**The Fear of the Lord: Good Friday Tenebrae Service**

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**Nutana Park Mennonite Church**

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**Gathering Hymn** – Were You There When They Crucified My Lord? (HWB 257)

**Introduction:**

Our Lenten journey has led us to this somber day. We have spent these weeks bringing our fears and naming them before God and each other, reminding one another that love is stronger than fear.

As we turn our hearts and minds to the story of Jesus’ passion and death from the Gospel of Mark this evening, we do so with an awareness of the different fears faced by the various figures in this biblical narrative. Entering this ancient story, we wonder what it was like to be there, to face the various fears that the disciples, the religious authorities, the political leaders, even Jesus himself faced in that time and place. And we wonder also at how their fears aren’t really all that different from the fears we face today in our time and place. At the end of the service, there will be an opportunity to write down the fears that we have using the slips of paper and pens found in the pews, and these will be collected as a way of handing them over to God.

This service is framed using the notion of the Fear of the Lord. This is a term, on one hand, that is used to speak about the proper awe and love of God that is the way of Wisdom in the Bible – the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, we are told in Proverbs. On the other hand, this also reminds us that Jesus’ way of the cross was a fearful one – in the Garden, Jesus was afraid of what lay before him. In this way, we remember the wisdom of the cross, the truth of worshipping the crucified one: that there is no part of our human experience – not fear, not suffering, not death or grief – that remains untouched by God’s hand. God has taken it all up into God’s care.

**The Last Supper (Mark 14:17-25)**

17When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” 19They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?” 20He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21For the Son of [Humanity] goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of [Humanity] is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

22While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” 23Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

JUDAS: *I was afraid that the revolution wasn’t going to go anywhere. I had seen Jesus do radical things – he had gotten crowds on his side, shouting Hosanna; he had performed miracles that left people in awe; he had cleared the Temple of the money-changers and those trying to profit from people’s piety. But in every case, he hadn’t gone far enough for me – he hadn’t fought back with the sword, like the Maccabees, who used force to take control of Judah. Jesus’ way of peace was too slow. So, I thought I would give Jesus the push he needed to start a real revolution. If they arrested him, he’d have to fight back with power and force. So I told the chief priests where he’d be, and I took their money. Sure, I felt strange at the Passover meal, when Jesus seemed to somehow know what I had done. But it was for a good cause. The revolution was everything to me. I didn’t care how we got there, I just wanted those Romans overthrown and done away with. And I knew Jesus could do that if he got his priorities straight.*

**Hymn – HWB 242 – Stay with Me**

**The Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:26-50)**

26When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written,

‘I will strike the shepherd,  
    and the sheep will be scattered.’

28But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” 29Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” 30Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” 31But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

32They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. 34And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” 35And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” 37He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? 38Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. 41He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of [Humanity] is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

43Immediately, 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. 44Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” 45So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. 46Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. 47But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 48Then Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? 49Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” 50All of them deserted him and fled.

JESUS: *Like any of us would be, Jesus was afraid. In the garden that night, the prospect of his own imminent suffering and death was overwhelming. Not only was he going to be arrested, subjected to the humiliating spectacle of two trials, and tortured to death on a cross, but his own friend, Judas, was the one who would hand him over to this fate. And the rest of his male disciples would scatter, abandoning him. So he was distressed and agitated, telling his friends, “I am deeply grieved, even to death.” Our Christ, our Messiah, was afraid. Emmanuel, God-with-us, suffered fear. And so he prayed to his “Abba” to take away the cup of suffering, to find some other way. He did not want to cross over into death, he did not want to experience godforsakenness, separation from God. And yet he went ahead, walking the difficult road set before him, taking the fullness of human experience – even suffering, even fear, even death – upon himself.*

**Hymn – HWB 241 – Tis Midnight and on Olive’s Brow**

**Jesus Before the Council (Mark 14:53-65)**

53They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. 54Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. 55Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. 56For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. 57Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, 58“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” 59But even on this point their testimony did not agree. 60Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” 61But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah,[[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-24809j" \o "See footnote j)] the Son of the Blessed One?” 62Jesus said, “I am; and

‘you will see the Son of [Humanity]  
seated at the right hand of the Power,’  
and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.’”

63Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? 64You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?” All of them condemned him as deserving death. 65Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophesy!” The guards also took him over and beat him.

CAIAPHAS, THE HEAD PRIEST: *That Jesus of Nazareth was a troublemaker. That’s all there was to it. Didn’t he know we were under military occupation, that he couldn’t simply wander around the countryside riling up the peasants with all his talk of blessed are the poor and this upside-down kingdom of God nonsense? What was he thinking? And then he escalated everything with marching into the city of Jerusalem like some kind of peasant king, and turning over all the tables of the respectable merchants in the Temple. Why would he provoke the Romans so blatantly? Didn’t he share the fear we all had – that the Romans would destroy the nation of Israel, and tear down our holy Temple? He had to be stopped before he brought us all down with him. So thanks to Judas, we had him arrested and held a trial for him before the council. There, he was foolish enough to blaspheme in front of us, calling himself the Messiah, the Son of God, and so we had no choice but to condemn him to death.*

**Special music**

**Peter’s Betrayal (Mark 14:66-72)**

66While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. 67When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” 68But he denied it, saying, “I do not know or understand what you are talking about.” And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed.69And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” 70But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.” 71But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know this man you are talking about.” 72At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

PETER: *I had vowed to Jesus that I would never leave him, that none of us would. But that was before I knew that the threats we faced were real and serious. I couldn’t believe it when I saw Jesus arrested – taken away by armed men, and for what? For preaching justice and peace? For healing people? For affirming their humanity as children of God? So I and the other male disciples were terrified that Jesus might actually be killed, and that if the chief priests and the Romans could do that to Jesus, our beloved teacher, we might very well be next. So when I was recognized, I blurted out that I didn’t know him, that I wasn’t one of his followers. Three times, I said I didn’t know him, that I’d never met this Jesus. And then the rooster crowed, and I remembered what Jesus had said, and I sank down in shame and fear and wept bitterly.*

**Jesus Before Pilate (Mark 15:1-15)**

15 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. 2Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” 3Then the chief priests accused him of many things. 4Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” 5But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

6Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. 7Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. 8So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. 9Then he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” 10For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. 11But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. 12Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you callthe King of the Jews?” 13They shouted back, “Crucify him!” 14Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” 15So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

PILATE: *They brought this man before me, this Jesus of Nazareth, and said that he needed to be put to death. But they presented no evidence, or certainly not enough to warrant the death penalty. So I tried to talk to the man, to get him to tell me his side of the story. I had heard rumours about him, how he had marched into the city in a kind of poor-man’s version of a victory march, riding on a donkey of all things. “Are you the King of the Jews?” I asked him. But he didn’t give me a straight answer, saying something about not being the kind of king I was thinking of, and about being called to speak the truth. I asked, “But what is truth? Whose truth do you mean?” He didn’t answer. I didn’t want to put an innocent man to death; I wanted no part in this scheme by the Temple leaders, who clearly had some grudge to settle. So I turned the decision over to the crowd, asking them whom they wanted released: Barabbas the rebel and murderer or the so-called King of the Jews. They shouted for Barabbas to be released. “Then what should I do with the King of the Jews?” The mob shouted, “Crucify him!”I tried to ask again what his crimes were, but they simply shouted for him to be crucified. Well, the crowd had spoken. So I washed my hands of the whole mess, and handed him over to be crucified.*

**Hymn – HWB 252 – O Sacred Head Now Wounded**

**The Crucifixion (Mark 15:16-41)**

16Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. 17And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. 18And they began saluting him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 19They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. 20After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

21They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. 22Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). 23And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. 24And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

25It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26The inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” 27And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. 29Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30save yourself, and come down from the cross!” 31In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

33When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 35When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” 36And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” 37Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

40There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

**Special Music**

MARY MAGDALENE: *We couldn’t look away. Even though this was a living nightmare, that our dear Rabbi should be crucified, we couldn’t leave his side. So we women disciples stood at a distance, so that at least he would not be alone while he died this cruel and unjust death. I cried from anger as much as grief – how could Judas have betrayed him like this? How could the Temple leaders have been so threatened by him that they thought he deserved this? How could Pilate, the Roman governor, have gone along with the crowd to have him killed this way? No one should have to die feeling utterly forsaken, even by God. Especially Jesus, who was such a thoughtful and gentle soul, who made all of us feel worthy and beloved. As his friend and disciple, it was almost too much for me to bear.*

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS: *It’s a parent’s worst fear to outlive their child, never mind to have their child taken from them, tortured to death by the occupiers. And yet here was my child, my first-born son, hung high upon a cross. I had known that Jesus’ teaching was risky – of course his messages of shalom and blessing of the poor would be seen by some as radical, even revolutionary. But anyone who knew him also knew that he would never instigate violence – his was the way of peace. Perhaps it was my fault, for raising him the way I did. I could have taught him to keep his head down and accept the way things are, occupation and all. But I taught him our Hebrew traditions, our hope for God’s peace and justice to flow like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Instead, he was met with violence and betrayal, and his own blood was spilled. “How long, O Lord?” I prayed while he was suffering. And when it was over, I had no more words left; only tears.*

**Jesus’ Burial (Mark 15:42-47)**

42When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. 45When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. 46Then Josephbought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. 47Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

OUR FEARS TODAY: *Our fears today are not much different from those of our forebears in faith. We, too, are afraid long-awaited justice and peace will not come, or are threatened by unexpected change. We, too, are afraid of broken relationships and violence that tear us apart. We, too, are afraid of suffering and death. Today, our God is dead and buried, and we are afraid that we have been forsaken.*

*Now, in the shadows of our own Gethsemane, let us bring our fears to the foot of the cross, offering them to be crucified and buried with Christ. In the pew in front of you, there are slips of paper and pens. We invite you to write down one of your own fears – something we have named during Lent or this evening, or something else. Once you have written down one of your fears, we invite you to place it in the offering plate as it is passed around. Once all fears have been gathered, we will lay them at the foot of the cross, and leave this place in darkness and silence. As you write, please join in singing:*

**Hymn - Jesus, Remember Me – HWB 247 (repeating)**

[FEARS WRITTEN DOWN, COLLECTED BY USHERS, AND LAID AT FOOT OF CROSS]