

Quispamsis United Church

Lent: Chasing the Light

April 7th, 2023 - Good Friday

Liturgical Colour: Black/Red

Presider: Rev. Richard Bowley

Director of Music: Stephen Alexander

Reader: Robert Orchard

Centering Passage: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.*

-Psalm 22:1-2

GATHERING TOGETHER

Lighting of the Christ Candle: The light of Christ reveals who we are, but also the truth of the world around us. May this revealing light show us those things that we have been blind to - whether through intention or ignorance - and guide us to wholeness as a people, as creation.

Opening Music God So Loved the World - Stainer's Crucifixion

Welcome & Lighting of Affirm Candle

Acknowledgement of Territories

Greeting (Responsive):

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy at the Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Call to Worship (Responsive):

From our ordinary lives we come on this day to be together, because today is different.

In the midst of the world which holds the promise of spring and new life, we have come to share a story of betrayal and death.

Come and hear the story, come and share the tragedy, come and embrace the darkness.

And give thanks for the one who carries our sorrows, heals our wounds, and redeems us from sin and death.

We come to worship today, and what we experience is of cosmic importance.

Prayer of Approach

Gracious God, on this day we gather to remember the death of Jesus. He was despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted, yet he was prepared to be wounded for our transgressions. We come overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us, and his commitment to defeat evil, even when that meant his own suffering and his own death. In his willingness to make us righteous he poured himself out to death, even death on a cross, and so, in response to such love and sacrifice, we commit ourselves as his disciples to overcome evil with good, suffering with wholeness, and oppression with justice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn:

Lift High the Cross

VU 151

Refrain:

**Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.**

**Come, Christians, follow where our Saviour trod,
the Lamb victorious, Christ the Son of God. R**

**Led on their way by this triumphant sign,
the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine. R**

**Each newborn servant of the Crucified
bears on the brow the seal of him who died. R**

**Saviour, once lifted on the glorious tree,
your death has brought us life eternally. R**

**So shall our song of triumph ever be
praise to the Crucified for victory. R**

Prayer of Illumination (Unison):

Open us, O Spirit, to the words that will follow. Help us to hear the story, the pain and the brokenness, but also help us to hear the compassion and deep love. Strengthen us, we pray. Encourage us, we pray. AMEN

Scripture: Matthew 27:1-2, 11-31

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time, they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.' Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!'

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Verse:

Were you There?

VU 144 (vs 1)

**Were you there
when they crucified my Lord? (Were you there?)
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes
it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there
when they crucified my Lord? (Were you there?)**

Scripture: Matthew 27:32-44

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's Son." ' The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

Verse:

Were you There?

VU 144 (vs 2)

**Were you there
when they nailed him to the tree? (Were you there?)
Were you there
when they nailed him to the tree?
Oh! Sometimes
it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there
when they nailed him to the tree? (Were you there?)**

Scripture: Matthew 27:45-50

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

Verse:

Were you There?

VU 144 (tune)

**Were you there
when our Saviour cried out loud? (Were you there?)
Were you there
when our Saviour cried out loud?
Oh! Sometimes
it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there
when our Saviour cried out loud? (Were you there?)**

Scripture: Matthew 27:52-56

The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Verse:

Were you There?

VU 144 (tune)

**Were you there
when the earth began to shake? (Were you there?)
Were you there
when the earth began to shake?
Oh! Sometimes
it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there
when the earth began to shake? (Were you there?)**

Scripture: Matthew 27:57-61

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Verse:

Were you There?

VU 144 (vs 5)

**Were you there
when they laid him in the tomb? (Were you there?)
Were you there
when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh! Sometimes
it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there
when they laid him in the tomb? (Were you there?)**

Gift of Music: My Song is Love Unknown (Senior Choir)

Message

Chasing the Light Liturgy (Responsive):

Throughout this season we have been watching as the light of these six candles has gone out, each time reminded of the part that we have played in the diminishing of the light in our lives.

Today one light remains, the light from which all these smaller lights were kindled, the light of Christ. In his life, Jesus embodied the light, giving it strength, guiding people into closer relationships with one another and with God.

Light candle

He reminded us of the power of forgiveness, how it can bring healing to whole communities, to the whole of creation.

Light candle

He showed us that God's promises of life were true, that in him we would have a guide in him for the way forward.

Light candle

He welcomed and embraced people from all walks of life, teaching us that those we might call strangers are our kindred and that we are stronger together.

Light candle

Into the darkest moments of life, he offered the light of hope, encouraging us that even in those times when we cannot imagine a tomorrow, it waits for us, waits to be discovered, because God is already at work in the mystery of what might yet be.

Light candle

He showed us that grace is more than a word. It is a force that has been poured into our lives, over all of us. And it doesn't matter whether we are worthy or not, because we are loved.

Light candle

And he was love. He loved more deeply and fully than we could possibly understand. He showed us ways to love without condition, without restriction.

Light candle

Christ gave us these lights, gives us these lights through his teaching, through his ministry, his healing and his love. Even in his last moments he shares his light with us.

The journey through Lent has been a path through light and darkness.

Today we near the end of that road. Before us is the light of life, and beyond stand the shadows of death.

The strength of light is such that, even when all other lights go out, when darkness seems to gather, it can still show us the way.

Christ gives us more than we ask, and even his death, even when the world quenches that light, he kindles within us new flames, new hope.

(put out candle)

Forgive us, O God, for the ways that we diminish the light of creation and hide the light of Christ within us.

Give us the strength that we need to be bearers of the light, even when we feel like Christ has gone from our lives.

Encourage us to light new lights, to bring new hope.

Inspire us to share that light, that hope, and your deep love with a world wrapped in darkness.

The light of Christ has gone from the world,
And we, his followers, are what remains.

(silent reflection)

Hymn:

Jesus Keep me Near the Cross
**Jesus, keep me near the cross;
there a precious fountain,
free to all, a healing stream,
flows from Calvary's mountain.**

VU 142

[Refrain:]

**In the cross, in the cross,
be my glory ever,
till my raptured soul shall find
rest beyond the river.**

**Near the cross, a trembling soul,
love and mercy found me;
there the bright and morning star
sheds its beams around me. R**

**Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
bring its scenes before me;
help me walk from day to day
with its shadow o'er me. R**

**Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
hoping, trusting ever,
till I reach the golden strand
just beyond the river. R**

Prayers of the People & Sung Lord's Prayer

(VU 959)

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil,
for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.**

Commissioning (Responsive):

Are we to be left in darkness?

The Light of the world has gone.

Is this the Good News?

Is it over?

Benediction

You are invited to remain in reflective prayer, and, when you are ready to leave in silence