

In the other gospels Jesus' death is accompanied by signs and disturbances, but in John the sign is in the body of Jesus itself: when his side is pierced blood and water flow out (19.34). The bones are not broken is another echo of the theme of Jesus as the paschal lamb (cf. Exodus 12.10). In death, Jesus' body continues to be treated with reverence. As Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (unique to John) play their part.

## Quotations

### 1

We do not reveal or restore Christ's glory by dismantling the cross, but rather by seeing the glory of love shining from those wounds even as the nails are driven in.

Malcom Guite, 1957–

### 2

The real truth is that while He came to preach the Gospel, His chief object in coming was that there might be a Gospel to preach.

*The atonement; the Congregational Union lectures for 1875 / Robert William Dale. 1829–95*

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Cross; redemptive suffering; paschal mystery; christology

## Closing Prayer

From the throne of grace, O God of mercy, at the hour your Son gave himself to death, hear the devout prayer of your people.

As he is lifted high upon the cross, draw into his exalted life all who are reborn in the blood and water flowing from his opened side.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our passover and our peace, who lives with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Good Friday*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999. CPL • LBC Year C Good Friday.odt • 2022-04-04*

# Good Friday

## Principal Service readings

Isaiah 52.13-53.12

The Fourth Song of the servant of the Lord

Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me

Hebrews 10.16-25

Confidence in the sacrifice of Christ

John 18.1—19.42

The Passion

## Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

## Gospel Reading

### *The Passion*

After they had eaten the supper, <sup>1</sup>Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. <sup>2</sup>Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' <sup>5</sup>They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus replied, 'I am he.' Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they stepped back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again he asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.' <sup>9</sup>This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, 'I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.' <sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup>Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

<sup>12</sup>So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. <sup>13</sup>First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the

high priest that year. <sup>14</sup>Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

<sup>15</sup>Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, <sup>16</sup>but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup>The woman said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' <sup>18</sup>Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

<sup>19</sup>Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. <sup>20</sup>Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup>Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.' <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?' <sup>24</sup>Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>25</sup>Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, 'You are not also one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' <sup>26</sup>One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with him?' <sup>27</sup>Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

<sup>28</sup>Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup>So Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?' <sup>30</sup>They answered, 'If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.' <sup>31</sup>Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.' The Jews replied, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death.' <sup>32</sup>(This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

<sup>33</sup>Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' <sup>35</sup>Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' <sup>36</sup>Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom

Pilate hands Jesus over 'to them' (the priests) to be crucified (19.16a). All four gospels mention the charge (*titulus*) listing Jesus as a would-be 'King of the Jews', which was fastened to the cross, but only John sees its potential for proclamation. So, in all the relevant languages of the empire, Hebrew, Latin and Greek the kingship of Jesus is affirmed (19.20). Despite objections from the Jews, Pilate is resolute: 'What I have written I have written' (19.22).

The other gospels make an implicit allusion to Psalm 22.19 in describing the division of Jesus' clothes; John makes the allusion explicit, but with particular attention to the seamless tunic that was not divided (19.23-24). Is there perhaps a reference here to the seamless garment of the high priest (as described by Josephus)? Or perhaps the seamless tunic is a symbol of unity.

In the Marcan/Matthean tradition the women who followed Jesus were watching from afar, and all the disciples had fled (cf. Mark 14.50). In John's account, though, not only are the women placed at the foot of the cross, but the Mother of Jesus is included among them, together with the Beloved Disciple (19.25-26). John names both of them only by title (cf.2.1). They meet at the last moment of Jesus' death. John is not so interested in their historical identity, but in the symbolism of the occasion. In John the dying Jesus leaves his natural mother as the mother of the Beloved Disciple, and that disciple is designated as her son, thus becoming the brother of Jesus. The cross becomes the birthplace of the church.

A sponge full of common wine is presented to Jesus (19.29-30). In Mark and Matthew this is on a reed, but in John it is hyssop, a fern-like herb that is less suitable than a reed, but is symbolic, as it was used used to sprinkle the blood of the paschal lamb on the doorposts of the Israelite houses in Exodus 12.22.

In John, Jesus cry of 'I thirst' is uttered as part of the fulfilment of the scriptures (19.28), rather than as a cry of desperation. And when he takes the wine, he declares, 'It is finished' as he hands over his spirit (19.30). This calmness is very different from the agony shown in Matthew and Mark, where Jesus expresses his sense of being forsaken.

before Annas (18.20-21), in which his interrogators are aggravated to the point of abusing him (18.22). The interrogation leaves Annas, not Jesus, with the embarrassing and unanswered question (18.23).

While Jesus is being interrogated, Simon Peter is present in the scene, and showing his weakness. Although he is now mentioned as the one who cut off the high priest's servant's ear in the garden (18.10), he now denies that he was even in the garden (18.26-27). Only in the fourth gospel does 'another disciple have a role in Peter's denial (18.15), presumably the disciple 'Jesus loved'. Whatever his identity, he was the principal witness for the Johannine community (19.35; 21.24). The gospel writer wants to show this hero (whether one of the twelve or not), who only appears from chapter 13 onwards, at the Last Supper (13.23-26), in the process against Jesus (18.15-16), at the crucifixion (19.26-27), at the empty tomb (20.2-10), and at the appearance of the risen Jesus (21.7, 20-23). He is a trustworthy witness.

When the fourth gospel writer turns the spotlight from Peter's denial to the ongoing process against Jesus, he doesn't, as in the synoptics, portray Jesus as silent before Pilate who is interrogating Jesus before the Jewish priests. But rather, in an elaborate setting, with the priests in the crowd outside. Jesus is inside and Pilate shuttles back and forth between them, and we see the contrast between the outcry outside and the calm dialogue within. Jesus is far from silent – he eloquently answers the false charges. He doesn't refuse the title 'King of the Jews' (18.33), but says that the real reason he came into the world was not to be a king but to bear witness to the truth (18.37). It seems that Pilate is on trial, not Jesus.

In contrast to Mark and Matthew, John places the scourging and mockery at the centre of the Roman trial (19.1-5), a prelude to the dramatic moment when Jesus is brought out to encounter the crowds outside, the mid-moment of the trial when all three parties meet. John also makes the cries of the people to crucify Jesus the response to Pilate's declaration *Ecce homo*, 'Behold the man'. As Jesus displays the mantle and crown, this is shown to be a rejection by the Jews of their own messianic hopes. In the Johannine account there is no Simon of Cyrene; instead, Jesus carries his own cross (19.17) as a continuing sign that he lays down his own life (10.18).

were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' <sup>37</sup>Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' <sup>38</sup>Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

After he had said this, he went out to the Jewish leaders again and told them, 'I find no case against him. <sup>39</sup>But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' <sup>40</sup>They shouted in reply, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas was a bandit.

<sup>1</sup>Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup>And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup>They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. <sup>4</sup>Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' <sup>5</sup>So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' <sup>6</sup>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.' <sup>7</sup>The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

<sup>8</sup>Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. <sup>9</sup>He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>Pilate therefore said to him, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.' <sup>12</sup>From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.'

<sup>13</sup>When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup>Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' <sup>15</sup>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.' <sup>16</sup>Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; <sup>17</sup>and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup>There they

crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. <sup>19</sup>Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' <sup>20</sup>Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup>Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews," but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' <sup>23</sup>When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. <sup>24</sup>So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says,

'They divided my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.'

<sup>25</sup>And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' <sup>27</sup>Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

<sup>28</sup>After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup>When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

<sup>31</sup>Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. <sup>32</sup>Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. <sup>33</sup>But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup>Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. <sup>35</sup>(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) <sup>36</sup>These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' <sup>37</sup>And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

<sup>38</sup>After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the

body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. <sup>40</sup>They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup>Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup>And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 18.1—19.42 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

The passion narrative of John is read every year on Good Friday. It is very different from the other passion narratives.

He is a Jesus conscious of his preexistence. Through death, therefore, he is returning to a state he has temporarily left during his stay in this world (17:5). He is not a victim at the mercy of his opponents since he has freely chosen to lay down his life with the utter certitude that he will take it up again (10:17-18). If there is an element of struggle in the passion, it is a struggle without suspense, for the Satanic prince of this world has no power over Jesus (14:30); indeed, Jesus has already conquered the world (16:33). Since the Johannine Jesus is omniscient (2:25; 6:6; etc.), he cannot be caught off guard by what will happen in the passion. He had chosen Judas knowing Judas was going to betray him (6:70-71) and has himself sent Judas off on his evil mission (13:27-30).

Raymond E. Brown<sup>2</sup>

Jesus is not surprised by Judas when he is in the garden (18.1), as he is in the Marcan version of the scene. Rather, he goes out to meet Judas whom he has been expecting (18.4). The Jesus who confronts Judas has not been on the ground in Gethsemane praying that the cup will pass from him, as in the synoptics. He and the Father are one (10.30); he has specifically rejected that the Father should save him from this hour (12.27), and he is eager to drink the cup the Father has given him (18.11).

In the 'trial' section of the passion, John shows, not a formal procedure before Caiaphas as in Mark and Matthew, but a police interrogation

1 *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

2 *Christ in the gospels of the liturgical year* / Raymond E. Brown. – Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2008. – ISBN-13 978-0-8146-1860-8. – p.183.