

**Welcome:**

A reflective service: readings, prayers, reflections woven throughout. The service will end with a song, finish with a slide. No benediction, no waving or chatting with others after. The Zoom meeting will end and so will our worship. It will leave us feeling incomplete, empty and a bit disappointed. Just like the death of Jesus did for the disciples.

**Call to Worship:**

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Let us hear about the God of Love and love of God:

**Reading:**

*"After Jesus had spoken these words, he 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, "Whom are you looking for?" <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, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he." (John 18:1-8)*

- Jesus was in the Garden with his closest friends praying to His Father.
- It was a quiet, safe, serene and sacred location.
- This garden was a place of refuge for Him. Jesus had been there many times before with His disciples.
- This garden was a place of fellowship for Him – fellowship with God and fellowship with His closest friends.
- This garden was a place of prayer.
- The garden was a place of rest.
- This garden was a place for teaching.
- Now it has become a place of betrayal.
- A place of intrusion.
- A place of violence.
- As Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested by the soldiers, we see the man who only promoted Shalom has surrendered to hostility.
- The man who loved absolutely everyone was bound by hands of hatred and jealousy.
- The man who did nothing wrong became the victim of wrongful accusation.

**Reflection:**

1. Where have you noticed intrusion, intensity, disloyalty, hatred, jealousy or wrongful accusation in our world?
2. Where have you noticed these things in the garden of your own soul?

**Prayer:**

Jesus, as we hear this story today, we imagine an old, gnarly garden with weathered trees providing extensive shade; exposed roots creating crevices; and rocks large enough to sit on. And here, in this garden you found rest, you prayed to your father, you taught your disciples and fellowshiped with

your closest friends. When the interruption became an invasion, and the invasion became hostile, you responded with grace, dignity and strength.

Jesus, today our world has been invaded and Hollywood has not scripted a saviour to defend it. We too feel as though our places of fellowship have been interrupted and our safety is in question. The places where we found shade from the chaotic world and enjoyed conversation with others has been invaded by a hostile virus. Holy Spirit give us the heart and mind of Christ that we might also respond with grace, dignity and strength.

We pray for all people throughout the world who have had their occasions for fellowship interrupted. For those who can no longer work, those who at this time cannot celebrate marriage, or other family gatherings, for those who are unable to attend the funeral service of a loved one, or go on planned a holiday, on simply go to the shops when and where they want. Lord, meet with them and cause the power of your presence to embrace and comfort them; and help them to find other ways of connecting and enjoying abundant life.

We pray for all who have found themselves bound by financial difficulty, arrested by a cruel virus and let down by circumstances outside of their control. Jesus, you know what it's like to be in this situation, so would you empower them with your strength, grace and dignity during this season and give them what they need to be safe and well.

For those who are in leadership, we ask that you give them wisdom, courage and strength. Protect their health and wellbeing and release insight and understanding into their hearts and minds so that they make decisions that are just and appropriate for the situations they face.

For all who are working in health care – we ask that you protect and strengthen them. Give them wisdom, patience and rest. Help them to serve with dignity and grace; and Holy Spirit, cause the cure for Covid 19 to be developed with accuracy and released swiftly throughout the world.

Lord, we need a fresh outpouring of your Spirit to renew, restore and refresh our weary and troubled earth.

So today we ask that you bless all who call BRUC their home, release healing, grace, joy and peace. And bless the offering we have given, and your faithful servants who have contributed. Amen

#### **Reflection:**

- The Jewish nation had their own version of a supreme court, called the Sanhedrin. It was headed by the High Priest, who this year was Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin had religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction.
- In this passage they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Palace where Pilate was staying.
- The Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus for blasphemy which was a capital offense in Israel (Lev. 24:16). However, the Sanhedrin could not pass the death sentence for this offense without Roman agreement, and there was little hope of Pilate giving them permission to kill him.
- Therefore, the Jewish leaders decided to charge Jesus with treason against Rome, by declaring that Jesus claimed to be a king.

#### **Reading:** (John 18:28-35) TPT

*"Before dawn they (the Sanhedrin) took Jesus from his trial before Caiaphas to the Roman governor's palace. Now the Jews refused to go into the Roman governor's residence to avoid ceremonial defilement before eating the Passover meal. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate came outside where they waited and asked them pointedly, "Tell me, what exactly is the accusation that you bring against this man? What has he done?"*

*<sup>30</sup> They answered, "We wouldn't be coming here to hand over this 'criminal' to you if he wasn't guilty of some wrongdoing!"*

*<sup>31</sup> Pilate said, "Very well, then you take him yourselves and go pass judgment on him according to your Jewish laws!"*

*But the Jewish leaders complained and said, "We don't have legal authority to put anyone to death. You should have him crucified!" <sup>32</sup> (This was to fulfill the words of Jesus when he predicted the manner of death that he would die.)*

<sup>33</sup> Upon hearing this, Pilate went back inside his palace and summoned Jesus. Looking him over, Pilate asked him, "Are you really the king of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus replied, "Are you asking because you really want to know, or are you only asking this because others have said it about me?"

<sup>35</sup> Pilate responded, "Only a Jew would care about this; do I look like a Jew? It's your own people and your religious leaders that have handed you over to me. So tell me, Jesus, what have you done wrong?"

#### **Prayer:**

Jesus, we are so sorry for the false accusations you endured from those who were meant to welcome you, affirm you, protect you and uphold you. We are deeply saddened by the fact that they were the very ones who despised you, disowned you, betrayed you and killed you. Those who should have seen and known the signs that you are the Messiah were the ones whose eyes were dim, and ears were blocked. The people who were entrusted with the holy word of God were the people who denied the love and power of the Word made flesh.

Oh Lord, how many times have our eyes become dim, our ears blocked, and the soil of our hearts become hard and rocky towards you. While we may read this story and shake our heads at the religious leaders, there are times when we haven't been faithful to your mission; we haven't been obedient to your call, and we haven't lived out our baptism which unites us with Christ and with the church.

Father forgive us for our deaf ears, dim eyes and hard hearts. Holy Spirit fill us with your breath of life and season our thoughts, attitudes, words and behaviour, with your holy fire, so that we don't stay the way we are, but we become more like you exhibiting grace, dignity and strength.

Thank you for your forgiveness and for your love and grace that radiates peace and joy in our hearts. Amen.

#### **Affirmation:**

Church let us rejoice in the forgiveness and restoration we have through Christ. Our sins are forgiven – thanks be to God!

- Following His interrogation from Pilate, Jesus was beaten, sentenced to death and crucified:

#### **Reading:** John 19:13-18; 28-30

*"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 Pilate 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."*

*"After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill 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."*

- Jesus, the eternal God, who was there in the beginning, is now hanging on a cross.
- The God who breathed life into Adam, not breathed his last breath, gave up His spirit, and died.
- The most powerful being in all of creation, the God who made heaven and earth has succumbed to a painful, humiliating death.
- The hands that once formed the stars and placed the planets in their orbit have now been pinned to a wooden cross.

- The heart that embraced all people despite their gender, or race, or sickness, or sin, has now stopped beating.
- How can this be?
- How can an eternal, loving, powerful, life-giving God die in such a painful, lonely, humiliating way?
- There is only one reason:

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16)*

- Let me ask you this question, do you truly believe that God loves you so much that He was arrested, bound, beaten and nailed to a cross for you.
- Would you open your hearts to receive the God of love and the love of God given for you!

**Prayer:**

Father God, thank you for always loving me and always forgiving me. Thank you giving your life for me. Today I open my life to receive you and your love for me. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I may know you more and more each day, as I commit myself to loving you and following your ways. Amen.

**Song: “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”,** words and music by Edward Miller, Isaac Watts,  
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