

Good Friday: Opening Prayer

Jesus, our loving friend, this is not an easy day, it is the day of wood and nails.

It is a strange and bitter irony that the instruments used to bring this day's agony upon you are those that you loved most. Wood and nails were once the tools of your trade, the sound of hammer blows were part of your life. Now they will ensure your death.

Some would have us believe that you came to this death without choice, pre-ordained and pre-programmed, sacrificed to satisfy an angry God's need for retribution, but we have learned differently:

We dare to believe that in those long six hours of your agony, it was the very heart of God being laid bare for all the world for all to see; that on the place of the skull, outside a Middle Eastern town, God was there, present in you, suffering in you, forgiving in you, and loving with you to the end.

Because of you we discover that our parent God is a sufferer too – a crucified God.

And this week we have learned again that what happened in that place and at that time, is limited by neither time nor space: that your Cross placards not only God's love for us but what we do to our God everywhere and always; that wherever we or our institutions inflict hurt upon, or are blind to the suffering of, any child, any woman, any man, any image of God - it happens again; another cross is planted and God suffers again.

Therefore Jesus, humble servant, and lover of our souls, we can only dare to come to this day as penitents, sharply aware of the nails we have held and the hammers we have wielded, and how often we have thought our hands to be clean only because we let our institutions do our crucifying for us.

We need your mercy, Jesus. You are still the Carpenter; by the wood and nails of your Cross, please make us new people.

AMEN