



seeking:

Why have you forsaken me?

April 7, 2023 + Good Friday

An asterisk * invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read aloud responses found in **bold**.

We welcome you to First Lutheran Church!

All gather in silence

No one enjoys experiencing sorrow, lament, or grief, yet these are natural parts of the rhythms of life. These moments make us feel vulnerable and exposed so we avoid them, and in doing so, we deny ourselves an important opportunity to meet God in different ways. To be clear, we should not seek out sorrow, lament, or grief, nor should we chase these experiences in order to pass some kind of “test” from God. God does not play games with creation. God does not think so little of our hearts and minds to put us through experiences that cause us harm; rather, in the midst of so much pain in the world, God makes Godself known in the midst of it all.

Our Good Friday service rests in the belief that in places of sorrow, lament, and grief we meet God differently. In our culture of conflict avoidance, we too often rush through these moments, touching down as lightly as possible as we reach out for the new life offered on Easter Sunday. In doing so, we do not give ourselves a chance to meet the God who sits with us in our sorrow.

Welcome and Instructions

Welcome to our service of silence and sorrow on this Good Friday. We are grateful that you have taken the time to gather together. In our liturgy, we will be sharing in times of silence in three minute intervals to symbolize the three hours Jesus suffered on the cross before his death.

During our times of silence, do not worry about controlling your thoughts or blocking out the sounds around us. In a world filled with so much noise, silence can be uncomfortable and startling, but it can also be healing and revelatory. If the time feels long, hear that as a prompting from God to open yourself even more. Tonight, in this silence we meet God in new ways. In this space, you are invited to hold your body and soul in whatever ways you are most comfortable. Listen to your breath, inhale and exhale, and be open to how the Spirit may move your soul.

Throughout the service, we will be prompted into silence with the ringing of a chime and invited back by singing a stanza of “Were You There.” If you would like to sing in harmony with the choir, you are invited now to turn to hymn no. 353 and to refer to it throughout the service.

Opening Silence

Prompt

Let us now fully enter this space of sorrow and silence focused on this question: "What sorrows, mine or the world's, do I bring into this space?"

Response — "Were You There"

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
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?**

Lament and Grace

Prompt

As we enter the final moments of the life of Christ, we seek not to rush to the resurrection but to sit at the foot of the cross—a place where none of us wants to be, but a space many of us know all too well. So here we are, gathered together—in the discomfort and disruption, in the grief and sorrow and in the anger and anguish.

As we gather, we also know that the sorrows of the world are created and reinforced by individuals and communities—with action or inaction, with subtlety or subconsciousness, with intent or impunity. For all the ways that we have added to the sorrow of others or ourselves, for the ways we have sinned we lament and confess. As we enter this time of silence, let us reflect on the question: "How have I, or how have we, added to the sorrow around us—personally, communally, and globally?"

Response — "Were You There"

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
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?**

*Friends, we are forgiven for even our worst thoughts and deeds; we are forgiven our sins, not as humans forgive with limit, but as only God is able to forgive with the Holy One's unimaginable limitlessness. For this we are grateful; **and all God's people say Amen!***

Listen

Prompt

Our scripture readings this day come from Matthew chapter 27 which tells the last moments of the life of Jesus. After each reading, we will have a time of silence and reflection on the question: "How is this sorrow known today?" We will not be sharing, so the Spirit's words to you are yours, and yours alone.

From the Gospel of Matthew: 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.

Let us reflect: "How is this sorrow known today?"

Response — Stanza 1, "Were You There"

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
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?**

From the Gospel of Matthew: 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.

Let us reflect: "How is this sorrow known today?"

Response — "Were You There"

**Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
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?**

From the Gospel of Matthew: 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.

Let us reflect: "How is this sorrow known today?"

Response — "Were You There"

**Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?**

Depart

Prompt

In response to Matthew's gospel, you are invited to bring the sorrows and sufferings of the world to the cross. These can be personal, communal, or global, for no matter the level of pain, God can hold it all. Because sorrow comes in many forms, we will do this in three possible ways: by dropping a stone in this basket by the cross, by writing your prayer on a paper and sticking it to the cross, and/or by extinguishing a candle. As you come forward and leave your sorrow, you are invited to speak it aloud, or simply hold it to yourself. If you prefer to remain in your seat or come to the rail, you can use the stone handed out at the beginning in your hands as you pray or meditate.

After everyone has come forward, another chime will be rung and we will end our time as we started, in silence. After our final three minutes of silence, the chime will be rung three times for the three hours that Christ was on the cross. At the end of the third chime, the altar space will become completely dark, and we will all leave in silence. So let us now offer our sorrows to God.

Response — “Were You There”

Setting by Raymond Haan
Sanctuary Choir; Erik Lutz, cello

*You are invited into a time of silent prayer and reflection in the sanctuary.
Feel free to use the communion rail, and please depart in silence to respect those remaining for meditation.*

Our service continues tomorrow at 7:00 p.m.

Acknowledgements

Liturgy by Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

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Readers: Judy & David Fienen

Musicians: Sanctuary Choir