

Good Friday April 2, 2021

Deep in the shadows: Called deep into the story

Tenebrae service adapted from Leader magazine, Lent 2021

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{TITLE SLIDE}

SUSANNE: Welcome to those joining us in person and online on Treaty 6 territory and the Homeland of the Metis for this tenebrae worship service. [Review pandemic protocols].

Tenebrae is Latin for “darkness” or “shadows” and has often been used as a Good Friday service. This evening, we will share the story of Jesus’ passion, betrayal, and death through Scripture, reflections, art, and song. We invite you to enter into the mystery of this formative story of Divine solidarity with the deepest shadows of the human condition. Our Lenten candles will be extinguished one by one, until a single candle, a symbol of Jesus, remains. At the end of the service, this Christ candle will be extinguished, symbolizing the apparent victory of evil and leaving us “deep in the shadows.”

{SLIDE 2} **Call to Worship (Susanne reads One, Patrick and congregation read Many)**

One: Today we gather to enter this story of betrayal and pain together.

Many: With heavy feet we enter the story.

**The sea, the earth, the sky, the woods, the current, the wilderness,
all lead us here. We rest in God’s shadow.**

One: We are here in the darkness remembering Jesus’ death.

{SLIDE 3} **Many: Slowly we open our hearts to grief and to our part in the story.**

One: We are here in the darkness, following Christ, who says, “Take up your cross.”

Many: Deep in the darkness, we trust that death is not the end.

All: And there was darkness.

{SLIDE 4 - blank} **Song • Voices Together 632 - Dans nos obscurités (Within Our Darkest Night) (OL 02192)**

PATRICK: “The Passion of Jesus” – by Carter Heyward

“But the passion of Jesus must be considered in a far broader sense than that which is denoted by the common ecclesiastical usage of the term. “Passion” is synonymous to “suffering” only in the most all-inclusive meaning of the verb “to suffer” – that is, “to bear up,” or “to sustain”; in the case of Jesus, to bear up God in the world. It follows that Jesus’ entire public ministry is marked by his passion, ...which involves pain and finally death.

...To suffer the possibility of effecting good in the world is to suffer also the evil of broken relational power in human life. A person of passion endures both the power and ecstasy of relation and the pain and trauma of broken relation whenever she witnesses, or is involved in, the destruction of human relation. There is no way to avoid pain. There is only the choice

between pain steeped in passion and pain incurred through dispassionate invulnerability to relation.”¹

{SLIDE 5} **SUSANNE: 1. THE SHADOW OF GETHSEMANE**

Excerpts from Matthew 26:36-41; Mark 14:43-46

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” ⁴⁰ Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

⁴³ Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

Psalms 42:1-2 (NIV)

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

{SLIDE 6} **Song • HWB 241 - Tis Midnight and On Olive's Brow (public domain)**

SUSANNE: Prayer

God, there have been times when we, like Judas, have betrayed the ones we love.
Forgive us, we pray. *{Extinguish a candle.}*

{SLIDE 7} **PATRICK: 2. THE SHADOW OF DENIAL**

Matthew 26:69-75

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” ⁷⁰ But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” ⁷¹ When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷² Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” ⁷³ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” ⁷⁴ Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

Psalms 42:3 (NIV)

¹ Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 54.

My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

{SLIDE 8} **Song • HWB 242** Stay with Me (3-4 times) (OL 03065)

PATRICK: Prayer

God, like Peter, we have been afraid and have denied the ones we love.
Forgive us, we pray. {*Extinguish a candle.*}

{SLIDE 9} **SUSANNE: 3. THE SHADOW OF CONDEMNATION**

Mark 15:1-5, 15; John 19:1-3

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ² Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” ³ Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. ³ They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face.

Psalms 42:4 (NIV)

These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.

{SLIDE 10} **Song • O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (HWB 252)** (public domain)

SUSANNE: Prayer

God, like the chief priests, we have lost sight of the truth and accused the innocent unfairly.
Forgive us, we pray.
{*Extinguish a candle.*}

{SLIDE 11} **PATRICK: 4. THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS**

John 19:6, 15-17

⁶ When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.” ¹⁵ They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but the emperor.” ¹⁶ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; ¹⁷ and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

Psalm 42:5 (NIV)

Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

{SLIDE 12} **Song** • HWB 254 - Ah Holy Jesus (public domain)

PATRICK: Prayer

God, like the crowd, we have been swept up in the current of condemnation.
Forgive us for inflicting harm, we pray. {*Extinguish a candle.*}

{SLIDE 13} **SUSANNE: 5. THE SHADOW OF CRUCIFIXION**

Luke 23:33-34

³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

From “The Distance” By Simone Weil

“God created through love and for love. God did not create anything except love itself, and the means to love. [God] created love in all its forms. [God] created beings capable of love from all possible distances. Because no other could do it, [God Godself] went to the greatest possible distance, the infinite distance. This infinite distance between God and God, ... this agony beyond all others, this marvel of love, is the crucifixion. Nothing can be further from God than that which has been made accursed.

This tearing apart, over which supreme love places the bond of supreme union, echoes perpetually across the universe in the midst of silence, like two notes, separate yet melting into one, like pure and heart-rending harmony. This is the Word of God. ...

We have to cross the infinite thickness of time and space – and God has to do it first, because [God] comes to us first. Of the links between God and [humanity], love is the greatest. It is as great as the distance to be crossed.”²

Psalm 42:7-8 (NIV)

Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.
By day the Lord directs his love,

² Simone Weil, Excerpt from “The Distance,” in *Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 2003), 214-215.

at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.

Song • Were You There (HWB 257, omit v. 5) – Kathleen only, a capella (public domain)

SUSANNE: Prayer

God, deep in the shadows, we know we have been part of your crucifixion, and have chosen death

over life in many ways. Forgive us, we pray.

{Extinguish a candle.}

{SLIDE 14} **PATRICK: 6. THE SHADOW OF GRACE**

Luke 23:39-43; John 19:25-27

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

From *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James Cone:

“The real scandal of the gospel is this: humanity’s salvation is revealed in the cross of the condemned criminal Jesus, and humanity’s salvation is available *only* through our solidarity with the crucified people in our midst [, those victims of lynching and violence today]. ... The cross needs the lynching tree to remind [us] of the reality of suffering – to keep the cross from becoming a symbol of abstract, sentimental piety. Before the spectacle of this cross we are called to more than contemplation and adoration. We are faced with a clear challenge: ... ‘to take the crucified down from the cross.’

Yet the lynching tree also needs the cross, without which it becomes simply an abomination. It is the cross that points in the direction of hope, the confidence that there is a dimension to life beyond the reach of the oppressor. ...

God’s solidarity can transform ugliness – whether Jesus on the cross or a lynched black victim – into ... God’s liberating presence.”³

Psalm 42:9-10 (NIV)

I say to God my Rock,

“Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”

My bones suffer mortal agony

³ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 160-162.

as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

Song • HWB 246 - Why Has God Forsaken Me? – Kathleen only, a capella (OL 90116 + 00680)

PATRICK: Prayer

God, at the crucible moments in our lives, give us, like the thief, courage to face and speak the truth.

And like Mary, may we stand with the ones we love, even as they suffer.

{Extinguish a candle.}

SUSANNE: 7. THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Luke 23:44-46

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon,
⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.

From *Suffering* by Dorothee Soelle

“How can hope be expressed in the face of senseless suffering? ... [In those moments, we cannot help but ask,] ‘Where is God now? ... [God is] here – God is hanging here on this gallows.’ ... God is no executioner – and no almighty spectator (which would amount to the same thing). ... God ... is on the side of the sufferer. ... God is not in heaven: [God] is hanging on the cross.”⁴

Moment of silence *{Extinguish the Christ candle.}*

Psalm 42:11 (NIV)

Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

{SLIDE 15} **Song** • When I Survey the Wondrous Cross - **HWB 259** (public domain)

{SLIDE 16} **SUSANNE: Still** by Jan Richardson:⁵

This day

let all stand still

⁴ Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975), 145, 148.

⁵ Jan Richardson, “Still,” in *The Painted Prayerbook* (Orlando, FL: Wanton Gospeller Press, 2015), 139-40, and <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2017/04/13/good-friday-still/>

in silence,
in sorrow.

Sun and moon
be still.

Earth
be still.

Still
the waters.

Still
the wind.

Let the ground
gape in stunned
lamentation.

Let it weep
as it receives
what it thinks
it will not
give up.

Let it groan
as it gathers
the One
who was thought
forever stilled.

Time
be still.

Watch
and wait.

Still.

PATRICK: Sending blessing

In the darkest of moments, in the deep folds of night . . . this is where we sit in the story. The place where the followers have lost their center. In this suspended space, our souls cry out: Where do we go from here? May we be compelled to stay with the darkness a little longer and allow it to teach us.

Go into this night with an open heart.

PATRICK: Prayer

Jesus, in the eclipse of the sun, we hear your cry.
Open our hearts to follow in your steps, to receive
the mystery of your life and your death. Amen.

{Depart in silence.}