

THE FIRST 15

Friday, March 29, 2024

Today is Good Friday, March 29 and today we come to Golgotha and the cross.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and gracious God, I seek you in these moments of morning silence. As I read the account of Jesus' last week on earth, I listen for the particular message you have for me today. Speak to me through the power of your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "You have said so," Jesus replied. Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. "Crucify him!" they shouted. "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Mark 15:1-2,6-15

REFLECTION

Everyday during Holy Week we have read scripture from the happenings of that same day of Jesus' last week on earth. Today we come to the events of the crucifixion. After sharing a meal with Jesus in the upper room, Judas left the dinner table to betray him. The remaining disciples sung a hymn together and walked to the Mount of Olives to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus asked Peter, James and John to stay with him and keep watch while he prayed, but they failed him and fell asleep.

Judas arrived in the darkness with a mob armed with swords and clubs. He pre-arranged a signal with the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law. "The one I kiss is the man, arrest him" (Mark 14:44). Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The authorities seized Jesus and arrested him. All the disciples deserted and fled in fear. The authorities took Jesus to the high priest to be tried before the Sanhedrin. They condemned him to be worthy of death and held him in a cell until early the next day.

In the morning on the day of crucifixion, the religious authorities sent Jesus to the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate, to be criminally sentenced by the Roman government. I find myself as one more person in the great crowd of people gathered outside the Roman prison. I

recognize people in the crowd who recently waved palm branches and spread cloaks on the road shouting Hosanna as Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey - a mere six days ago. I have the opportunity to request Jesus be released, but a murderous insurrectionist named Barabbas is chosen instead. The energy of the crowd is intense, those who once shouted Hosanna, shout "crucify him!" Crucify Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of us all.

The day of Christ's suffering has arrived. The soldiers mock him in the Praetorium putting a purple robe on him and a crown of thorns. He is forced to carry his cross to Golgotha (the place of the skull) and the men cast lots for his clothing. The written notice of the charge against him is posted above the cross "The King of the Jews". Passersby hurl insults at him and mock him, calling him to save himself and come down from the cross. He suffers a brutally painful, torturous death, hanging for hours until he finally breathes his last. The curtain of the temple is torn in two from top to bottom.

Ask: What does the account of the crucifixion of Jesus reveal to me? Where do I find myself in the story and what does that tell me about myself?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Savior Jesus, thank you for your willing sacrifice giving yourself out of love for me. Let me never take for granted the suffering you endured for the sake of my soul. Your journey to the cross was made for the salvation of the world. You overcame death and sin so that I could find life and peace. Holy Spirit, comfort my aching heart as I go about this Friday that we call "good" and recall the horrible circumstances of the suffering and death of my beloved Savior and Lord. Dark sadness overwhelms this day, as the Son of God laid in a tomb. The promise of the resurrection is what makes this day good. Jesus endured death for me, so that I can live life with him. Amen.