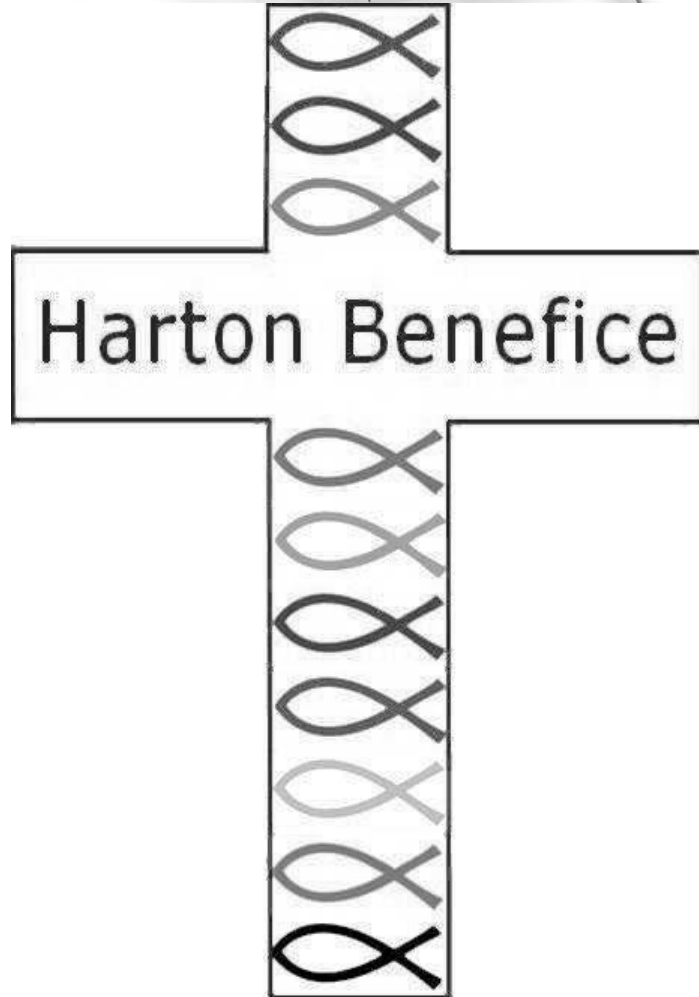
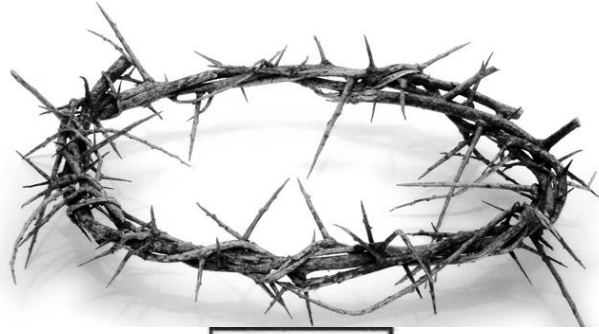


BEFORE THE CROSS



WELCOME

Hymn

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through 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 compose 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, my life, my all.



JESUS IS CONDEMNED. *Matthew 27:11-14, 22-25, 26b*

Jesus Stood before the Roman governor, who questioned him. “Are you the king of the Jews?” he asked. “So you say,” answered Jesus. But he said nothing in response to the accusations of the chief priests and elders. So Pilate said to him, “Don’t you hear all these things they accuse you of?” But Jesus refused to answer a single word, with the result that the Governor was greatly surprised. “What shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?” Pilate asked them. “Crucify him!” they all answered. But Pilate asked, “What crime has he committed?” Then they started shouting at the top of their voices: “Crucify him!” When Pilate saw that there was no use to go on and that a riot may break out, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, “I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!” He had Jesus whipped and handed him over to be crucified.

Reflection

Why doesn't Jesus say anything?

Why doesn't He say who he is?

Why doesn't he confront the crowds?

Where are the lepers, the blind, the deaf and many others whom Jesus had healed?

Why does no one come forward to Jesus' defence?

So Jesus stands alone before the governor.

Stands in chains, bruised and bleeding from the beatings, with spit on his face.

Pilate washes his hands and abandons Jesus.

But Jesus does not wash his hands of the Father's will or of us.

He is determined to love us regardless of the cost.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we are ashamed to admit how often we wash our hands of you. Give us the courage to follow you even when all others reject you. Help us to be determined and firm in our conviction that following your will and showing love to all, is more important than any other treasure that we have in life. Grant that the way of the Cross may be for us the way of life and peace. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Music

JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS AND MOCKED.

Matthew 27:27-31

Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace and the whole company gathered around him. They stripped him of his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. Then they made a crown of thorny branches and placed it on his head and put a stick in his right hand; then they knelt before him and mocked him. "Long live the King of the Jews!" they shouted. They spat on him, took the stick and hit him over the head. When they had finished mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes back on him. They then led Jesus out to crucify him.

Reflection

I cringe at the pain of the thorns.

But I am wounded far more deeply at the humiliation and degradation Jesus suffered.

Stripped naked for all to stare at.

A crown of thorns thrust on His head.

A stick in his hand and a scarlet robe on his shoulders.

Soldiers bowing in mockery—spitting, hitting and whipping.

How cruel can people be....

and yet has anything changed in today's world?

We like to think we are ready to follow Jesus who offers us peace and love....

But are we?

Are we willing to let love and peace control us and lead us to live as people who truly want to serve others, even though it may not always be easy or convenient?

There in Pilate's court we see a true servant....

He was willing to endure anything, no complaints, no protesting his innocence, no cursing, simply accepting and enduring the Cross for us.

The thorns, the whip, the mockery, the nails, the cruel death - He did it all for us.

He loves us even though it is our sin that caused him to suffer so much pain.

Silence

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for allowing yourself to be tried and condemned and scourged. Thank you for the joy of bringing salvation to all people and because of your great love for us, you endured the shame and pain. **Amen**

Music

SIMON AND THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM. *Luke 2 :26-31*

The soldiers led Jesus away and as they were going, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon who was coming into the city from the country. They seized him, put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of people followed him; among them were women who were weeping and wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said "Women of Jerusalem! Don't cry for me but for yourselves and your children. For the days are coming when people will say, 'How lucky are the women who never had children, who never bore babies, who never nursed them!' That will be the time when people will say to the

mountains 'Fall on us!' and to the hills 'Hide us!' For if such things as these are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Reflection

Can you imagine the awful weight of the cross Jesus had to carry?

It's not just the weight of the wood that pressed Him down but it is also the weight of the burden that he carried for those whom he loved.

He came to offer them life but they return only death.

As His physical strength begins to fail from the weight of pain and grief, Simon without hesitation, bears the weight of the cross to save Jesus's strength.

I wonder if I had been there, would I have rushed to carry the cross for Jesus and walk with him or would I have turned the other way pretending I knew nothing of what was happening.

It's easy to pretend not to see the needs, the grief, the cries for help.

So easy to say I am too busy, too tired, too much already on my plate.

And yet Jesus says something about taking up my own cross and following him, putting myself last and others first.

Is this what it means to be a servant?

As Jesus struggles along the road towards that awful place of death, a group of women knowing of Jesus' approaching death, follow him deeply distressed. Jesus, about to die and suffering unbelievable pain, shows incredible love and mercy as he puts aside his suffering and stops to speak with them to warn them of the pain and suffering that will be experienced by those who reject Him.

Do I learn from Jesus's example to stop in the midst of my own troubles to express concern and to care for others?

Am I so caught up in living my own life that I lose sight of what is happening to those around me?

Silence

Prayer

Heavenly Father, your Son came not to be served but to serve. Forgive me for becoming so preoccupied with myself that I become deaf and blind to the grief and suffering of those around me. Forgive me for not embracing the sacrifice made for me and being so caught up in my own troubles that I forget to encourage and care for others. Help me never to lose sight of your Son Jesus and what he has done for me, so that I can share your unconditional and all-embracing love with others who are around me. **Amen**

Organ: Reflection (Daniel Bishop b. 1981)

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS CLOTHES. *John 19 :23-25*

After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe which was made of one piece of woven cloth without any seams in it. The soldiers said to one another "Let's not tear it; let's throw dice to see who will get it." This happened in order to make the scripture come true: "They divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe." So this is what the soldiers did.

Reflection

Just yesterday Jesus removed his cloak and laid it aside to wash his disciples' feet. Now he is allowing others to strip off his clothes.

He could have stopped the gambling and stripping with just one word but he didn't. He allowed the disgrace, ridicule and humiliation, in fact he is left with nothing.

For us?...for me and you?....Why?

We have nothing of worth to give him.

Where is our gratitude for this?

Why does he allow himself to be so humiliated?

Because of his total commitment to you and me.

He lays everything aside for us.

Silence

Prayer

Father, we thank you that Jesus willingly allowed himself to be humiliated because of his deep commitment to each one of us. He stretched out his arms of love on the hard wood of the cross so that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace. So clothe us in your spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of Jesus and all that he endured for us; for the honour of your name.

Amen

Music

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS. *Mark 15: 25-32*

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The notice of the accusation against him said: "The King of the Jews." They also crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left. People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "Ah! You were going to tear down the Temple and build it back up in three days! Now come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law made fun of Jesus saying to one another, "He saved others but he cannot save himself! Let us see the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now and we will believe in him!"

Reflection

The last awful step of the journey is about to be taken.

Jesus is laid on the ground, his arms outstretched.

Can you hear the sound of the hammering as the nail is driven through each of his hands and feet? The pain is excruciating.

Jesus's body is hoisted into place and the weight on his rib cage makes it difficult to breathe.

It makes one want to rage at the cruelty, hypocrisy, cowardice, treachery and fickleness of those involved.

Don't they remember that Jesus spoke of love, even to our enemies?

How could they be so cruel to the most perfect human who had ever lived?

And yet are they who condemned him to such a cruel death, the guilty ones?

Or is it human sin that drove in the nails? My sin.

He was broken for me.

Silence

Prayer

Lord, remind us of the deathly cost of our wrong doing. Forgive us for those things we have done that are displeasing to you, for thinking of ourselves better than others so we have no need to repent and finding excuses not to do what we should have done. Give us grace to humble ourselves before you so that we may know your forgiveness. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Music

JESUS DIES. *Mark 15: 33,34,37-39*

At noon the whole country was covered in darkness which lasted for three hours. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" With a loud cry Jesus died. The curtain hanging in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The army officer, who was standing there in front of the cross, saw how Jesus had died. "This man is really the Son of God!" he said.

Reflection

It is the middle of the day and it seems the heavens and earth are grieving. Everyone has forsaken you but there is one who still hears your prayer - the one you address as *my God*.

The earth shakes and the curtain in the temple is torn right down the middle.

What does it mean?

Yet you never stopped loving us even in death.

You died because of human sin, because of us.

Sin is never the final word. God can redeem the worst that human beings can do.

But this? What can come of this? What can God do with such a final ending?

We hope and wait.....

Silence

Prayer

O God, you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death on the Cross for our redemption and to deliver us from the power of the enemy by his glorious resurrection. May we die to sin each day so that we may live forever with him who died and rose again for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Organ: Miserere (Gregorio Allegri 1582 - 1652)

JESUS IS BURIED. *Matthew 27: 57-60*

When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea arrived; his name was Joseph, a disciple of Jesus. He went into the presence of Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate gave orders for the body to be given to Joseph. So Joseph took it, wrapped it in a new linen sheet and placed it in his own tomb, which he had

recently dug out of a solid rock. Then he rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Reflection

Like every human being, Jesus was born with nothing and dies naked and alone. The hysterical clamour of the passion is now quiet.

His bruised body, marked with the wounds of nails and spear, is hastily washed and wrapped in a clean linen shroud and laid in the coldness of the stone tomb.

Now an anonymous corpse, seemingly like any other, he was buried like any other - no funeral procession, no elaborate mourning.

However we know how the story ends.

In just a few short hours he will emerge from the cold dark tomb victorious over sin and death.

Silence

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, you rested in the tomb on the Sabbath day and so sanctified the grave to be a bed of hope for your people. Lead us to say sorry for our sins, which were the cause of your suffering and death and grant that at our death we may rise and live with you. **Amen**

Organ: Chorale Prelude – Herzlich tut mich verlangen (J. S. Bach 1685 - 1750)
My heart and flesh cry out for the living God

Please leave the church quietly and reverently

“Being in human form He humbled Himself and came obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:8-10

The suffering servant . . .

It was the will of the Lord that his servant grow like a plant taking root in dry ground.

He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of him.

There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him.

We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain.

No one would even look at him — we ignored him as if he were nothing.

But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne.

All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God.

But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did.

We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.

All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way.

But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved.

He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word.

Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word.

He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die, and no one cared about his fate.

He was put to death for the sins of our people.

He was placed in a grave with those who are evil, he was buried with the rich, even though he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie.

The Lord says,

“It was my will that he should suffer; his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness.”

Isaiah 53: 2-10a



Broken for me, broken for you,

The Body of Jesus, broken for you.

He offered His body, he poured out His soul,

Jesus was broken, that we might be whole.

Broken for me, broken for you,

The Body of Jesus, broken for you.

