

# Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

## Good Friday Service

Marlene Kropf



***How splendid the cross of Christ!  
It brings life, not death; light, not darkness; paradise, not its loss.  
It is the wood on which the Lord, like a great warrior,  
was wounded in hands and feet and side, but healed thereby our wounds.  
A tree had destroyed us; a tree now brought us life.***

Theodore of Studios, ninth century

### Notes for Leaders:

This service for Good Friday invites worshipers to join Jesus at the cross. Including scripture, silence, much music, and prayers of intercession around the cross, the service begins and ends with a sung affirmation of Jesus' love and provides an opportunity for reflection on God's gracious gift of salvation.

The visual atmosphere for the service is simple and somber. A large standing cross is located in an area where worshipers can easily gather around it. A black cloth is draped across the arms of the cross (if you choose, you can place an underlay of crimson cloth beneath the black cloth and drape it so just a tiny border of crimson is visible). On a table nearby, also covered with a black cloth, is a low, flat, sand-filled container. A large white candle is placed at the center of the container and is lit at the beginning of the service. A basket nearby contains enough small white candles for each worshiper.

The congregation may sing all of the suggested music, or a small ensemble (vocal and/or instrumental) may offer some of the selections.

In Christian tradition, prayers of intercession for the salvation of the world are traditionally offered on Good Friday. It is a significant way for worshipers to join Jesus in his act of self-giving on the cross. During the part of the service called "Praying around the cross," the congregation sings continuously while worshipers come forward, light a small candle at the Christ candle, and kneel at the cross to offer prayers of intercession. When people are finished praying, they place the lit candle in the sand-filled container, return to their seats, and continue singing with the rest of the congregation.

## GATHERING

Hymn	"What wondrous love is this" <i>(unison or solo voice)</i>	530 (st. 1,2)
Opening words		
Leader	On this day we gather to remember Jesus our Savior who loved us and gave himself for us. Let us draw near in full assurance of God's endless love and mercy.	
People	<b>We give our thanks and praise to Jesus Christ who carries our sorrows, heals our wounds, and redeems us from sin and death.</b>	
Old Testament reading	Isaiah 53:1-12	
Hymn	"O sacred Head, now wounded"	252 (st. 1-4)
Opening prayer		
Leader	O Majesty, O Magnificence, O Mystery, come! Be hammer, and break our indifference. Be sun, and splinter our shadows. Be wind, and scatter our despair. Yes, in the dry country of our souls, Let your grace rain upon us so we take root in you and grow. Make of us trees strong in all seasons, bearing good fruit, giving shade to all weariness and shelter to those who are lost. So we pray to the glory of Jesus Christ who made the crosstree green and flourishing forever. Amen. <sup>1</sup>	

## SINGING AT THE CROSS

Hymns	"Alas! And did my Savior bleed?"	253 (st. 1,2)
	"Ah, holy Jesus"	254
	"Jesus, remember me"	247
	"Jesus, keep me near the cross"	617 (st. 1-3)
	<i>(sung very slowly in black gospel style)</i>	
	"Open are the gifts of God"	255

## HEARING THE WORD

Gospel reading	The Passion from Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 27:1-60) <i>(at the conclusion of verse 50, the large white Christ candle is snuffed out)</i>	
Silence		

Hymn "When I survey" 259

### PRAYING AROUND THE CROSS

Epistle reading Hebrews 10:16-23  
(*large white Christ candle is re-lit*)

Prayer of confession 698

Hymn "Kyrie eleison" 144

Silence

Words of assurance 706

Prayers of intercession around the cross with "Behold the Lamb of God"  
*Hymnal Subscription Service 920*

### SENDING

Epistle reading Romans 8:31b-39

Hymns of love to Christ

"O Love, that will not let me go" 577

"My Jesus, I love thee" 522

"Christ, we do all adore thee" 105

Words of grace

Leader

In paradise of old the wood stripped me bare.  
Now the wood of the cross that clothes us  
with the garment of life  
has been set up in the midst of the earth,  
and the whole world is filled with boundless joy.<sup>ii</sup>

Hymn "What wondrous love is this" 530

Benediction

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from Arnold Kenseth, "O Majesty, O Magnificence, O Mystery," cited in *Gifts of Many Cultures: Worship Resources for the Global Community*, edited by Maren C. Tirabassi and Kathy Wonson Eddy (United Church Press, 1995).

<sup>ii</sup> Exaltation from the cross from the Orthodox liturgy, *A Triduum Sourcebook*, edited by Gabe Huck and Mary Ann Simcoe (Liturgy Training Publications, 1983).