

# **GOOD FRIDAY READINGS AND REFLECTIONS**

**Welcome to the readings and reflections for Good Friday, there will also be a prayer after the reflection. Please feel free to add your own prayers and thoughts to the ones given here.**

**Eternal God,  
in the cross of Jesus,  
we see the cost of our sin  
and the depth of your love;  
in humble hope and fear,  
may we place at his feet,  
all that we have and all that we are;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen**

## **1 READING JOHN 18 v1-14**

**When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.**

**Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.**

**Jesus knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"**

**"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.**

**"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them). When Jesus said "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.**

**Again he asked them "Who is it you want?"**

**And they said "Jesus of Nazareth."**

**"I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "if you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."**

**Then 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).**

**Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"**

**Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father in law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.**

**Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.**

### **Reflection One of those who arrested Jesus**

To be perfectly honest, I thought he'd run for it the moment he saw us, make himself scarce before it was too late. He must have seen us coming, heard us at any rate, what with the noise we made marching into the garden. He must have known the game was up, the writing on the wall, long before that so-called friend of his singled him out. But he just stood there, watching, waiting, almost as though he wanted it to happen, as though he was relieved to see us. Yet it wasn't that simple, not simple at

all. In fact, even now, years later, it's still a mystery, a puzzle I'm trying constantly to unravel.

You see, in some ways he was just a man, that Jesus, like you or me, with all the emotions you'd expect to see, fear, despair, hurt. Yet there was more; feelings that I hadn't expected to see, emotions that made no sense – peace, assurance, expectation.

He looked at that snake Judas, and there wasn't hate in his eyes, such as I would have felt, there was love! He looked at us, and there wasn't that usual mixture of resentment and contempt, there was understanding, forgiveness, even pity.

And when one of his followers tried to make a fight of it, whipping out his sword and hacking off one of my men's ears, he didn't laugh or gloat – he reached out and healed the fellow, right before our very eyes. I wish we could have more like him, I can tell you, a welcome change from the usual rabble we have to deal with.

To be honest I couldn't make out why we were arresting him; he seemed harmless enough, likeable in fact, not at all the villain they made him out to be. But orders are orders – I was just doing my job, that's all.

And I suppose he must have done something to deserve his fate. So we marched him away – off to Caiaphas, off to Herod, off to Pilate, off to the cross.

He could have run for it, I'm sure of that, and when I saw what they did to him, I almost wished he had. Yet he didn't run, and I don't think he ever would have, for looking back it still seems to me, strange though it may seem, that it wasn't us in the garden coming for him, but he who was waiting for us.

## **Prayer**

**Lord Jesus Christ, you spoke about loving our enemies, praying for those who persecute us, turning the other cheek, and there in Gethsemane you showed that you meant those words, no matter what the cost.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, we are good at saying the right things, but all too often we merely talk, found wanting when the real test comes. Help us, like you, to practise what we preach. Amen**

## **2 READING: JOHN 18 v12-14, 19-24**

**So the soldiers, their officer and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First they took him to Annas, who was the father in law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one man die for the people....**

**Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered” I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.” When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying “is that how you answer the high priest?” Jesus answered, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.**

### **Reflection Annas**

He had it coming to him, you can't deny it. We warned him what would happen, told him time and again to tone things down. But would he listen? Not a bit of it!

He knew our feelings – we'd made no secret of them – and he knew the risks as well as any. Many's the time we tried to stone him, and we would have done too, but for the crowds.

Yet he kept on preaching, kept on violating the Sabbath, kept on blaspheming the name of God. Oh, I know he'd dispute that, and no doubt his followers would too – come up with some pathetic nonsense to justify his teaching. Oh yes, I know their sort, the most dangerous kind there is, to my mind. Well all I can say to them is, be real, come down out of your ivory tower.

Maybe he did heal the sick, work a few miracles, but that's not everything is it?

What was the cost, that's what I want to know? What damage did he do to our religion, openly flouting the law like that? What effect did he have on temple funds, turning out the traders?

What sedition did he foster, building up expectations of the Messiah? He could have got us all killed, not just him, that's what gets me; the Romans were out to get us and he must have known it.

Ok, so perhaps he did think the next world more important than this, that it's better to lose one's life than save it. But that was *his* problem not ours.

We wanted to live, each one of us, priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees.

And we wanted to live well, not with our faces ground into the dust. It hadn't been easy, but we'd worked hard to get where we were, biting our tongues, toeing the line, swallowing our pride. And we couldn't let that all be wasted by some lunatic with his head in the clouds.

So don't feel sorry for him, don't imagine he was hard done by, and don't you dare, any of you, point the accusing finger at us, suggesting we should feel ashamed of ourselves, that somehow we failed.

We had to think of ourselves, not to mention our people, our country, our faith. We had to put those first, ensure we saved them, come what may. So I'm telling you straight, he had to die; there was no other way.

I honestly believe that, and do you know what? In a funny kind of way, I think he believed it too.

### Prayer

**Lord Jesus Christ, it's easy to make excuses, to come up with all kinds of reasons to justify actions we know to be wrong. We may fool others, we may possibly even fool ourselves, but we can never fool you.**

**Help us then, instead of making excuses, to face ourselves as we really are, and having done that, to seek your forgiveness and the renewal that only you can give. Amen**

### **3 READING JOHN 18 v 15-18, 25-27**

**Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.**

**"You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."**

**It was cold and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.**

**As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "you are not one of his disciples, are you?". He denied it saying, " I am not."**

**One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" Again, Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.**

#### **Reflection Peter**

He warned me it would happen, told me exactly how it would be, but I just didn't believe him.

If he'd said anyone else I'd have thought otherwise – I mean you can't trust anyone finally can you, not even your friends? And to be honest, I expected a few of them to cave in when the pressure was on.

But me, I felt I was different. It was me, after all, whom he called to be his first disciple, me who realised he was the Messiah when the rest were still groping in the dark, me he called "The Rock".

And I thought I was just that; unshakeable, firm, dependable.

I'm not saying that I was better than anyone else, just that my faith always seemed stronger. So I told him, confidently, proudly, "Though all else fail you, I will not Lord, I am ready to die for you."

God, how those words haunt me now, how stupid they make me feel. If only I'd kept my mouth shut; if only I hadn't been so full of myself; if only I'd had more courage.

We all failed him, all of us in our own way. They look at me and say, "He denied him." They talk of Judas and say, "He betrayed him." They point at the others and

say, "They abandoned him." Well, let them judge if they want to. Let them imagine they're a cut above the rest; I've learnt the hard way that I'm not.

### Prayer

**Lord Jesus Christ, you could have chosen anyone as the foundation for your church, but you didn't; you chose Peter – the man who misunderstood you, who denied you, who failed you time and time again.**

**A man we might have written off, but who you saw instead as a rock on which to build your kingdom.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, when we let you down in our turn, remind us of Peter and help us to believe you can still use us. Amen**

## **4 READING: JOHN 18:28-19V1**

**Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked “What charges are you bringing against this man?”**

**“If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.”**

**Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” “But we have no right to execute anyone,” the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken, indicating the kind of death he was going to die, would be fulfilled. Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”**

**“Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, or did others talk to you about me?”**

**“Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”**

**Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”**

**“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.**

**Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”**

**“What is truth?” Pilate asked.**

**With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “ I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you, one prisoner, at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release “the king of the Jews”?”**

**They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.**

**Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.**



## Reflection Pilate

He was different, I have to admit it. Not a bit like I'd expected. I'd heard the stories, of course. Who hadn't?

Teacher, miracle worker, Messiah. But I'd just thought he'd be like all the others: a charlatan out for what he could get, or some crazy fanatic who dared to imagine he could take on the might of Rome.

Give me five minutes and I'll usually break them down. A good flogging will see to that, if all else fails. Not this one though – I tried that, I tried everything; we gave him the full works. And still he just stood there, looking at me, as if I were the one on trial, as if he was the one in charge.

He was quite innocent, of course; any fool could see that. But he wouldn't help himself, almost like he wanted to die.

Maybe he knew it was useless, that the crowds would never let me get away with it, though why they wanted him killed beats me. I had no choice, that's what I kept telling myself. It was my duty.

And anyway, it was them not me, who had the last word. Yet I can't help thinking I should have done more, feeling guilty. The wife doesn't help, nagging me about him all the time. Does she think that I can sleep any better than her? What would she have done in my place?

I washed my hands of him in the end, literally. But I still feel dirty, as though it's finally down to me. He was different all right, but what sort of man was he? That's the mystery.

## Prayer

**Lord Jesus Christ, faced with difficult decisions so often we tell ourselves we have no choice; that life has pushed us into a corner, leaving us no alternative as to how to act. But in our hearts, we know that isn't so.**

**It may be hard, it may be painful, it may be costly, but finally, there is always a right way, if we are prepared to look for it.**

**Forgive us for all the excuses we make. Forgive us for the ways we wriggle and squirm, rather than face up to our responsibilities. Forgive us for all the times we have taken the soft option, rather than the one we know to be right. Amen**

## **5 READING: JOHN 19 v 1-16**

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" and they struck him in the face.

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you, to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realise that I have the power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, " You would have no power over me if it were not given you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you, is guilty of a greater sin." From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king, but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

### **Reflection One of the mob**

What got into us that day? Can you make sense of it? I look back now incredulous, unable to believe we could have been so false, so fickle, one day protesting our undying loyalty, and the next baying for his blood like a pack of wolves. Yet that's what we did, our cries of "Hosanna!" in just a few days turning to "Crucify", our shouts of welcome to jeers of rejection.

It was partly, I suppose, borne of disappointment, the truth slowly dawning on us that Jesus wasn't the sort of Messiah we expected, his kingdom of an altogether different nature from the one we looked for.

That was a blow, undoubtedly; for many of us, me included, really believed he was the one we waited for, the promised deliverer who would set us free from the yoke of Roman oppression.

Then of course, there was fear, for we were well aware that the Pharisees were watching us, their beady eyes on the lookout for anyone less than enthusiastic in their cause. We all knew it wouldn't take much for us to suffer the same fate as Jesus.

Yet deep down, those are only excuses, incidental to the main cause. The ugly fact is this: we followed the crowd, caught up in the hysteria of the moment, until we blindly followed the one next to us, like a bunch of sheep.

It all happened so quickly, that's the chilling thing. One moment we were all sane, rational human beings, and the next no longer people at all, simply part of a faceless crowd, a senseless, soulless mob, all reason forgotten, all sanity suspended. I thought I was different, able to think for myself, make my own decisions, resist the pressure to compromise – but I learnt the hard way, that I wasn't; I caught a glimpse of the person I really am, and I'm still struggling to take it in.

Do you know what bothers me most, though? It's how Jesus must have felt as he stood there, listening to our shouts, and the truth dawned on him that he was wasting his life on people like us – it must have all but finished him.

The only surprise is he didn't realise it sooner, for he saw everything else so clearly; but he couldn't have done, or he'd have called a halt somewhere – it stands to reason.

Yes, I know he was special, no question about it, but no one in their right mind would have gone to their death for us, had they seen us that day, had they witnessed what we were really like – not even Jesus would do that, surely?

## **Prayer**

**Gracious God, despite our resolve to serve you, we are so easily led astray. Like sheep, we blindly follow the example of the crowd.**

**We congratulate ourselves on resisting the latest trend or fashion, but the pressures to conform are more subtle than that; often unseen, unrecognised.**

**Help us to listen to you rather than the voices which surround us. Help us to stay close by your side and respond to your guidance. And on those occasions when we find ourselves lost, seek us in Christ, the good shepherd and restore us to your fold, for his name's sake. Amen**

## **6 READING: JOHN 19 v16B-24**

**So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the Place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others – one on each side and Jesus in the middle.**

**Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write “The King of the Jews”, but that this man claimed to be the king of the Jews”.**

**Pilate answered “What I have written, I have written.”**

**When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot, who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, “They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” So this is what the soldiers did.**

### **Reflection**

He was bleeding, my friend Jesus, skewered to that cross, like a piece of meat, great drops of blood trickling slowly to the ground, from his head, from his hands, from his feet.

I watched stricken with horror, numbed with grief, as the life seeped away. And I asked myself, tearfully, angrily, why?

Why had God let it happen? Why didn’t he step in and do something? What was he thinking of?

It seemed criminal, a stupid, senseless waste to let such a wonderful man die – to be honest, I’ve never seen anyone quite like him. That look he had, even in death, as though we were the ones suffering, as though we were the criminals deserving punishment, as though he felt sorry for us.

Ridiculous, of course. But you know, I could swear as he drew his last breath, there was a smile on his face, almost like he’d achieved something.

An odd business, very odd.

**Prayer**

**Lord Jesus Christ, we praise you for your ministry, your love, your faithfulness to your calling. We thank you for your willingness to face even death itself so that we might find the true meaning of life.**

**We thank you for that sense of purpose, that inner courage, that deep faith which gave you the strength to continue on your chosen path to the very end.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us that having received so much, we give so little in return. Forgive us that we shy away from sacrifice and self denial. Forgive us for taking the easy and less costly way, rather than the way of the cross. Help us to deny ourselves and so to find life in all its fullness. Amen**

## **7 READING JOHN 19 v 25-27**

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

**When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved, standing nearby, he said to his mother "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.**

### **Reflection Mary, mother of Jesus**

He was thinking of me, even then! I couldn't believe it – despite everything he was going through, the awful stomach churning agony, which seemed to pierce my very soul, he was concerned more about my welfare than his.

Yet I shouldn't have been surprised – it was so like Jesus, the way he'd been from a boy, always putting others before himself. I'd dared to hope that just this once it would be different, that for the first time in his life, he'd look after number one.

Why not? Would it have been so wrong? He'd given enough already, hadn't he. Scarcely a moment to himself, the crowds always with him, clamouring, calling, pleading, demanding – enough to break any lesser man. And as if that wasn't enough, his enemies had been there stalking him, unable to conceal their hatred, watching his every move, waiting for their moment. He knew what they were up to, yet he'd continued without a murmur of complaint, always having time, always ready to respond, nothing and no one outside his concern.

I saw him so many times, just about all in, drained to the point of exhaustion, and I can't tell you how much it troubled me, to see my wonderful lad pouring himself out in a constant act of sacrifice, pushing himself to the very limit.

But it was useless to argue – I tried it sometimes and he simply smiled at me in that gentle way of his, knowing that I understood full well that there was no other way. He was right, I knew that, and I knew equally there was no way he'd come down from that cross, but I could still hope, couldn't I, still pray I might be wrong?

He was thinking of others even then, not only me, but a common thief hanging there beside him, my fellow women sobbing their hearts out, even those who'd hounded him to his death – thinking in fact of everyone except himself.

## **Prayer**

**Lord Jesus, throughout your life you were the man for others, always ready to listen, always prepared to respond, whatever the cost to yourself. At your death it was the same, still you poured yourself out, thinking of others to the last.**

**Forgive us that we are the opposite, more often than not, our thoughts only for self, rarely willing to listen, even less so to respond, fearful of what it all might cost us.**

**Lord Jesus, forgive us and teach us your way, for until we learn to be the servant of all, we will continue to be the slave of self, help us to give freely, and in a life of service, to find true freedom. Amen**

## **8 READING JOHN 19 v25, 28-30**

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

**Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the 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.**

### **Reflection Mary Magdalene**

It was over, finished – thirty three years of life, three years of ministry, seven days of turmoil, six hours of agony, finally ended – and I couldn't believe it.

Yes, I know that sounds daft, having stood there and watched him die, having seen them drive the nails into his hands, having watched the spear thrust in his side, having witnessed his dying breath. What else did I expect you may ask?

What other outcome could there possibly have been? And I understand all that, for I knew he was dying, of course I did. Yet, when it finally happened, when the end came, I was numb, unable to take it in, paralysed with grief.

It just didn't seem possible that this man Jesus, whom we'd known and loved, whom we'd trusted and followed, who had been at the very centre of our lives, could have been taken from us, snuffed out, never to be seen again.

It wasn't that he hadn't prepared us, you could never accuse him of that – he'd spoken of death until we were sick and tired of hearing it. And we honestly thought we were ready, that we'd taken it all in, come to terms with the inevitable, steeled ourselves to face the worst.

But we hadn't, not when it came to the wire. The theory was one thing, the reality something else. I realised as we stood there, the tears rolling down our faces, our hearts torn in two, that we'd always expected him, in the final chapter, to come up smiling, put one over on those wretched Pharisees and show them who was boss.

But of course, it was nothing like that, nothing like it at all. It was over, finished, just like he'd said it would be, and I couldn't get my head around it, couldn't make sense of it whatever.

Yet there's one thing I've held on to since that awful moment; one memory which has brought comfort even in the darkest of hours, and that is those last words of his, that cry he uttered with such dreadful, yet confident finality: "It is finished," he shouted.



“It is finished!”

words spoken not in sorrow, not in anger, nor in weary resignation, but in a tone of sheer thanksgiving, as though somehow, even there, especially there, he had accomplished the very thing he came to do.

**Prayer**

**Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us that having received so much, we give so little in return. Forgive us that we shy away from sacrifice and self denial. Forgive us for taking the easy and less costly way, rather than the way of the cross. Help us to deny ourselves and so to find life in all its fullness. Amen**

## **9 READING JOHN 19 31-37**

**<sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. <sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. <sup>35</sup> 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 also may believe. <sup>36</sup> These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>37</sup> and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."**

### **Reflection**

The deed is done: they have killed Jesus

And Christ's wounds continue to sting in Mary's heart,  
as one sorrow envelops both Mother and Child.

The sorrowing Mother and her Son! The scene cries out to us.

We almost seem to feel compassion for God  
and yet – once again – it is God who feels compassion for us.

Our pain is no longer hopeless, nor will it ever be hopeless again, for God has come to suffer with us. And with God, can we ever be hopeless?

### **Prayer**

**Lord Jesus, your mother and your dearest friend stayed with you until the bitter end; yet even while racked with pain, you ministered to them. Be with all broken families today and care for those who long for companionship.**

**You cared for your loved ones even in the throes of death, give us a love for one another that is stronger even than the fear of death.**

**To you Jesus, loving in the face of death be honour and glory with the Father and Holy Spirit now and evermore. Amen**

## **10 READING 19 JOHN 39 -42**

<sup>38</sup> Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. <sup>39</sup> He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>40</sup> Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. <sup>41</sup> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup> Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

### **Reflection Joseph of Arimathea**

I never thought that my tomb would be used until I died, but we knew that we would have to do something before the Sabbath, time was pressing on. We were going to move him to another tomb later. It wasn't until much later that I realised that the prophet Isaiah's words had been fulfilled: "They gave him a grave among the rich"

I was a bit taken aback that Pilate agreed that Nicodemus and I could take Jesus' body – it was almost as though he wanted him out of the way – gone from sight.

I could see that even so they were worried, why else seal the tomb and put a guard on it – probably thought the disciples would take him away.

I did what I could, so did Nicodemus.

### **Prayers**

**Lord Jesus you died upon the cross and entered the bleakest of all circumstances: give courage to those who die at the hands of others, In death you entered the darkest place of all; illumine our darkness with your glorious presence. To you Jesus, your lifeless body hanging on the tree of shame, be glory and honour with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen**

**Heavenly Father,  
in your Son you embrace every son and daughter,  
and share in our anguish throughout the world.  
your tears continue to fall in every age;  
they bathe the faces and mirror the grief of every man and woman.**

**We have known sorrow ... yet we still believe!  
We believe that clouds do not darken the sun,  
We believe that night gives way to dawn.  
Lead us in the song that conquers sorrow  
We pray that we too may experience  
the infectious power of true hope. Amen**

**Lord Jesus Christ, living as we do in the light of Easter, we can lose sight sometimes, of the darkness of Good Friday. But for those who were part of it, there could be no mistake, no escaping the awfulness of seeing you hanging there upon that cross. For them it was their darkest hour, what seemed like the end of all their dreams, and for a time their faith swung in the balance.**

**Yet even there, especially there, you were at work, bringing your love to all. Lord Jesus Christ, teach us that even when life seems dark, your light continues to shine. Amen**

**O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, set your passion, cross and death between your judgement and our souls, now and in the hour of our death.**

**Grant mercy and grace to the living, rest to the departed, to your Church, peace and concord and to us sinners, forgiveness, and everlasting life and glory, for with the Father and the Holy Spirit, you are alive and reign, with God, now and for ever. Amen**