



Good Friday – April 2, 2021 - Self-Guided Worship Experience

Section 1: John 18:1-14 (*Arrest in the Garden*)

Arrest in the Garden

¹⁸After he said these things, Jesus went out with his disciples and crossed over to the other side of the Kidron Valley. He and his disciples entered a garden there. ²Judas, his betrayer, also knew the place because Jesus often gathered there with his disciples. ³Judas brought a company of soldiers and some guards from the chief priests and Pharisees. They came there carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons. ⁴Jesus knew everything that was to happen to him, so he went out and asked, "Who are you looking for?" ⁵They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I Am." (Judas, his betrayer, was standing with them.) ⁶When he said, "I Am," they shrank back and fell to the ground. ⁷He asked them again, "Who are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus the Nazarene." ⁸Jesus answered, "I told you, 'I Am.' If you are looking for me, then let these people go." ⁹This was so that the word he had spoken might be fulfilled: "I didn't lose anyone of those whom you gave me."

¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹Jesus told Peter, "Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?" ¹²Then the company of soldiers, the commander, and the guards from the Jewish leaders took Jesus into custody. They bound him ¹³and led him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. (¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it was better for one person to die for the people.)

REFLECTION:

The scripture passages we will reflect on this Good Friday from John's gospel follow Jesus' prayer for the unity of his followers, that those who follow him would be one, just as the Father was in Jesus and Jesus was in the Father. John 18 begins the passion narrative with Jesus going out with his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. The structure is similar to that of the other gospel writers, though there are distinctive elements in John's gospel. In the arrest scene, the evangelist evokes the mood of Jesus' conversation with Judas by using the symbolism of darkness. In accepting the morsel from Jesus at supper, Satan enters him, and he goes out into the "night" (13:30). He once again alludes to the "night" when he notes that Judas, along with the Roman soldier and the temple police, were coming with "lanterns and torches and weapons."

Here Jesus comes forth and asks them: "Who are you looking for?" to which they answer "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus declares that "I am he," and the armed band "shrank back and fell to the ground" (18:6). Jesus' words to Judas and the police are literally: *ego eimi*, "I am." The impact of these words on the enemies of Jesus confirms this as an instance of Jesus revealing the divine name ascribed only to God in the Hebrew Scriptures, "I am."

We can also see a stark contrast with the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), where Judas comes forth to offer Jesus a treacherous kiss to identify Jesus. Not so in John. More than that, Jesus also protects his disciples so that they have no need to flee: "If you are looking for me, let the men go" and wins their freedom (18:8). The evangelist sees this as a fulfillment of what he has said earlier in 6:39 and 17:12, that he would guard them and not one of them would be lost. Jesus' protectiveness of the disciples recounts the imagery of the good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep (see 10:28–29).

It is only in the Gospel of John that it is said that it was Peter who struck and cut the ear of "Malchus," the servant of the High Priest. This scene gives occasion for Jesus to bring out another theological statement: "Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" The symbolism of the 'cup' stands for Jesus' death. John draws a sharp contrast between the exercise of power, used by the enemies of Jesus who came with weapons and the liberating power of Jesus' own life and death. Jesus is bound and taken away to Annas who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.

As you reflect on this scene, imagine yourself as one of the disciples who has been with Jesus in the Upper Room where he shared a whole new understanding of the love of God. Take some time to look into the light of Jesus' face and his love in contrast to the act of betrayal in the darkness. Do you feel his love and his deep desire to fulfill the will of the Father? Is there a time when you have been betrayed that can be understood differently in the light of what Jesus has done?

Is there anything that stands out to you as while reading and reflecting on these words at this particular time in your life? Read this passage several times, and then listen to the suggested music to help you reflect further.

Songs: *Forsaken in the Garden* - Stewart/Purify, <https://youtu.be/dM59ytx7C2g>
All for Love (Gethsemane) - Worship Central, <https://youtu.be/ETA1z7upUOE>

Section 2: John 18:15-27 (*Peter Denies Jesus // Jesus Testifies // Peter Denies Jesus*)

Peter denies Jesus

¹⁵Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Because this other disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. ¹⁶However, Peter stood outside near the gate. Then the other disciple (the one known to the high priest) came out and spoke to the woman stationed at the gate, and she brought Peter in. ¹⁷The servant woman stationed at the gate asked Peter, "Aren't you one of this man's disciples?" "I'm not," he replied. ¹⁸The servants and the guards had made a fire because it was cold. They were standing around it, warming themselves. Peter joined them there, standing by the fire and warming himself.

Jesus testifies

¹⁹Meanwhile, the chief priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰Jesus answered, "I've spoken openly to the world. I've always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews gather. I've said nothing in private. ²¹Why ask me? Ask those who heard what I told them. They know what I said."

²²After Jesus spoke, one of the guards standing there slapped Jesus in the face. "Is that how you would answer the high priest?" he asked. ²³Jesus replied, "If I speak wrongly, testify about what was wrong. But if I speak correctly, why do you strike me?" ²⁴Then Annas sent him, bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter denies Jesus again

²⁵Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing with the guards, warming himself. They asked, "Aren't you one of his disciples?" Peter denied it, saying, "I'm not." ²⁶A servant of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷Peter denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

REFLECTION:

In John 13:38 Jesus told Peter, "before the rooster crows you will disown me three times." Why would Peter refuse association with Jesus? Fear. Separation. Distancing himself from trouble. Preservation. Denial gives Peter the space to be close to the action taken against Jesus without being scrutinized himself.

Jesus is questioned about his teaching. Rather than speak for himself, Jesus asked for a witness to testify to his teaching, allowing someone outside his circle to speak on his behalf.

Twice more Peter denies being a disciple of Jesus. As the rooster crowed, prophecy was fulfilled. Denial costs something. Peter's relationship with Jesus is compromised.

Lord, Jesus, help me never deny my relationship with You. How can I/will I profess my Jesus today?

Song: *El Shaddai* - Michael Card, <https://youtu.be/tLM48ySdIDw>

Section 3: John 18:28-40 (*Jesus' Trial // Pilate Questions Jesus // Release of Barabbas*)

Trial before Pilate

²⁸The Jewish leaders led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman governor's palace. It was early in the morning. So that they could eat the Passover, the Jewish leaders wouldn't enter the palace; entering the palace would have made them ritually impure. ²⁹So Pilate went out to them and asked, "What charge do you bring against this man?" ³⁰They answered, "If he had done nothing wrong, we wouldn't have handed him over to you." ³¹Pilate responded, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your Law." The Jewish leaders replied, "The Law doesn't allow us to kill anyone." (³²This was so that Jesus' word might be fulfilled when he indicated how he was going to die.)

Pilate questions Jesus

³³Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others spoken to you about me?" ³⁵Pilate responded, "I'm not a Jew, am I? Your nation and its chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶Jesus replied, "My kingdom doesn't originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn't have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn't from here." ³⁷"So you are a king?" Pilate said. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

Release of Barabbas

After Pilate said this, he returned to the Jewish leaders and said, "I find no grounds for any charge against him." ³⁹ You have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ They shouted, "Not this man! Give us Barabbas!" (Barabbas was an outlaw.)

REFLECTION:

Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world and yet Jesus was born among us as the Son of God to share God's Kingdom with us. This ushering of the Kingdom of God bears the truth that God "...so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16, NIV)

This kind of Kingdom is not rooted in power and oppression (like Roman Empire and other kingdoms of the world) but, instead, rooted in servanthood and equality. This kind of Kingdom is God's vision for the whole world and Jesus would be the loving, sacrificial catalyst for this vision to be born, grow, and thrive.

Living into the Kingdom of God requires us to believe Jesus is Lord of everything and our willingness to follow Jesus' example. Reflect on Jesus' enduring sacrificial love that led him to the cross so that you and I could be included into this everlasting Kingdom. Where is Jesus Lord of your life? Where is he not? How can you love sacrificially today?

Song: *Man of Sorrows* – Hillsong, <https://youtu.be/b48fPuO8GY0>

Section 4: John 19:1-16 (*Jesus whipped & mocked // Pilate Questions Jesus #2*)

Jesus is whipped and mocked as king

¹⁹ Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. ³ Over and over they went up to him and said, "Greetings, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face. ⁴ Pilate came out of the palace again and said to the Jewish leaders, "Look! I'm bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no grounds for a charge against him." ⁵ When Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here's the man." ⁶ When the chief priests and their deputies saw him, they shouted out, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate told them, "You take him and crucify him. I don't find any grounds for a charge against him." ⁷ The Jewish leaders replied, "We have a Law, and according to this Law he ought to die because he made himself out to be God's Son."

Pilate questions Jesus again

⁸ When Pilate heard this word, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He went back into the residence and spoke to Jesus, "Where are you from?" Jesus didn't answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said, "You won't speak to me? Don't you know that I have authority to release you and also to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus replied, "You would have no authority over me if it had not been given to you from above. That's why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." ¹² From that moment on, Pilate wanted to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, saying, "If you release this man, you aren't a friend of the emperor! Anyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes the emperor!" ¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he led Jesus out and seated him on the judge's bench at the place called Stone Pavement (in Aramaic, *Gabbatha*). ¹⁴ It was about noon on the

Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, "Here's your king."¹⁵ The Jewish leaders cried out, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate responded, "What? Do you want me to crucify your king?" "We have no king except the emperor," the chief priests answered.¹⁶ Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

REFLECTION:

This passage officially begins Jesus' journey to the cross to be crucified. The Roman governor, Pilate, stresses three times to the Jewish religious leaders that Jesus is innocent, but the religious leaders insist that Jesus is both a heresy against God as well as a threat against the throne of the Roman empire; against Caesar, himself.

You would think a Gentile (non-Jewish) leader, who would have been regarded as an enemy of the Jewish people, would be the last person interested in defending Jesus' innocence. At the same time, you would think these Jewish religious leaders would be the people that would have understood and supported Jesus 100%. And yet, we find these characters in opposite roles. Pilate wants to release Jesus while the Jewish religious leaders want Jesus crucified. The ones closest to Jesus find themselves utilizing any and all loopholes available to get their own way.

We can't take for granted the fact that even though we can have a deeper relationship with God, we can still reject Jesus and the message of the Gospel, especially when it threatens the status quo and disrupts the ways we may have grown comfortable living our lives. When has Jesus and the Gospel disrupted the way you live your life? Will you accept Jesus, or will you reject him?

Song: *Via Dolorosa* - Sandy Patty, <https://youtu.be/hxaierKAQe0>

Section 5: John 19:17-37 (*Crucifixion // Witness at the Cross*)

Crucifixion

¹⁷Carrying his cross by himself, he went out to a place called Skull Place (in Aramaic, *Golgotha*).¹⁸ That's where they crucified him—and two others with him, one on each side and Jesus in the middle.¹⁹ Pilate had a public notice written and posted on the cross. It read "Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews."²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.²¹ Therefore, the Jewish chief priests complained to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The king of the Jews' but 'This man said, "I am the king of the Jews.'""²² Pilate answered, "What I've written, I've written."

²³When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and his sandals, and divided them into four shares, one for each soldier. His shirt was seamless, woven as one piece from the top to the bottom.²⁴ They said to each other, "Let's not tear it. Let's cast lots to see who will get it." This was to fulfill the scripture, *They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.* [a] That's what the soldiers did.

²⁵Jesus' mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross.

²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son."²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that time on, this

disciple took her into his home. ²⁸After this, knowing that everything was already completed, in order to fulfill the scripture, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was nearby, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it, placed it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. ³⁰When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is completed." Bowing his head, he gave up his life.

Witness at the cross

³¹It was the Preparation Day and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath, especially since that Sabbath was an important day. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of those crucified broken and the bodies taken down. ³²Therefore, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus. ³³When they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead so they didn't break his legs. ³⁴However, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. ³⁵The one who saw this has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he speaks the truth, and he has testified so that you also can believe. ³⁶These things happened to fulfill the scripture, *They won't break any of his bones.* [b] ³⁷And another scripture says, *They will look at him whom they have pierced.* [c]

REFLECTION:

Jesus' crucifixion and death took place just as the scriptures foretold (a. Psalm 22:18, b. Exodus 12:46, and c. Zechariah 12:10). These prophetic scriptures show us that God was working on a plan for our salvation long before Jesus' journey to the cross. Isaiah 53 foretold that Jesus would be despised, rejected, pierced, and crushed for our sins, with verse 6 saying: "Like sheep we had all wandered away, each going its own way, but the Lord let fall on him all our crimes." Jesus—*Emmanuel*, the Word made flesh—took on our sin and paid the cost with his life in the most excruciating way possible.

Even in death, we see Jesus' love and kindness in action in addition to his ultimate sacrifice. He ensures care for his mother (John 19:26-27), shows mercy to one of the criminals crucified with him (Luke 23:39-43), and asks God to forgive those who crucified him (Luke 23:34).

Those who crucified him. All of the sheep who had gone astray. All of the sheep who continue to go astray again and again, including me and you. God had a plan to reconcile all of us to him, and Jesus followed God's heart for us to the cross. It meant a painful death, but *we were worth it*. God loved us enough to extend mercy and grace to us through death on a cross. Do you believe that there is mercy and love, even for you? Because there is. Think on the magnitude of the crucifixion, and how great is the love that would endure it. How can we live into that love? What things do we need to let go of in order to let God love us fully?

Song: *On My Cross* – FFH, <https://youtu.be/nOpJw7HPnno>

Section 6: John 19:38-42 (*Burial*)

Jesus' body is buried

³⁸After this Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one because he feared the Jewish authorities. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took the body away. ³⁹Nicodemus, the one who at first had come to Jesus at night, was there too. He

brought a mixture of myrrh and aloe, nearly seventy-five pounds in all. ⁴⁰Following Jewish burial customs, they took Jesus' body and wrapped it, with the spices, in linen cloths. ⁴¹There was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

⁴²Because it was the Jewish Preparation Day and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus in it.

REFLECTION:

Finally a brief account is made of the burial of Jesus. What is special in the Gospel of John is the mention of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for permission to take the body of Jesus away for burial. These two were Jesus' disciples in secret and now come forward to bury Jesus. The placing of these two men in the burial scene is again theological. These two disciples who were earlier such timid and fearful disciples now come out into the open emboldened by the grace which flows out from Jesus during his death.

Notice how they followed Jewish burial customs. What was Nicodemus' intent to bring such an extensive amount of spices? Is it symbolic of a royal burial of Jesus, extending the royal triumph over death that was so strong in John's crucifixion narrative? What about the placing of Jesus in a "new" and never before used tomb? Could this also complement this royal motif? What was the significance of being buried in the garden near the place where Jesus was crucified?

Reflect on the gardens in the complete story of salvation from the Garden of Eden, to gardens mentioned symbolically throughout the prophets and the teachings of Jesus, to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the Garden Tomb, to the Garden motifs in the New Creation and the New Earth described in the Book of Revelation chapter 22.

Spend some quiet time pondering this time of complete stillness in the tomb. Listen to the music to add to the depth of this time of reflection.

Song: *Were You There?* - Annie Moses Band, <https://youtu.be/P4Aktws3V0s>