



## Holy Week Bible Study

### Links to Bible readings for Good Friday

[Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#)

[Psalm 22](#)

[Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9](#)

[John 18:1-19:42](#)

### Gathering Prayer

Insults, torture,  
mocking, whipping,  
accusations, beatings,  
shouts of 'Crucify! Crucify!'

A journey to a hill,  
the carrying of a cross,  
wood, nails and human flesh  
hammered together.

The most awful of days!  
In the middle of it all, Jesus,  
the one who was innocent,  
but the one who died.

Father,  
we have come together today,  
to give thanks to you for all your goodness,  
and to share with you our hopes and needs;  
help us to know that you are here,  
and that you remain with us always.  
Amen.

### Introduction

Holy week reminds us of numerous key elements of our faith. In the gospel readings alone, the anointing of Jesus, The visit of the Greeks, the first Last Supper and the washing of feet. The two that arguably are most acknowledged are the darkness of Good Friday and the light of the Resurrection.

In my mind, one cannot acknowledge the glorious resurrection without first acknowledging the darkness of Good Friday. Since it is not yet Friday, this week we will have a look at Good Friday and what it means for us.

### Good Friday Gospel Reading

*John 18:1–19:42*

**18** 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. So if you are looking for me, let these men go."<sup>9</sup> This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me."<sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus.<sup>11</sup> Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

<sup>12</sup> So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.<sup>13</sup> First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.<sup>14</sup> Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest,<sup>16</sup> but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in.<sup>17</sup> The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."<sup>18</sup> Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

<sup>19</sup> Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.<sup>20</sup> Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret."<sup>21</sup> Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said."<sup>22</sup> When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?"<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"<sup>24</sup> Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."<sup>26</sup> One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?"<sup>27</sup> Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

<sup>28</sup> Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover.<sup>29</sup> So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"<sup>30</sup> They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you."<sup>31</sup> Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death."<sup>32</sup> (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

<sup>33</sup> Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"<sup>35</sup> Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"<sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."<sup>37</sup> Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king.

For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”<sup>38</sup> Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no case against him.”<sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”<sup>40</sup> They shouted in reply, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a bandit.<sup>1</sup>

### Exegesis

John’s passion narrative begins and ends in gardens, which reminds readers of the disobedience in the Garden of Eden which brought the active force of sin into the world. In the hour of his death, we see Christ exercise complete obedience to and faith in the Father. He says to Simon Peter, “Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?” Like the suffering [servant in Isaiah](#), Jesus is nonviolent. Violence is the territory of those who trust in themselves and not in God.

We also see the violence of social systems here, and not just that of individual people. Jesus is in the shadow of Roman occupation. Pilate’s authority stems from empire, which the mob reminds him of when they tell him, “If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor.” This authority, though, is empty, because it is not from God. Pilate has no true power over Christ and is merely a cog in a system that perpetuates sin and violence. Robbed of his freedom and trapped in a system with the idol of an emperor at its center, Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified.

Despite the emptiness of empire, the narrative is not empty and has truth at its core, just as all of Scripture does. Jesus, as an embodiment of the truth, verbally proclaims it, tells it through his actions, and holds it in his silence throughout the narrative. Pilate’s famous question, “What is truth?” is a question of someone without faith. When the Evangelist brings his voice into the narrative, it is to say that his testimony is true, and he knows it is true.

### Discussion

- What idols do you observe in your life and our social systems?
- Think about the passion narrative in the context of the other readings for today. What comes up for you?
- How would you respond to Pilate’s haunting question?

### We are sent out

Let us pray for the world and its people in their need:  
 Let us pray for politicians, councillors, and all who govern others  
     that they may be able to set a good example,  
     and to serve faithfully and well;  
 Let us pray for each other,  
     our families, friends, and neighbours;  
 Let us think of those who are in hospital and at home,  
     especially ...  
 and we remember those who have died,

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<sup>1</sup> [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

especially ...  
and we pray for those who loved them;  
Lord, hear our prayers and answer them in the right way for us all.

Look at our hands.  
It was hands like ours  
that were nailed to the cross.

Look at our feet.  
It was feet like ours  
the stumbled their way to Calvary.

We look into eyes of our neighbours.  
It was for ones like these,  
that Jesus was crucified.

Look at ourselves  
It was for us  
that Jesus died.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ  
Amen