

## *A Reflection for Good Friday*

# Look upon the one you have pierced



### **Instructions for Readers**

*This is a meditation and should be taken slowly without any rush or hurry, pausing after each line and each paragraph. The whole service may be done by one person or the words shared between two or three. Where multiple voices are to be used, this should be agreed beforehand.*

*The service should have some simple focus, such as a cross or a draped cross and silence encouraged both before and after the service.*

## **How deep the Father's love for us**

*(Track 1)*

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 the 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



## Introduction and Welcome

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

We gather here to worship God. We gather to remember how Jesus suffered and died for us and to thank God for his love and his mercy. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before God like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The service today is a meditation upon the cross. With the exception of the first hymn - we would like everyone to remain seated during the service. After that hymn, we gather at the foot of the cross and reflect on the meaning of the events of this day. After each reflection, there will be a time of silence followed by a hymn.

Immediately after the after the Silence, we ask you to sing the verse or verses printed in the bulletin or on the screen. It is our hope that you will relax - and enter into the experience of Christ's passion, that you may know the meaning of what our Lord has done for us. Let us prepare for our worship now by standing to sing "There is a Green Hill Far Away".

## **There is a Green Hill Far Away**

There is a green hill far away  
Without a city wall  
Where the dear Lord was crucified  
He died to save us all

We may not know, we cannot tell  
what pains he had to bear  
but we believe it was for us  
he hung and suffered there

He died that we might be forgiven,  
he died to make us good  
that we might go at last to heaven,  
saved by his precious blood

There was no other good enough  
to pay the price of sin  
he only could unlock the gate  
of heaven and let us in

O dearly, dearly has he loved,  
And we must love him too,  
And trust in his redeeming blood  
And try his works to do.

# Meditation 1

## *Seeing the Obvious*



### Meditation 1 - Seeing the Obvious

"They will look on the one they have pierced." Not just those gathered around this wooden cross erected on the darkening hill of Golgotha--haven't we all looked upon him? For close to two thousand years humanity has looked back on this seminal, defining moment. It has looked back on the one they have pierced. Yes, all of us have pierced him, for all of us have sinned. As Paul so aptly will remind us in Romans 3:23, it is sin that has placed him there, nailed him to that barren tree, and we are all sinners, each and every one of us.

It is not unusual that this should be so, this universal reflection on the one now hanging in the dusty heat of the afternoon sun. It is because the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the nexus point, the pivotal moment in all of human history. Everything that came before led up to this moment and everything that has happened afterward is the outworking of it, looking back to it.

As Peter will soon tell the assembled elders in Jerusalem, which will be recorded in Acts 4:11-12, "He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

From the first promise to Eve as mankind was banished from the Garden of Eden that her seed would crush the head of Satan, to the Jews standing that very day throughout the Roman Empire, all of whom awaited the coming Messiah represented in the fifth Passover

cup, the Cup of Elijah; everything in the life of the people of God since their creation has pointed to this moment. From David blessing Jerusalem as the city of God, to Nehemiah saving it for the future Messiah to walk in, to the revolt of the Macabees preserving the temple and priesthood from the Abomination of Desolation, so that the High Priest might this very morning pronounce that "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish"; everything has pointed to this one decisive moment.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the physical wilderness of Sinai to heal the stricken nation of Israel, so now Jesus is lifted up in the spiritual wilderness of Golgotha to heal the whole stricken human race. Salvation is found in no one else, no one who came before, and no one who will come after. Not in Amon Rah of Egypt, or Ahura Mazda of Persia, not in Surya or Buddha or Hari Krishna of India, not in Confucius or Chang Tao-ling of China, and not in Mohammed of Islam, not in the Passover lambs killed every year, or the scapegoat sent into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement, not in the daily sacrifices of the priests of Israel or in the Law of Moses, which no one alive can fully keep. No, they will not, they cannot save us. There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. There is only one way, one truth, and one life. It is in the singular name of the one that the Romans have just pierced. It is in the name of the one whose hands and feet are at this moment nailed to the rough wood standing before us. It is not the thief to his left, or the thief to his right. It is in him and him alone, it is in Jesus the Christ whom we look upon for our hope of redemption.

Look upon the one you have pierced.

### *Silence*

#### **O Sacred Head**

O sacred head, sore wounded,  
with grief and shame weighed down;  
now scornfully surrounded by thorns,  
thine only crown:

how art thou pale with anguish,  
with sore abuse and scorn;  
how does that visage languish,  
which once was bright as morn!

Thy grief and bitter passion  
were all for sinner's gain,  
All mine was the transgression,  
but thine the cruel pain.

Lo, here I fall, my Saviour,  
turn not from me thy face;  
but look on mine with favour,  
and grant to me thy grace.

What language shall I borrow  
to praise thee, heavenly friend,  
for this thy dying sorrow,  
thy pity without end?  
O agony and dying!  
O love to sinners free!  
Jesus, all grace supplying,  
turn thou thy face on me.

In this your bitter Passion,  
good Shepherd, think of me,  
look on me with compassion,  
unworthy though I be:  
beneath your cross abiding  
for ever would I rest,  
in your dear love confiding,  
and with your presence blessed.

Lord, be my consolation,  
my shield when death is near;  
remind me of your Passion,  
be with me when I fear.  
my eyes shall then behold you,  
upon your cross shall dwell,  
my heart by faith enfold you;  
and who dies thus, dies well.

# Meditation 2

## *God is in Control*



### Meditation 2 - God is in Control

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." We say that two thousand years later upon reflection, but at this moment it does not appear to be so. If anything it appears that God has failed, that the Messianic mission of Jesus, his bringing of the Kingdom of God, has been aborted by the concerted actions of evil men.

There is a scene in C.S. Lewis' Christian allegory *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* where Aslan, who represents the Lion of Judah, is bound on the stone table and killed by the White Witch. With a shriek, the assembled agents of darkness celebrate their apparent victory. They think they have won. Aslan is dead, his power was a myth. But they, like the evil perpetrators of Golgotha, were wrong.

Lost in both of these moments, one fictional and symbolic and one real and eternal, is a true understanding of the genuine power of sacrifice and its ability to transform and heal at the deepest level of creation and existence, to cure even death itself. Yesterday in the upper room, Jesus counseled his disciples about the nature of sacrifice saying, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" and speaking of himself he said, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The unique power and glory of God's kingdom is based on sacrifice and service, on the deep, deep agape love of God. The apostle John will later express the truth of this in his great



statement learned by every new Christian that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Paul will later address the same theme when writing to the Philippians when he will say "Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Yes, the death we now see overtaking him.

In stark contrast to this culture of loving sacrifice, the kingdoms of man and their glory are built on the raw exercise of power and we see that power being exercised by Rome at this moment. In the end Jesus' innocence did not matter to Pilate. The only thing that carried any weight was what was best for Rome, what would maintain its undiluted power. That made crucifixion important weapon of statecraft, since it was the most dehumanizing and power affirming death that Rome could inflict, reserved for those who would be made examples of.

That raw self-serving decision is contrasted with the kingdom of God, currently laying its cornerstone in this man bleeding out his life on the cross. Its power is in its acceptance of rejection. It is being solidly built on sacrifice and not just any sacrifice. No, this sacrifice is of the very life of God the Son, with all this being done so that we might be healed from our sin and degradation.

While we are still sinners, in the midst of our continued rejection of his efforts, he still dies for us.

Look upon the one you have pierced.

*Silence*

### **Nature with open volume stands,**

Nature with open volume stands,  
to spread her maker's praise abroad;  
and every labour of his hands  
shows something worthy of a God

But in the grace that rescued us,  
his brightest form of glory shines;  
here, on the cross, tis fairest drawn  
in precious blood, and crimson lines

Here his whole name appears complete  
Nor wit can guess, nor reason prove,  
Which of the letters best is writ,  
The power, the wisdom, or the love

O The sweet wonders of that cross  
Where God my Saviour loved, and died!  
Her noblest life my spirit draws  
From his dear wounds, and bleeding side.

I would for ever spread his name  
In sounds to mortal ears unknown,  
With angels join to praise the lamb,  
And worship at his father's throne.

# Meditation 3

## *Abraham and Jesus*



### Meditation 3 - Abraham and Jesus

"Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." God had asked Abraham to make the fundamental sacrifice, that of his future, his inheritance, his hope. He submitted his will to the will of God and met the challenge placed before him.

With that in mind, what do we see when we look at the cross before us? Beyond any of the spiritual and symbolic images that it may invoke, there is one central tenant, one core fact that we cannot deny: God did not spare His only son. Instead he hangs there on a Roman cross, crucified.

God the Father did not ask anything of Abraham that He himself would not one day do. However, for Abraham and Isaac the call to sacrifice was only a test. Not so for God the Father and his only son, Jesus Christ. There is no ram caught in the bushes nearby, bringing at the last moment a welcomed deliverance. No, the die was cast in the eternal heart of God and sealed by Adam's first sin, then made final and sure by every sin that followed after.

The cup of sacrifice has been raised to Jesus' lips and it will not pass him by. There is no reprieve for the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

When we look within this one all encompassing sacrifice, we see the echos of all the sacrifices that God has in the past, or will at any time in the future, ask each of us to make.

From this singular moment of agape, self-sacrificial love, all other acts of sacrifice find their true significance, their eternal grounding, their meaning and purpose.

So, as we look back on our past offerings and face whatever sacrifices that lay ahead, we can know that nothing we offer will ever be forgotten, no effort we make will ever be lost in the dustbin of time. Every effort will find its proper place, its appointed purpose within this single transforming moment.

As you survey this wonderous cross, where the Prince of Glory hangs to die, with love so amazing, with love so divine, what small demand then is God asking of you today?

Look upon the one you have pierced.

### *Silence*

#### **Lord Jesus, think on me,**

Lord Jesus, think on me,  
and purge away my sin;  
from earth born passions set me free,  
and make me pure within.

Lord Jesus, think on me  
By care and woe oppressed;  
let me your loving servant be,  
and taste your promised rest.

Lord Jesus, think on me,  
amid the bitter strife;  
through all my pain and misery  
become my health and life.

Lord Jesus, think on me,  
nor let me go astray;  
through darkness and perplexity  
point to the heavenly way.

Lord Jesus, think on me,  
that, when the flood is past,  
I may your radiant glory see,  
and share thy joy at last.

#### **Thorns in the Straw** *(Track 2)*

Since the day the angel came  
It seemed that everything had changed  
The only certain thing  
Was the child that moved within  
On the road that would not end  
Winding down to Bethlehem  
So far away from home

Just a blanket on the floor  
Of a vacant cattle-stall  
But there the child was born  
She held him in her arms  
And as she laid him down to sleep  
She wondered - will it always be  
So bitter and so sweet

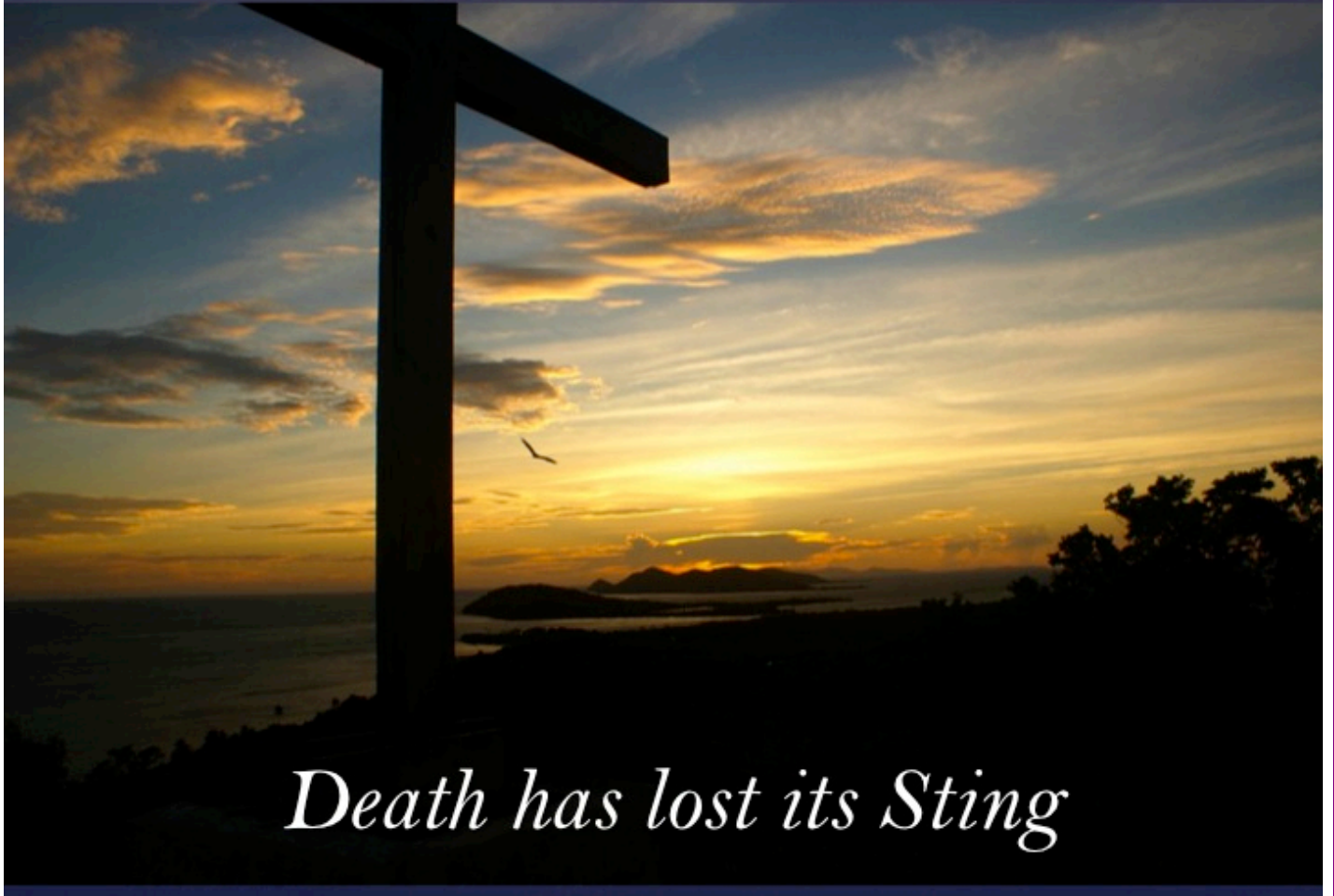
And did she see there  
In the straw by his head a thorn  
And did she smell myrrh  
In the air on that starry night  
Then the words of ancient seers  
Tumbled down the centuries ...

A virgin shall conceive...  
God with us... Prince of Peace  
Man of Sorrows - strangest name  
Oh Joseph there it comes again  
So bitter yet so sweet

And did she see there  
In the straw by his head a thorn  
And did she smell myrrh  
In the air on that starry night  
And did she hear angels sing  
Not so far away  
Till at last the sun rose blood-red  
In the morning sky

And as she watched him through the years  
Her joy was mingled with her tears  
And she'd feel it all again  
The glory, and the shame  
And when the miracles began  
She wondered, who is this man  
And where will this all end  
'Til against a darkening sky  
The son she loved was lifted high  
And with his dying breath  
She heard him say 'Father forgive'  
And to the criminal beside  
"Today-with me in Paradise"  
So bitter yet so sweet

# Meditation 4



## *Death has lost its Sting*

### Meditation 4 - Death Has Lost Its Sting

"O fail not, with thine immortal power, to hold me, that I quail not, in death's most fearful hour". As death approaches us, whether our real physical death, or the symbolic death of our hopes and desires, or even the death of someone we love and care for, will we "quail not'?

The apostle Paul will later encourage the Corinthians with the following statement, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" [1 Cor 15:55] Well, at this moment the sting appears very real. Jesus' life is inexorably ebbing away, flowing down the rough wood of the cross in a steady bloody stream, onto the ground below. Except for John, his disciples are scattered, disillusioned. Peter, the self-assured, denied that he even knew him. The sting of his approaching death is biting not just him, but also all those who have believed in him. At this moment everyone is confused and hurting and no one understands why the river of precious blood runs down that wooden stake.

We shouldn't be surprised. Doesn't death always bring out this same question? Why, God, why? Death, however it comes, whatever the circumstances, never seems to fit. It always wounds us deeply; it always seems unfair. I am sure that those who love Jesus are at this very moment asking God that same question. Why, oh God, did you allow this to happen?

But God is silent. Though creation itself is screaming out in pain and fury, God is silent. While we pound and cry against the silence, do we also fear that stillness? Do we cower, shrinking

back from death's most fearful hour, the hour in which we are forced to wait for God to speak?

Oh God, in your time, not ours, fail not, with thine immortal power, to hold me that I will quail not in death's most fearful hour.

Look upon the one whom you have pierced.

*Silence*

### **When I survey the wondrous cross**

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.

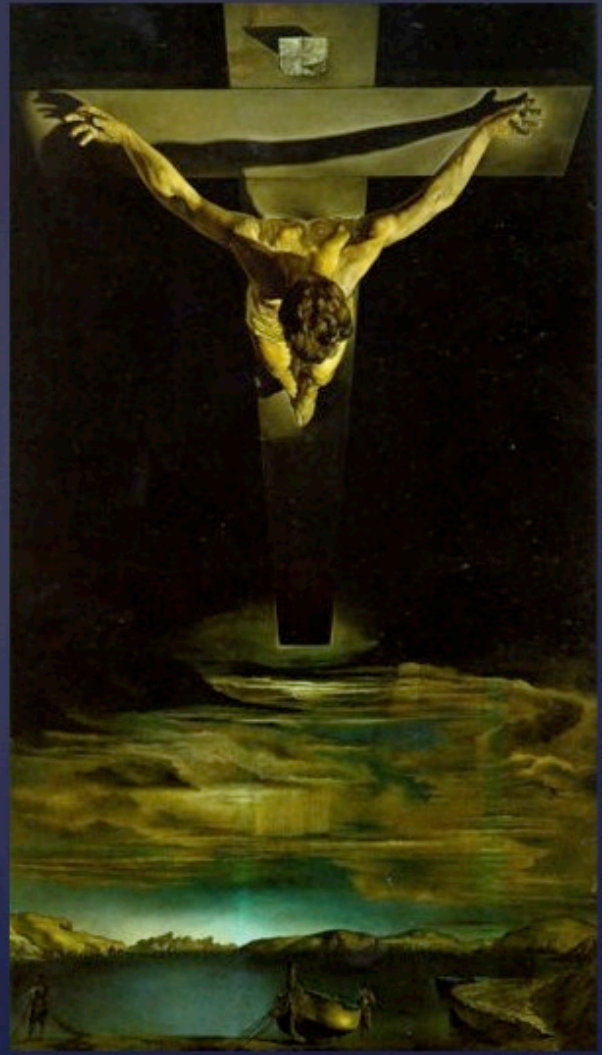
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small:  
love so amazing, so divine  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

# Meditation 5

*Taking hold of  
what has taken  
hold in Christ*



## Meditation 5 - Taking Hold of What Has Taken Hold of Us in Christ

It is one thing to not shrink back in fear from what lies ahead, even if it is our death, but it is quite another to actively embrace the path that God has set before us. When we think of courage, especially spiritual courage, we think of the heroes of the faith. However, they did not act in rash bluster, garnering up momentary courage for a quick decision. David's choice to stand before Goliath was built on a life of not shrinking back from what God had placed in his path. Before going out to fight David said to Saul, "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." David saw the current moment and its problem in the light of all that had gone before between him and his God.

When Nehemiah placed his life on the line before the King of Persia over the future of Jerusalem, it was the result of months of prayer. When first hearing of the ruined state of the City of God he sat down wept and then for many days mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven. Just before going into the presence of Artaxerxes, the Persian king, Nehemiah prays "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man." Nehemiah then took wine and gave it to the king, but he also allowed his sadness over Jerusalem to show. He had never been sad in the king's presence before, since emotional displays such as this could result in his execution. The king asked him, "Why does your face look so sad when you are



not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." Nehemiah, even though he was very afraid, spoke boldly to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" Not only did he not shrink back in fear, but like David he actively took hold of the task that God had laid out for him, even if it meant his death.

On Palm Sunday, when Jesus approached Jerusalem, he like Nehemiah wept over its ruined spiritual condition, but added to his sadness was also its coming destruction. Jesus said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you, when your enemies will build an embankment against you, and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

No, Jerusalem and its leadership did not recognize the path, the possibilities God had laid out before them. The question to us then is not whether we will shrink back in fear, but instead will we recognize the time of God's coming to us and actively embrace the path that lies before us. Jesus now hangs suspended over Jerusalem because he succeeded where it failed.

He embraced his calling. Will we embrace ours?

Look upon the one you have pierced.

*Silence*

### **Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle**

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle,  
of the mighty conflict sing;  
tell the triumph of the victim,  
to his Cross your tribute bring.  
Jesus Christ the world's Redeemer,  
From that cross now reigns as King.

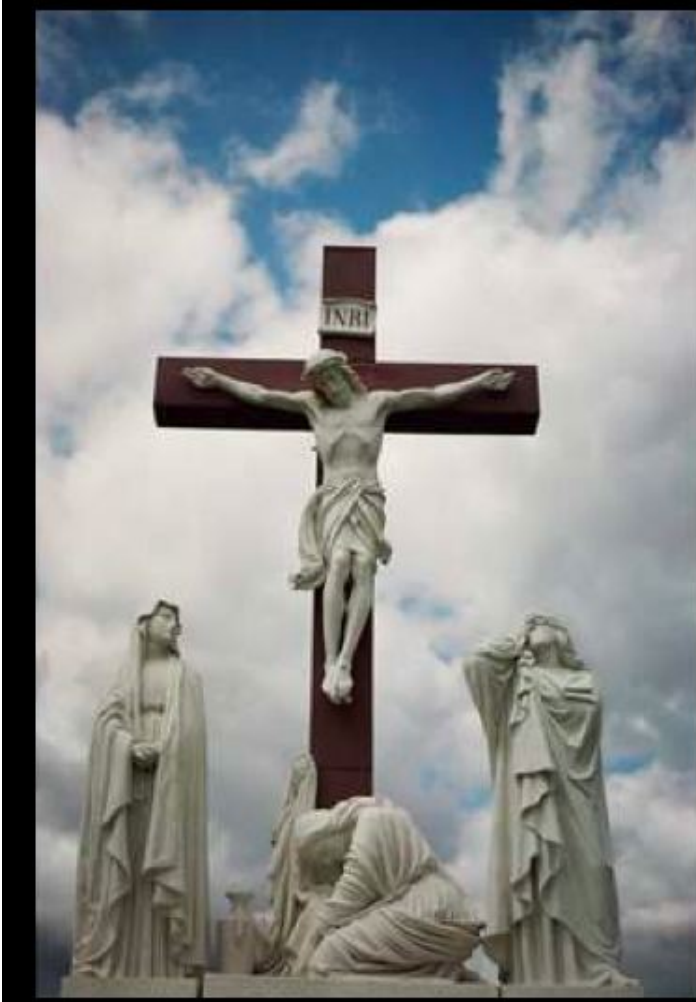
When at length the appointed fullness  
of the sacred time was come,  
he was sent, the world's creator,  
from the Father's heavenly home,  
and was found in human fashion,  
offspring of the Virgin's womb.

When the thirty years were ended  
which on earth he willed to see,  
willingly he meets his Passion,  
born to set his people free;  
on the Cross the Lamb is lifted,  
there the sacrifice to be.

There the nails and spear he suffers,  
vinegar and gall and reed;  
from his sacred body pierced  
blood and water both proceed:  
precious flood, which all creation  
from the stain of sin has freed.

Faithful cross, above all other,  
one and only noble tree,  
none in foliage, none in blossom.  
none in fruit your peer may be;  
sweet the wood and sweet the iron  
and your load, most sweet is he.  
in precious blood, and crimson lines

Praise and honour to the Father,  
praise and honour to the Son,  
praise and honour to the Spirit,  
ever Three and ever One:  
One in might, and One in glory,  
while eternal ages run. Amen.



**"It is finished."**

**John 19:30**

**Sixth Meditation *John 19:29-30***

*So, Lord, I have watched with you one hour.  
The cross by which I kneel, is empty now.  
That night, your disciples and the women  
went to their homes in tears,  
believing all their hopes were dashed  
and they would never see you again.  
I, too, am sad and shaken by this hour,  
but I cannot identify with them;  
not fully, for I know what they could not -  
I have heard about the Sunday morning!*

*Silence*

**Prayer**

It is finished, Lord, yet it has just begun. What you have done, has giving me – New Life. Yet I find it hard to accept this, to live as a citizen of your kingdom. Help me to re-commit my time, my talents, my resources to you and your mission. **Amen.**

## **How deep the Father's love for us**

*(Track 3)*

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 the 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