



Community CRC

Oakdale

**GOOD FRIDAY**

**THE CROSS AND PARADISE**

**LUKE 23:32-49**

**04-02-21**

**All = bold sections – read together**

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

*Sung together = italics*

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

### **Affirmation #7**

Because **hospitality makes an invisible God visible**, we will strive to make room for others through nurturing a will to embrace in corporate expression of worship and in the various ministries that make up CCRC.

### **Welcome**

Good evening! Welcome to Community CRC's Good Friday Service! Tonight, we both lament the horrific death of Jesus Christ of Nazareth but also celebrate his victory over sin and his substitutionary and sacrificial death on our behalf! There is tension here. Jesus is crucified and killed. Yet, there is salvation and a promise of paradise too! We will take a closer look at Jesus and this second thief and celebrate the "good" of Good Friday!

Our call to worship is a call to Christ. From the Old Testament we see prophecies of the Messiah (the One who would save God's chosen people) to be a suffering King, a suffering servant and not a public political or militant king to rule the political nation of Israel over her enemies by power and force but by submission and weakness. Isaiah 53 is a powerfully descriptive passage of this Messiah. This is describing Jesus Christ of Nazareth – the crucified one.

### **Call to Christ – Isaiah 53**

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

**He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.**

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

**All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.**

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

**And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.**



Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

**Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.**

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

**Song** – O Sacred Head Now Wounded -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESo7seZTctM>

*O sacred Head, now wounded  
With grief and shame weighed down  
Now scornfully surrounded  
With thorns, Thine only crown  
How pale thou art with anguish  
With sore abuse and scorn  
How does that visage languish  
Which once was bright as morn  
What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered  
T'was all for sinners' gain  
Mine, mine was the transgression  
But Thine the deadly pain  
Lo, here I fall, my Savior  
'Tis I deserve Thy place  
Look on me with Thy favor  
Vouchsafe 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 should I fainting be  
Lord, let me never, never  
Outlive my love for Thee*

**Christ Candle** – The World

Even torture and death cannot extinguish the light of Christ but only makes it shine all the brighter amidst the deepening darkness. The world grew very dark on this particular Friday. Yet, Jesus' light never dims but shines all the brighter as the amazing and wonderful sacrificial lamb who makes a way for us to him.

**Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His Light.**

**Psalm of Confession & Need:** Psalm 51:1-17



Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

**For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.**

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

**Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

### **The Jesus Storybook Reading** – The Sun Stopped Shining -- Sally Lloyd-Jones

“So you’re a King, are you?” the Romans soldiers jeered. “Then you’ll need a crown and a robe.”

They gave Jesus a crown made out of thorns. And put a purple robe on him. And pretended to bow down to him. “Your majesty!” they said.

Then they whipped him. And spat on him. They didn’t understand that this was the Prince of Life, the King of heaven and earth, who had come to rescue them.

The soldiers made a sign – “Our King” and nailed it to a wooden cross.

They walked up a hill outside the city. Jesus carried the cross on his back. Jesus had never done anything wrong. But they were going to kill him the way criminals were killed.

They nailed Jesus to the cross. “Father; forgive them,” Jesus gasped. “They don’t understand what they are doing.”

“You say you’ve come to rescue us!” people shouted. “But you can’t even rescue yourself.” But they were wrong. Jesus could have rescued himself. A legion of angels would have flown to his side – if he’d called.

“If you were really the Son of God, you could just climb down off that cross!” they said. And of course, they were right. Jesus could have just climbed down. Actually, he could have just said a word and made it all stop. Like when he healed that little girl. And stilled the storm. And fed 5,000 people.

But Jesus stayed.

You see, they didn’t understand. It wasn’t the nails that kept Jesus there. It was love.



“Papa?” Jesus cried, frantically searching the sky. “Papa? Where are you? Don’t leave me!”

And for the first time – and the last – when he spoke, nothing happened. Just a horrible, endless silence. God didn’t answer. He turned away from his boy.

Tears rolled down Jesus’ face. The face of the One who would wipe away every tear from every eye.

Even though it was midday, a dreadful darkness covered the face of the world. The sun could not shine. The earth trembled and quaked. The great mountains shook. Rocks split in two. Until it seemed that the whole world would break. That creation itself would tear apart.

The full force of the storm of God’s fierce anger at sin was coming down. On his own Son. Instead of his people. It was the only way God could destroy sin, and not destroy his children whose hearts were filled with sin.

Then Jesus shouted out in a loud voice, “It is finished.” And it was. He had done it. Jesus had rescued the whole world.

“Father!” Jesus cried. “I give you my life.” And with a great sigh he let himself die.

Strange clouds and shadows filled the sky. Purple, orange, black. Like a bruise.

Jesus’ friends gently carried Jesus. They laid Jesus in a new tomb carved out of rock.

How could Jesus die? What had gone wrong? What did it mean? They didn’t know anymore. Except they knew their hearts were breaking.

“That’s the end of Jesus,” the leaders said.

But, just to be sure, they sent strong soldiers to guard the tomb. They hauled a huge stone in front of the door to the tomb. So that no one could get in. Or out.

**Song** – How Deep The Father’s Love For Us -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iw01L-gfmN4>

*How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure  
How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory  
Behold the man upon a cross  
My sin upon His shoulders  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished  
His dying breath has brought me life*



*I know that it is finished  
I will not boast in anything  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ  
His death and resurrection  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have paid my ransom*

**Song** – What Wondrous Love Is This -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpUV2RhQPAY>

*What wondrous love is this  
O my soul, O my soul?  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul?  
What wondrous love is this  
That cause the Lord of bliss  
To bear the dreadful curse  
For my soul, For my soul?  
To bear the dreadful curse For my soul?  
When I was sinking down  
Sinking down, sinking down  
When I was sinking down, sinking down  
When I was sinking down  
Beneath God's righteous frown  
Christ laid aside His crown  
For my soul, for my soul  
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul  
To God and to the Lamb  
I will sing, I will sing  
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing  
To God and to the Lamb  
Who is the great I AM  
While millions join the theme  
I will sing, I will sing  
While millions join the theme, I will sing  
And when from death I'm free  
I'll sing on, I'll sing on  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on  
And when from death I'm free  
I'll sing and joyful be  
And through eternity  
I'll sing on, I'll sing on  
And through eternity, I'll sing on*



### **Scripture Reading** – Luke 23:32-49

We engage with the crucifixion from a familiar author’s perspective – doctor Luke. His account is significantly different than Matthew and Mark which are nearly identical to each other. Luke provides additional material to the story – particularly in regards to one of the thieves that was crucified with Jesus. Matthew and Mark both state that the two thieves reviled Jesus in the same way as those passing by and the religious leaders did by deriding and mocking him. Luke’s version has one of the thieves “railing” against Jesus but the other responding quite differently. The discrepancy is easily remedied if the second thief had a change of heart and mind and after initially reviling Jesus, he stops. We will first lay down the importance of the crucifixion in the gospel story, then unpack the repentant thief’s remarks to the other thief and to Jesus. Finally, we will look at Jesus’ amazing and breathtaking response to the repentant thief. While crucifixion is horrible, there is good news and light shining out from Jesus and the new disciple of Jesus that serves as a stark contrast that sin and condemnation will not have the final say.

With this in mind, please read Luke 23:32-49.

### **Gospel Message** – The Cross and Paradise

JR Tolkien coined the term “eucatastrophe” in 1944 to describe the essence of a good fairy-tale. In his essay “On Fairy-Stories” he maintained that tragedy is the true form of drama, the eucatastrophe is the true form of the fairy-tale. “Eu” means “good” and “catastrophe means “a sudden and unexpected disaster or destruction.” Eucatastrophe then is the opposite of catastrophe in that it is “the sudden happy turn which pierces you with a joy that brings tears” and is a “sudden and miraculous grace.” Pretty cool term! While the example he used was the resurrection, it also applies, maybe even more fittingly with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In the crucifixion we have tragedy, we have disaster, we have deep darkness (literally and figuratively) and yet Luke breaks the tragedy and darkness with a piercing bright light of good news and hope – the repentant thief’s gospel declaration and Jesus’ promise of paradise.

We have spent a lot of time on the importance of the crucifixion in regards to the narrative of redemption over the past year and a half. We will only remind ourselves today as I’m confident you could write this section yourself. Jesus’ perfect life made him the perfect spotless lamb. He was perfectly righteous by not ever, not even once giving in to real temptation (he is fully human and fully God). Sin never got to him. Everyone one else ever, was gotten to. Jesus of Nazareth lived the life you and I cannot and could not. He is the only one who could offer and fully pay the debt of sin with his life. And that is what he does. He dies willingly and not because it is a “wage of sin” (Romans 6:23). It is not a have to but a get to. It is his righteousness that is credited to us so that we might be the righteousness of God. That is, we would no longer be condemned but declared righteous because of the righteousness of Christ that is now ours by grace and being united with Christ in his life and death through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, his death is not only a substitutionary sacrifice payment for sin, it is also a punishment for sin. God’s wrath is poured out on him in death so that it would not be poured out on us. His life is payment (perfect righteousness), his death punishment. We get the righteousness; we don’t get the punishment. In him we have forgiveness and life eternal. Sin and death have no say over us in Christ. They do not stop us because they did not stop Christ. No crucifixion, no good news. No good news, no salvation. No salvation, no hope. Yes – Jesus’ perfect life of obedience and humble



death on the cross are essential to our salvation and therefore the good news of hope we have in Christ. And we see this actually played out right on the cross!!

Luke records that one of the thieves “railed” at Jesus while on a cross next to him. “Railed” comes from the word for “blaspheming.” To blaspheme someone is to speak against in such a way as to harm or injure their reputation and well-being. This thief was going to his death on the cross the same way he got himself onto the cross – by sinning and rebelling against God. He was going down hostile to his last breath. And, he was going down without any good news or hope. For him, there was only catastrophe; there was only tragedy; there was only disaster and destruction and darkness. But not the other thief. While he may have started out reviling Jesus, he does not end that way. The Holy Spirit gets a hold of his heart and mind and changes him – on the spot. He must have known at least the stories about Jesus circulating around that he might be the Messiah and the stories of his miracles. Somehow, through the Holy Spirit, the light goes on and he sees Jesus for who he really is – not someone to revile or deride or rail against. No! But someone to revere and die and rally for. There are seven things he does that shows this genuine, changed heart.

First, he rejects the contra-story against Jesus. He doesn’t listen anymore to the other thief or the religious leaders or those passing by that are mocking and ridiculing Jesus. He turns from them and turns from his prior understandings and beliefs. A significant and first step in conversion is the rejection of the legion of beliefs that counter the biblical story; the gospel story of Jesus of Nazareth and his kingdom. We can’t have both the stories of the world and the story of God. God’s story is, The Story of the world and the narrative by which we understand all other stories. It is the definitive God-drama in which all others are a part of for better or worse. Second, he declares a truly converted person “fears God.” To fear God is to reject all stories against him or that distort him. To fear God is to recognize and believe that he is God and you are not. It is to humbly and rightfully submit to him as Creator and we as the created ones; to rightfully submit to him as the infinite One and we as the finite ones; to rightfully submit to him as the Almighty and All-powerful One and we as the weak and powerless ones; to rightfully submit to him as the King of kings and we as his servants; to rightfully submit to him as the saving One and we as the ones who need saving; to rightfully submit to him as the great rescuing One and we as the ones who need rescuing; to rightfully submit to him as the perfectly righteous One and we as the imperfectly unrighteous ones; to rightfully submit to him as the esteemed Shepherding One and we as the lowly sheep ones; to rightfully submit to him as the great Authority One and we as the meek obedient ones; to rightfully submit to him as the judging One and we as the ones being judged. This the second thief did in that moment of confession of fearing God – indeed, fearing Jesus Christ as God.

Third, he admits his sin. He says they are being justly condemned for their deeds. A truly converted person knows that they are sinners in need of mercy and grace. A truly converted person knows that they are guilty and justly condemned for their sins. A truly converted person knows that they are far worse than they can imagine (so cheer up! ☺). A truly converted person knows that they cannot save themselves but need God to save them. In the moment, this thief rightly calls out the other thief’s sin and justifiable condemnation and rightly recognizes his own as well. This thief knows the bad news of his guilt. His comparison regarding his guilt and condemnation is not horizontal with another human



that he might think he is better than because he didn't do the things that this person did; his comparison in vertical – with God himself in and through Jesus of Nazareth. In that comparison, we fall massively and miserably short. Fourth, he doesn't dismiss or minimize or push back or get angry about this truth. He simply accepts it as truth. A truly converted heart accepts that we are sinners in need of God's saving work in and through his Son. This is humility

Fifth, he declares that Jesus Christ is innocent; that he has "done nothing wrong" like they did. Jesus is the righteous one; he is the one who is innocent and perfect in every way. This repentant thief is correctly letting God be God and he the sinful human. Jesus is not to be reviled but revered. Sixth, he pleads for help. Recognizing and believing the truth about his condition and who Jesus of Nazareth is, he does the only fitting and reasonable thing – he begs for help. Instead of railing at Jesus, he pleads with him. "Please remember me" he asks. In other words, there is more to Jesus of Nazareth than meets the eye. He and Jesus are about to die. How can Jesus remember him after he dies unless he thinks there is something more beyond death and Jesus of Nazareth is the right in the middle of it? His hope is being placed in Jesus – a living hope now but one that he hopes extends into the life after death.

Seventh, he extends his understanding of Jesus to be a King and to have a kingdom. Not only is Jesus at the middle of hope beyond death, he is the great King who has a kingdom that he reigns over. Death is not defeat but a doorway to a better reality for those with him. The repentant thief says, "remember me when you come into your kingdom." Notice the thief realizes it is not his kingdom but Jesus' and that as King he has the right to let in whomever he wants to let in. He doesn't demand or think he deserves it or is entitled to it. No – his right understanding of himself as a sinner in need of Jesus' help keeps him humble and in a right posture and perspective of his entrance into Jesus' kingdom.

After these seven distinct recognitions, beliefs and statements of faith, Jesus responds and the eucatastrophe explodes in bright light! Imagine being the repentant thief – actually, you don't have to imagine, you are and I am that thief. You are hanging (no pun intended) on Jesus' next words to you if he responds at all – because he doesn't have to. But he does. Why? Because of love. You see, it wasn't yours or my sin that held him on that cross (sorry Stuart Townsend and the song, How Deep The Father's Love) but Jesus' love. It wasn't even yours or my sin that put him there. It was love. God did not have to save a single soul. He did not have to go to the cross. It was never a duty, a have to but a delight and I get to. It was from the beginning – love. Love is the eucatastrophe that blasts its way through the darkness of sin and death. And Jesus is love, through and through. Even in the midst of justice mercy triumphs. Even in the midst of darkness, light shines. Even in the midst of suffering, hope arises. Even in the midst of death, life emerges! Jesus says to the believing ears of the repentant thief the eucatastrophic good news, "Today you will be with me in paradise!" Today! Not tomorrow or next year or when I return but today – in essence, when we die, we will be together in my kingdom, in paradise! We are the thief that is promised paradise upon death because of the finished saving work of Jesus Christ. We are forgiven and in right relationship with him by grace through repentant faith like the second thief. And there's more come Sunday!!

Author and theologian T. F. Torrance once said, "And so, the cross with all its incredible meekness and patience and compassion is no deed of passive and beautiful heroism simply, but the most potent and





aggressive deed that heaven and earth have ever known: the attack of God's holy love upon the inhumanity of man and the tyranny of evil, upon all the piled-up contradiction of sin."

On this Good Friday, may we all experience the attack of God's holy love.

### **Communion Meditation**

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.  
We believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
Born of the virgin Mary,  
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
Was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven  
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come to judge the living and the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
The holy catholic Church,  
The communion of saints,  
The forgiveness of sins,  
The resurrection of the body,  
And the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

**Remember and believe that the body & blood of Jesus was given & shed for the forgiveness of sins.**

Linger here in the tangible grace of communion.

Reflect on God's great sacrificial love for us.

Pray.

Listen.

Linger. . . . .

**Song** – Be Still My Soul (In You I Rest) -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq59iE3MhXM>

*Be still, my soul, The Lord is on thy side  
Bear patiently, the cross of grief or pain*



*Leave to thy God, to order and provide  
In every change, He faithful will remain  
Be still, my soul, thy best thy heavenly friend  
Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end  
Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as He has the past  
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last  
Be still, my soul, the waves and wind still know  
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below*

*In You I rest, in You I found my hope  
In You I trust, You never let me go  
I place my life within Your hands alone  
Be still, my soul*

*Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on  
When we shall be forever with the Lord  
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored  
Be still, my soul, when change and tears are past  
All safe and blessed, we shall meet at last*

*In You I rest, in You I found my hope  
In You I trust, You never let me go  
I place my life within Your hands alone  
Be still, my soul*

*In You I rest, in You I found my hope  
In You I trust, You never let me go  
I place my life within Your hands alone  
Be still, my soul  
Be still, my soul  
Be still, my soul*

### **Sending as Disciples of Jesus**

Go in the knowledge that your sins are forgiven because of God's eucatastrophic great love for his world and us. It wasn't ultimately our sins that put him there or held Jesus on the cross. It was love. Jesus Christ of Nazareth did not have to come to earth, live the perfect life by never giving in to temptation, be tortured and killed on the cross and rise again from the dead into life after life after death. But he did! And now, just like the thief on the cross with Jesus, we are promised paradise with him when we die. Sin does not have the final say in our life because Jesus had the final say over sin. That indeed is good!

Eucatastrophically good!