



CHESTER
CATHEDRAL

Devotions for Good Friday

Reflections on the Cross

3rd April 2026
1pm-2pm

WELCOME

We welcome you to Chester Cathedral! It is a place where the mission of the church to proclaim God's love is central, and your welcome presence here for worship helps to strengthen this vital act of witness.

We're a paperless Cathedral and are working environmentally to save paper. The service can be downloaded to your device using the QR code at the back of the nave, or by visiting [Service Information for Chester Cathedral - Chester Cathedral](#)

Hymns, readings and responses will be presented on the screens.

If you need to leave during the devotions, please do so during a convenient pause in the service or during a hymn.

There are significant periods of silence in this service between each section for your own reflection and prayer.

DEVOTIONS FOR GOOD FRIDAY

We begin in silence with all seated.

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love
towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow
the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers
of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

I. God so loved the world

We adore you, O Christ,
and we bless you;
**by your holy cross,
you have redeemed the world.**

Bible reading

Jesus said to Nicodemus ‘Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘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.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil

hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

John 3:11-21

Please stand, if able, to sing.

Hymn

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O, who am I, that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh, and die?

He came from his blest throne,
salvation to bestow:
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
but O, my Friend, my Friend indeed,
who at my need his life did spend!

Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!' is all their breath,
and for his death they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
themselves displease, and 'gainst him rise.

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes,
that he his foes from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,
my Lord on earth might have;
in death no friendly tomb,
but what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heav'n was his home;
but mine the tomb wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine!
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.

Samuel Crossman c.1625-84

LOVE UNKNOWN

John Ireland 1879-1962

Please be seated.

2. Taking up our cross

We adore you, O Christ,
and we bless you;
**by your holy cross,
you have redeemed the world.**

Bible reading

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

‘For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.’

Matthew 16:21-28

Please stand, if able, to sing.

Hymn

Drop, drop, slow tears,
and bathe those beauteous feet,
which brought from heaven,
the news and Prince of peace.

Cease not, wet eyes,
his mercies to entreat;
to cry for vengeance
sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
nor let his eye see sin,
but through my tears.

Phineas Fletcher 1582-1650

SONG 46

Orlando Gibbons 1583-1625

Please be seated.

Bible reading

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

Matthew 27:45

Poem

Still For Good Friday

This day
let all stand still
in silence,
in sorrow.

Sun and moon
be still.

Earth
be still.

Still
the waters.

Still
the wind.

Let the ground
gape in stunned
lamentation.

Let it weep
as it receives
what it thinks
it will not
give up.

Let it groan
as it gathers
the One
who was thought
forever stilled.

Time
be still.

Watch
and wait.

Still.

Jan Richardson

Silence is kept.

3. The road to Jerusalem

We adore you, O Christ,
and we bless you;
**by your holy cross,
you have redeemed the world.**

Bible reading

Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.' But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Luke 18:31-34

Please stand, if able, to sing.

Hymn

○ dearest Lord, thy sacred head
with thorns was pierced for me;
○ pour thy blessing on my head
that I may think for thee.

○ dearest Lord, thy sacred hands
with nails were pierced for me;
○ shed thy blessing on my hands
that they may work for thee.

○ dearest Lord, thy sacred feet
with nails were pierced for me;
○ pour thy blessing on my feet
that they may follow thee.

○ dearest Lord, thy sacred heart
with spear was pierced for me;
○ pour thy Spirit in my heart
that I may live for thee.

Henry Ernest Hardy 1869-1946

BELMONT

ad. from William Gardiner 1770-1853

Sacred Melodies 1812

Please sit.

Bible reading

Many women were also there, looking on
from a distance; they had followed Jesus
from Galilee and had provided for him.

Matt 27:55

Poem

Present

It's not the sear of scorching heat
that makes sweat run, darkens spilt blood,
but the chill that grips my heart,
roots my bones to the spot.

It's not the dizzying wheel of birds,
crowd's relentless jostle,
but the stillness of nailed feet
that once walked on water.

It's not the solidity of hammered wood,
Cross plunged into hard earth,
it's the hollowing out of hope within,
void deeper than tears.

It's not the contempt of gloating shouts,
superior sneers, crude jeers,
it's the quietness of the living word
who holds his peace.

It's not the brutality of bristling spears,
an army's might to crush, to crucify,
but Love's endurance, broken-bodied,
whole in grace and truth.

This Love calls me, powerless
except to be present,
beyond where I would go,
to stay with him.

Even here.

Julia McGuinness

Silence is kept.

4. Judas' betrayal

We adore you, O Christ,
and we bless you;
**by your holy cross,
you have redeemed the world.**

Bible reading

Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people.

Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Luke 22:1-6

Please stand, if able, to sing.

Hymn

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

O sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

O sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they pierced him

in the side?

Were you there when they pierced him

in the side?

O sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they pierced him

in the side?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

O sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

O sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when he rose
from out the tomb?
Were you there when he rose
from out the tomb?
O sometimes it causes me
to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when he rose
from out the tomb?

Trad.

American Spiritual melody

Please sit.

Bible reading

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 19:25b

Poem

Mary Speaks

O you who bear the pain of the whole earth,
I bore you.
O you whose tears
give human tears their worth,
I laughed with you.
You, who, when your hem is touched,
give power,
I nourished you.
Who turn the day to night in this dark hour,

light comes from you.
O you who hold the world in your embrace,
I carried you.
O you who laughed and ate
and walked the shore,
I played with you.
And I, who with all others, died for,
now I hold you.
May I be faithful to this final test,
in this last time I hold my child, my son,
His body close enfolded to my breast,
the holder held: the bearer bare.
Mourning to joy: darkness to mourn.
Open, my arms: your work is done.

Madeleine L'Engle 1918-2007

*Silence is kept until the beginning of the
Liturgy of Good Friday at 2pm.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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