To be a blessing Because you have First blessed us So please Help us Lord To do our best To give of our best In response Rather than in return For your love For us I have placed all my hope

[22 : 44] In a crucified man In the wounds in his side His feet and his hands I have traded my pride For a share in his shame And the glory that one day Will burst from his pain I have abandoned my trust In the wise and the proud For this right and mysterious Weakness of God And I dare to believe In his scandalous claim That his blood cleanses sin For whoever will call on his name Live or die Here I stand I have placed my hope

In a crucified man I believe as they beat On his beautiful face He turned a torturous chair Into an altar of grace Where the worst we can do Met the best that God does Where unspeakable hate Met the gaze of unstoppable love At the crux of it all There he has I've placed my hope In a crucified man Man of sorrows Man of grief Will he stand Beyond belief

When the purest and best Took the force of our curse Death's victory Amount Jittered into rivers And either we bow Or we stumble and fall For the wisdom of suffering God God has made fools God has made fools of us all I gladly admit That I am That I've placed my hope In a crucified man But man of sorrows Man of sorrows Man of grief Will he stand Will he stand Beyond belief Will he stand Beyond belief

Will he stand In a buried in my life In the cold earth within Like a seed in the winter I'll wait for the spring From that garden of tombs Eden rises again The paradise blooms from his body And never will end He'll finish all he began He'll finish all he began Creation moves In a crucified man When I stand at the judgment I have no other plan I've placed my love I've placed my hope In a crucified man

Like the female beside you I have no other plan I've placed my hope In a crucified man See from his feet It's hard to comprehend Jesus Just how excruciating the pain of crucifixion must have been There's an inherent cruelty to every form of execution But this method The one you knew you had come to earth to endure Lord Jesus, it's a shameful thing

[27 : 49] That as a human race we ever devised such a barbaric act Over the years we've tended to focus on the reality of the nails Which went through your hands Through your hands But to have that single nail Driven through both your feet at once It's simply a horrific image A nail through your feet Which would have meant that every time you tried to lift your body To catch your breath The pain, Jesus Must have been unbearable Your feet Your feet Your feet Jesus Nailed to a cross An attempt to Literally Pin you down So that you couldn't move You couldn't escape You'll have heard those taunting you Tempting you to save yourself To come down from the cross

I wonder I wonder, Jesus When you heard those words Did you recognise Something in the tone with which they were said That echoed the way The devil himself had tempted you Some three

years earlier In the wilderness Your story Tells us, Jesus That after you resisted the devil During those 40 days in the wilderness The devil left you until An opportune time Did the devil think that this was now his moment His opportunity To tempt you again When you were at your most vulnerable Your most shattered Come on, come down from the cross, Jesus Leave this pain behind You don't have to do this Quite how you resisted this temptation, Jesus

Is beyond us Thank you for not cracking For not compromising Your love for us But then we know Lord Jesus That even when you were tempted You remained in control So there was that time After you fed the 5,000 And the crowds wanted to force you To be their king But you resisted this temptation too On that occasion By taking yourself away from the crowds And retreating to the mountains On your own And yet having resisted Having fled from that temptation What was the very next thing We're told you did?

Well, it was when your disciples Were in trouble in their boat On the Sea of Galilee And in the midst of a storm You, Jesus Came down from your retreat And walked on water Towards them And as you climbed into the boat They miraculously found themselves Mooring safely by the water's edge You walked on water, Jesus To bring peace and hope to your friends Your feet Your feet Brought with them Your good news Your rescue Your recovery Your restoration Those same feet That walked on water Had now been pierced Pinned to the wood of the cross And yet When that nail was driven through them Your willingness to let that happen Your willingness to let that happen Brought with it

Our ultimate rescue Our recovery Our restoration Our redemption Our redemption Our redemption Lord Jesus, we're grateful Beyond measure That you knew What you were doing That you knew What you were doing That you knew The perfect plan you had For the salvation of the world And Lord Jesus, we're grateful Beyond measure That you call us To follow in your footsteps To put our feet Where yours have been Indeed you call us To follow in your footsteps To put our feet To put our feet Where yours have been Indeed you call us To walk on water with you To get out of whatever boats We find ourselves in And to place one foot in front of the other Not looking down But keeping our eyes fixed on the ground Equally To get out of whatever boats We find ourselves in And to place one foot in front of the other Not looking down But keeping our eyes fixed on you Equally, you call us, Jesus

[32 : 49] To wash each other's feet Because you have first washed ours But perhaps most profoundly of all You call us to take up our cross Just as you have taken up yours Lord, if we're honest We don't really know what that means To take up our cross Our best guess Is that you are calling us To be willing to go And do whatever it is That you ask of us Jesus, we have faith in you But that's a tough call So Lord Jesus We believe We believe But help our unbelief On this Good Friday As we seek to reflect and process All that your cross means We're acutely aware that there is far more going on Than we can begin to comprehend We simply see

We simply see From your head Your hands Your feet The sorrow and love Which mingle down Lord Jesus, we are so sorry That your death was necessary Was necessary And yet we are so grateful That in your death You displayed the extent Of your love for us We know that you love us, Jesus And we love you We know it's Friday We know that Sunday We know that Sunday Is coming So help us, we pray To journey with you Trusting you Wherever you may lead us Wherever you may lead us Wherever you may lead us Love break me down Pick me up off the ground Pick me up off the ground Oh let me out From where I have gone And unlock my heart I don't know where to start Love break me down And take me back home Look at the clouds Look at the clouds As the rain falls down

Oh, wash away My sorrow and pain And now I can see The lost look a lot like me From dust I was born In dust I shall be And hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah And hallelujah Ale Ramen You All that I've done All that I should have done

All I've become And all I should be I'll let you down I've not quite figured out What I will say When death's at my door But hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah But hallelujah Hallelujah And hallelujah And hallelujah On my holiest day And hallelujah

[38 : 02] I'll let you hide Heaven's my way Have you seen Hallelujah Revelation And hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Watching Everyonesem our antenna Amen.

Amen. Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, Surely this was a righteous man.

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council, good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action.

[40 : 31] He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body.

Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was preparation day and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes.

But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. Thank you very much for being here this afternoon.

You're welcome to stay and sit in the quiet as long as you like. If you do leave, can I suggest maybe any conversation.

[41 : 45] Do you want to take that outside into the sunshine with folks so that those who might want to stay can do so in quiet. But when you do leave here, may you go with God's blessing.

And may you rest well tomorrow looking forward to all that Sunday will bring. Amen.