Good Friday
Service of Seven Words
The celebration of Good Friday as a separate day developed in fourth-century Jerusalem. Already by the middle of the fourth century a full religious observance of Good Friday was to be found. Prior to that time, however, what is now Good Friday was part of the fast which preceded Easter—a single festival which commemorated our redemption won by Jesus. When Good Friday emerged as a separate day commemorative of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, it became at once the church’s great day of mourning. The name Good Friday is of English origin and is possibly derived from “God’s Friday” as “good-bye” is derived from “God be with you.”

Good Friday is full of apparent contradictions. It is different from a funeral. In the case of a funeral, even though we celebrate the blessings of someone’s earthly life and the blessings of eternal life, we mourn the fact of his or her death. It is the one thing we wish we could forget. In the case of Jesus, his death is the very thing we gather to celebrate and remember. In fact, we prolong our remembrance. We dwell on the details. To top it off, we call it “good.” Today is full of both solemnity and praise, sorrow and joy, and horror and beauty. Good Friday is full of apparent contradictions.

These contradictions are resolved by the fact that we already know how Good Friday fits within the story of our salvation. We know why Jesus willingly and obediently endured the agony of the cross. It was not a tragic miscarriage of justice. It was not a glaring example of oppression of the weak at the hands of the strong. Jesus suffered this punishment vicariously. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53). He placed himself under a curse in order to set us free from ours (Galatians 3).

We also know how Jesus endured the cross. He did so successfully. Before entrusting his life and the final verdict about his work to his Father, Jesus proclaimed, “It is finished” (John 19:30). That same good news was echoed by the Father as “the light of life” (Isaiah 53:11) shone forth from Easter’s empty tomb. Centuries later, as promised, that same good news is proclaimed to “people yet unborn: He has done it!” (Psalm 22:31).

The apparent contradictions of Good Friday are resolved in the hidden reality of this day. At the beginning of Lent, we saw how Jesus was obedient to the law. As we reach Lent’s culmination, we see him obedient to death in exactly the same way: vicariously and victoriously. His punishment is our peace. (Christian Worship Commentary Year C, p. 156.)

Light of Light, no brightness cheering
rends the gloom of that dread day
till your mercy’s beams appearing,
drive the clouds of sin away.

Come, O Christ, and grant us freedom
by your bondage on the tree.
Lead our steps to that fair kingdom
where you reign eternally.

— Herman G. Stuemfle, Jr.

For Martin Luther, “On the Cross of Christ,” see page 53.
PATH FOR WORSHIP

This service centers around the seven statements our Savior spoke as he hung on the cross. The basic order of service has its roots in the devotional orders that the early Christian church used on Good Friday. The devotions were held during the three hours that Jesus hung on the cross. Our service today brings us to the foot of the cross to hear these words of Jesus and to ponder them anew through Word and prayer. Each candle that adorns the altar represents one of the “Words” spoken by Jesus from the cross.

Gather

Worshipers gather in silence.

A bell is tolled seven times to begin the service.

The minister enters in silence.

READING Isaiah 52:13—53:12 (EHV)

13 Look, my servant will succeed. He will rise. He will be lifted up. He will be highly exalted.
14 Just as many were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured that he did not look like a man, and his form was disfigured more than any other person—
15 so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him, because they will see something they had never been told before, and they will understand something they had never heard before.

Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root from dry ground. He had no attractiveness and no majesty. When we saw him, nothing about his appearance made us desire him.
3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man who knew grief, who was well acquainted with suffering. Like someone whom people cannot bear to look at, he was despised, and we thought nothing of him.
Surely he was taking up our weaknesses, and he was carrying our sufferings. We thought it was because of God that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, but it was because of our rebellion that he was pierced. He was crushed for the guilt our sins deserved. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all have gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the LORD has charged all our guilt to him.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent in front of its shearsers, he did not open his mouth.

He was taken away without a fair trial and without justice, and of his generation, who even cared? So, he was cut off from the land of the living. He was struck because of the rebellion of my people.

They would have assigned him a grave with the wicked, but he was given a grave with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, and no deceit was in his mouth.

Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and to allow him to suffer.

Because you made his life a guilt offering, he will see offspring. He will prolong his days, and the LORD’s gracious plan will succeed in his hand.

After his soul experiences anguish, he will see the light of life. He will provide satisfaction. Through their knowledge of him, my just servant will justify the many, for he himself carried their guilt.

Therefore I will give him an allotment among the great, and with the strong he will share plunder, because he poured out his life to death, and he let himself be counted with rebellious sinners. He himself carried the sin of many, and he intercedes for the rebels.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.
Seven Words

First Word  

Two other men, who were criminals, were led away with Jesus to be executed. When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified him there with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” They cast lots to divide his garments among them.

For dogs have surrounded me. A band of evil men have has encircled me. Psalm 22:16 (EHV)  
They have pierced my hands and my feet.

They divide my garments among them. Psalm 22:18 (EHV)  
For my clothing they cast lots.

He himself carried the sin of many, Isaiah 53:12 (EHV)  
and he intercedes for the rebels.

Gracious Savior, you did not strike back with revenge against your enemies as they ridiculed and crucified you, but prayed for their forgiveness. In your compassion, pardon us for our secret sins and sins we do not discern. Enlighten us to know and do you will. Amen.
The people stood watching. The rulers were ridiculing him, saying, “He saved others. Let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!” The soldiers also made fun of him. Coming up to him, they offered him sour wine, saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription written above him: “This is the King of the Jews.” One of the criminals hanging there was blasphemying him, saying, “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? We are punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” Jesus said to him, “Amen I tell you: Today you will be with me in paradise.”

All who see me mock me. 

They sneer. They shake their heads.

They say, “Trust in the LORD.” “Let the LORD deliver him. Let him rescue him, if he delights in him.”

Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people. Visit me with your salvation.

Psalm 22:7 (EHV)
Psalm 22:8 (EHV)
Psalm 106:4 (EHV)
Mighty Redeemer, remember us as we walk through the darkest valleys of life and realize that our time on earth is ending. Stay close to us when we feel the pain and loneliness of dying and take away our fears with your certain promise of paradise. Amen.

Third Word

John 19:25–27 (EHV)

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

This child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel

and for a sign that is spoken against,

so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

Who is my mother? And who are my brothers?

Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven

is my brother and sister and mother.
Precious Jesus, you consider us friends and care about the needs of our bodies and souls. Keep us in your care as we walk the road of life and provide the blessings we need to gain safety, contentment, and joy in your service.

Amen.

**Fourth Word**  
Matthew 27:45, 46 (*EHV*)

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
*Psalm 22:1 (*EHV*)

My groaning does nothing to save me.

My God, I call out by day, but you do not answer.  
*Psalm 22:2 (*EHV*)

I call out by night, but there is no relief for me.

Here is what will happen on that day, declares the LORD God:  
*Amos 8:9 (*EHV*)

I will make the sun set at noon,  
and I will bring darkness on the earth when it should be light.
Lord Jesus, you endured the horrific penalty of our sins as your Father turned his face from you on the cross. Compel us to see in your sacrifice the dreadful nature of sin and call us to acknowledge the amazing depth of your love. Overcome our shame, dear Savior, and give us grateful faith.

Amen.

Fifth Word

John 19:28, 29 (EHV)

After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

Commentary, followed by...

My strength is dried up like broken pottery,
   and my tongue is stuck to the roof of my mouth.
You lay me in the dust of death.

I am worn out from my crying.
My throat is sore.

They put bitter poison in my food.
For my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.
Dear Jesus, as our brother on earth you endured the agony of pain that besieged your body when your sacrifice was complete. Knowing our experiences, hover over us with your care and compassion when our bodies and hearts are hurting. Provide us with strength that we may confess you with confidence and power.
Amen.

Sixth Word

John 19:30 (EHV)

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished!” Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

Because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will release your prisoners from the waterless pit.

I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day.
I will forgive their guilt, and I will remember their sins no more.
Worship Notes

Gracious Redeemer, you paid the full price for our redemption and have released us forever from the hold of Satan, the power of sin, and the fear of death. Protect us from the devil’s claim that we need to do more and from the accusation of our consciences that we have not done enough. Lead us to place our entire confidence in you and to live our lives secure in your grace.

Amen.

Seventh Word


It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun was darkened. Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

Into your hand I commit my spirit.

Psalm 31:5 (EHV)

You have redeemed me, O LORD, the God of truth.

For he has not despised nor detested the affliction of the afflicted. Psalm 22:24 (EHV)

He has not hidden his face from him,

but when he cried out to him, he heard.
He poured out his life to death, and he let himself be counted with rebellious sinners.

**He himself carried the sin of many, and he intercedes for the rebels.**

Loving Savior, at the moment of your death you gave yourself into the loving hands of your Father. As we close our eyes in death, lead us to commit our bodies and souls to him who has summoned us by name and made us his own because of you and your love. Then, we pray, let us depart in peace.

**Amen.**

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**Stand**

**READING**

John 19:31–42 (EHV)

Since it was the Preparation Day, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses over the Sabbath (because that Sabbath was a particularly important day). They asked Pilate to have the men’s legs broken and the bodies taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who was crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other man.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear. Immediately blood and water came out. The one who saw it has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. Indeed, these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, “Not one of his bones will be broken.” Again another Scripture says, “They will look at the one they pierced.”
After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him remove Jesus’ body. When Pilate gave him permission, he came and took Jesus’ body away. Nicodemus, who earlier had come to Jesus at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-two pounds. They took Jesus’ body and bound it with linen strips along with the spices, in accord with Jewish burial customs.

There was a garden at the place where Jesus was crucified. And in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. So they laid Jesus there, because it was the Jewish Preparation Day, and the tomb was near.

Be seated

Silence for meditation

HYMN

Hymnal 437 | Rest, O Christ, from All Your Labor

1 Rest, O Christ, from all your labor; sleep with-
2 Peace at last from all your anguish, wounds in
3 Help us keep this solemn Sabbath as we

in your borrowed tomb. Foes have crucified and
hands and feet and side. Enemies no longer
wait for Easter dawn. Earth’s dark night of sin is

bound you fast within death’s narrow room.
mock you, scourged, abandoned, crucified.
passing; death’s long reign will soon be gone.

Pilate’s guards stand watching, waiting where they
Faithful women gather spices, weep for
Christ, in whom the new creation rises

rolled the sealing stone. All unseen another
you whom sin has slain. Though they mourn, the God who
brighter than the sun: may we, as we watch for
Stand

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this, your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

LORD’S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
    thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,
    forever and ever. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, go in peace.

Amen.

The minister exits in silence.

Worshipers may remain for prayer and meditation before dispersing quietly.

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