

Good Friday 2026 - An Hour At The Cross

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Date: 03 April 2026

Preacher: Laura Edwards

[0 : 00] O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

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O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.

[1 : 23] O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

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[3 : 11] O Lord, hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

O Lord, hear my prayer, come and listen to me.

O Lord, hear my prayer, come and listen to me. O Lord, hear my prayer, come and listen to me. It was about five feet, it was about five feet. It was half a cross.

He didn't carry the Lord, he didn't carry the whole thing, though this is how he is remembered.

Though nobody ever got him right. We forget sometimes that he was a carpenter.

He was familiar with wood. He died. He died. He died. He died. He died. He died. He died.

[4 : 58] He died. He died. He died. He died. He died. Feeling its shape, its weight, its smell.

But this was not to be a rafter of a house or the hull of a boat. It had a grim vocation to be the place where death is distributed.

They handed it to him like it was nothing. Like he was nothing and he shouldered the weight. He was already battered and broken from being flogged and he felt the roughness against his rawness.

The splinters that dug into his flesh anticipated the nails that were to follow. It was half a cross.

The cross piece that his hands would be nailed to. His wrists actually. He would be hoisted up.

[6 : 13] It would make a cross and then his feet would be nailed in place. But first there was a journey to make.

From Pilate's Palace, through the crowded streets, to the hill of the skull, outside the walls. And all this way, he half carried, half dragged this beam.

This great girder from which he would hang. Everyone knew about crucifixion. Thousands of people had died this way over a thousand years.

There were times when Roman circus arenas became forests of crosses. The Romans were fond of crucifixion.

They liked its precision. It produced the maximum amount of pain with an adjustable duration. They had mastered this killing technology as such that they could decide how long it lasted and how much it hurt.

[7 : 31] As Jesus carried this weight through the streets, he knew what was in store for him.

We can imagine him stumbling through the narrow, crowded streets on a humid afternoon. We see the crowds jeering, fingers jabbing, excitement on their faces.

Smell the rank odour of blood and sweat. And we hear the bloodlust of the crowd boiling over. We feel disgust for them.

But we all know how easy it is to run with a crowd. And wonder in horror if we see our hands jabbing and our voices jeering.

And suddenly it seems to mean nothing. Another innocent man going to his death like so many, many thousands and millions of people before.

[8 : 39] Through the whole bloody failure of human history. In gas chambers. Killing fields. Firing squads. Atomic explosions. Bombed trains. Illegal wars. The list goes on. And here is one more.

Silent before his accusers. Stoical in his suffering. Many names are forgotten.

In the end all names are forgotten. But the carpenter's son from Nazareth. This man. Stumbling to carry a huge wooden beam.

He is remembered. Why? Because this man is not just a man. But God contained in a man.

[9 : 41] And his suffering and dying is not just one more in a torment of human misery. But God sharing it. God involved in the world he made.

God. By carrying the cross he treads a path of suffering. He carries the woundedness of everyone who has been affected by the depravity of the awful things we do to each other.

He can taste its breath. He can feel its hand upon him. But he carries something else.

A light flickering in him that will not be snuffed out. Not when the soldiers mock him. Beat him.

When they drive in the nails. Not when he hangs there ridiculed. Defeated. Forsaken. Not when he hangs there. He carries half a cross.

[10 : 57] He is reaching into the bloodiness to redeem it. He carries the purposes of God. They will be shaped into a cross.

He carries the purpose of God. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[13 : 39] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[16 : 47] And a good joke travels. Did he expect the War of a dream?

wormed its way to people, intrigued by scandal and intrigue. It even reached the ears of Pilate. Are you a king? he inquires.

And when he leads him out before the people, he says, Here is your king. The crowds laugh and sneer. We have no king but Caesar.

Pilate issues a sign to be put above the cross saying, King of the Jews. And so everyone can get the joke, it is written in three languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

All the world can enjoy the joke now. The preacher from Nazareth who said he was king. It reaches the ears of the high priest.

[18 : 24] But he wasn't laughing. Jesus' silence didn't speak to him of a broken man. He's disturbed by the silence, confronted by it.

Don't put king of the Jews, he intervenes. What I have written is written, says Pilate.

So adorned with thorns, he wears the crown. And as the blood pours down into his eyes, he sees those who he has come to save, hurrying to get to better view.

But the taunts keep coming. What sort of king is this? He saved others, but he cannot save himself. And I wonder what words ring in his ears.

Pilate's, so you are king. His own words, the agony of vocation. Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me.

[19 : 43] But there is no other way. This is a cup that must be drained. The thorns press harder, blood pumping from the wounds in the heat.

He's faint. His hands are shaking, utterly alone. But the joke backfires.

He is a king. The thorn is a sign that he is what he is, anointed and annihilated.

And what some saw him to be, the Messiah of God. He is a king. A piercing beam of light for the world.

The very one that Israel has been hoping for. The one to all their scriptures and prophets point. But they don't see it.

[20 : 49] They laugh out loud. They crown him with thorns. What sort of king is this?

The one to all their brothers. The wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died My richest gain I count but loss and poor content

On all my pride Forbid it Lord That I should boast Saving the death of Christ my God All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to His blood See from His head

His hands, His feet Sorrow and love flow mingled down Did e'er such love and sorrow meet Or thorns composed So rich a crown Were the whole realm of nature mine That were an offering Far too small Love so amazing So divine Demands my soul Demands my soul Love demands my soul My life My all Love so amazing Love so amazing Love so amazing Love so amazing Love so amazing Love so amazing Love so amazing

[25 : 37] Mark 9 30 to 37. Jesus predicts his death a second time. They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, the son of man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him and after three days he will rise. But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. Where he was in the house he asked them, what were you arguing about on the road? But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve and said, anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all. He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me. He carried our disappointments and sins.

He carried his followers. He carried his followers' disappointments. You see, they thought he was going to be a different kind of king. His disciples had gone. Through his eyes, narrowed with pain, he looked around. He saw John, faithful beloved John, and his mother bent over in grief.

He said, several other women are there. They comfort each other. But the others, they were only prepared to follow him so far. They followed him when he fed the multitudes, healed the sick, when he seemed to be a conquering leader. But then they fled. And Peter, who had promised if everyone else deserted, he would stand firm. He denied he had ever known him.

He had broken bread with them the night before. But now they were embarrassed by him, endangered by him.

And this was a terrible thing to have carried. The terrible possibility that it was all in vain.

[28 : 55] They would forget. Never to be recognised, known. And he cries out in his own Aramaic language, words we translate into English as, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

In Aramaic, the word for God is Eloi. But the crowd hear Eli and think he's saying Elijah. And they suddenly get interested.

They say to one another, Listen, he's calling for Elijah. Let us see whether Elijah comes and gets him down. Even in these final moments of utter desolation, he carried the knowledge he was misunderstood.

We just don't get it. And he carried our doubts too. He knew about doubt.

Knew it was part of faith. And he carried our sins. He carried those moments when we took the easy road.

[30 : 14] He carried the times we took delight in seeing someone suffer. He carried all the lies, the hundreds of times we haven't said thank you. The times we bullied and cheated.

Carried the harsh words we say for those we love the most. He carried our negligence, envy, deceit. He carried the times we let people down, sat on the fence, didn't care.

He gathered up everything we refused to share. And he carried the sins of the world. Global horrors born of complacency.

Plundering earth and melting ice caps. Hatred. Genocides. Corruption. Exploitation. Division.

He carried it. He carried it all. The things we do with our power. Money we pour into things.

[31 : 25] Things we worship. He carried it all. He saw everything that separates us from each other and each other from God.

And he pulled it together and carried it. He picked it all up and took it to the cross. And as he went we heaped more on him.

Fled in fear or jostled for a good view of him dying. Ridiculed him and laughed some more. This is what sin does.

It isolates. It divides. It rules. The weight is unimaginable. But the arms that bear the weight are stronger still.

He carries it for love. If I look very closely I can see something else he carries.

[32 : 29] Something very precious. Something that needs restoring. Something which he knows can be beautiful. Can be loved back to life. He carries me.

And I am not heavy to him. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[34 : 29] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Sometimes they stried his way And His sweet praises sing Resounding all the day hosannas to Their King and crucified Is all their breath And for His death they thirst and cry Here might I stay and sing No story so divine Never was left, dear King Never was grieved Like thine, this is my friend In whose sweet praise

I all my days could gladly spare A reading from John 19, 28 to 37 Later, knowing that everything had now been finished And so that scripture would be fulfilled Jesus said, I am thirsty A jar of wine vinegar was there

So they soaked a sponge in it Put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant And lifted it to Jesus' lips When He had received the drink Jesus said, it is finished With that He bowed His head And gave up His spirit Now it was the day of preparation And the next day was to be a special Sabbath Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies Left on the crosses during the Sabbath They asked Pilate to have the legs broken And the bodies taken down The soldiers therefore came And broke the legs of the first man Who had been crucified with Jesus And then those of the other But when they came to Jesus

And found that He was already dead They did not break His legs Instead, one of the soldiers Pierced Jesus' side with a spear Bringing a sudden flow of blood and water The man who saw it has given testimony And his testimony is true He knows that He tells the truth And He testifies So that you may also believe These things happened So that the scripture would be fulfilled Not one of His bones will be broken And as another scripture says They will look on the one they have pierced He carried the hopes of God

[38 : 49] God had spent everything To try and create community With His beloved That is, with us A creature Not creator Frail and fallen Yet still made in God's image Everything had been spent Through covenants Through prophets Through everything except Himself And now When all else was exhausted Except the love that still ached to include us There was only one way left To communicate language To communicate language In the only way Human beings really understand The language of human life It was in His life and death

That this new covenant Would be spoken And there were words From the Father that sustained Him This is my servant Who I uphold This is my son The beloved Listen to Him He did not arrive with us Fully formed But as a baby Living Working out Fighting against the years 30 or so of them But now It is no longer About what He said Who He healed And loved It is about It is about Carrying this body To this cross On this Friday afternoon And submitting To what Is to happen To Him When He begun His ministry John the Baptist Said Look There is the Lamb Of God Now He realised What they meant God was making good His promise To Abraham A Lamb For the slaughter Was being provided All He had to do now Was be that slaughtered Lamb Whose shed blood Saves There would be no more Pigeons Goats Or lambs Slaughtered again This last sacrifice Would really be The end Of all that There would be no more Barriers Protecting God's presence And keeping us out No more systems Deciding who has favour With God And who does not This blood Will be shed For all

The curtain Will be torn And with this He carried Every person And every person's Death To the cross There won't be rules Only Him Nailed down And then lifted up With this He carried The wild And wonderful Hopes Of God He carried The possibility Of a new Temple A new Covenant A new Relationship Beyond death He saw a new Creation A new Heaven And earth A place Set For everyone For in Him All the fullness Of God Dwelt And He had Also set a place For people On earth A table Where feet

Are washed And hearts Are fed Peter Had been there So had Judas And we too Sit there And can receive A place To learn And a place Where our hearts Can be expanded Love one another As I

have Loved you Love your enemies As yourself Pray for those Who persecute You If they are thirsty Give them something To drink He carried The determination That this new Commandment Should be lived Out And here In His dying The risky Enterprise Of love Would stand Or fall All God's Hopes And God's Purposes Were poured

[43 : 53] Into these Hours Of passion There was No plan B There was No other Way The agony Is now At its Worst His temperature Soars Disjointed He heaves Upwards To gasp Another breath The grip Is slipping It is Finished Jesus Remember me

When you come Into your kingdom Jesus Remember me When you come Into your kingdom Jesus Remember me When you come Into your kingdom Jesus Remember me When you come When you come Into your kingdom Jesus Remember me When you come Into your kingdom Jesus Remember me

Into your kingdom Jesus Remember me Into your kingdom To your kingdom Jesus, remember me When you come into your kingdom Jesus, remember me When you come into your kingdom Jesus, remember me When you come into your kingdom Jesus, remember me When you come into your kingdom Reading from Luke 23, 44 to 56 It was now about noon And the darkness came over the whole land Until three in the afternoon For the sun stopped shining And the curtain of the temple Was torn in two 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

[49 : 05] A member of the council A good and upright man Who had not consented To their decision and action 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 Many thanks for being here today

And spending this hour At the cross together You're very welcome To stay in the worship area As long as you like When you do leave If you could do so quietly That would be appreciated We know it's Friday And Sunday is coming But until then May God be with us As we continue to process The meaning of Jesus' crucifixion While anticipating the hope Of his resurrection to come Amen Amen Amen