

E-Series

Friday



26 As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then " 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' 31 For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" 32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." 36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." 38 There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews. 39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. " 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." 44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. 47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. **—Luke 23:26-49**

Once again, I will turn my keyboard over to my friend, The Reverend Dr. James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC for his reflections on each day of this holiest of weeks.

Good Friday? Seems like it should be Bad Friday, Tragic Friday, the Worst Friday Ever. But this is the paradox of Christianity: God's power is "made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

"At the right time, died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Good Friday is a day to check your watch, between 6 and 9 in the morning when Jesus was on trial, at noon, and again at 3 in the afternoon, when he breathed his last, and as it grows dark – and pause to consider the sufferings, death and burial of our Lord.

In the early morning, Jesus submitted to hard questioning by [Pilate](#), a sham trial, really; Jesus was nonviolent, silent, beautiful. They mocked him, whipped him, pressed a crown of thorns into his brow. "He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, with his stripes we are healed. He was afflicted, yet he opened not his

mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter; they made his grave with the wicked, although he had done no violence" (Isaiah 53).

Beginning later in the morning, extending through mid-afternoon, Jesus was [crucified](#), a horrific form of capital punishment, an excruciating public humiliation designed to intimidate the rabble and keep the peace. The Romans alone wielded the legal authority to crucify. Pilate had crucified quite a few himself.

With little breath left in him, Jesus cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Doesn't this leave us space to cry out in the darkness when we seem forsaken by God? God did not remain safely aloof in heaven, but God entered into human suffering at its darkest. Just as Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross, so God envelops us in a love that even death could not defeat.

Imagine his mother's sorrow. Stop and look at [the painting in our Church](#) of Mary sitting next to the crucified Jesus. As the shadows lengthen this day and night, consider the grief, reflect on your own life, worship the Lord.

James

james@mpumc.org

I have a [YouTube](#) explaining the suffering and death of Christ – just 7 minutes.

Trying to Walk with Jesus this Holy Week,

Pastor Michael