



**April 18, 2025**

**Melville United Church**

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**Melville United Church**

**Good Friday**

**April 18, 2025**

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*Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson*

*Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber*

**Prelude**

**Greeting**

ONE: The grace of Jesus Christ be with you all.

**ALL: And also with you!**

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Land Acknowledgement**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

**Call to Worship**

When we entered Jerusalem, they handed out stars...

**As a symbol of our pilgrimage.**

We held them next to our heart...

**And continued on our journey.**

It's five days later now, and in the distance...

**We hear the sounds of hammers pounding...nails being driven.**

We kneel in silence. We know what it means.

**The best we can do is remain still...**

And pray.

**Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross VU 149**

1. When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.

2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,

Save in the death of Christ, my God:

All the vain things that charm me most,

I sacrifice them to His blood.

3. See from his head, his hands, his feet,

Sorrow and love flow mingled down!

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

**Gathering Prayer (in unison):**

**God of love and gentleness, how do we comprehend such a scene as Golgotha. Against the backdrop of a world of wonder and beauty, here is darkness and brokenness. But all we can do is be here...to sense it...to remember it...and to be changed because of it. Amen.**

**Hymn: Were You There VU 144 (vv. 1, 2, 3 and 5)**

1. 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?

2. 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?

3. 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?

5. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
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?

**Ministry of Music — O The Deep Love of Jesus** *Words by Samuel Trevor Francis. Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Edited and Arranged by Tom Fettke*

**Psalm 22 selected parts — VU 744**

Sung refrain:

***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

**Why are you so far from helping me, from the cry of my distress?**

O my God, I cry out in the daytime, but you do not answer;

**At night also, but I get no relief.**

Sung refrain:

***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***

But you are the holy one, enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

**In you our ancestors trusted—they trusted, and you delivered them.**

They called to you and you rescued them.

**In you they put their trust, and you did not disappoint them.**

Sung refrain:

***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***

Do not be far from me, for trouble is close at hand,

**And there is no one there to help me.**

My heart has melted like wax within my breast,

**My mouth is parched as dry clay.**

They bind my hands and my feet,

**I can count all my bones, while they stand gloating over me.**

They divide my garments among themselves,

**They cast lots for my clothing.**

Sung refrain:

***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***

**Gospel Reading — Matthew 27:45-46** reader *Patty Duncan*

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?"

**Good Friday Dialogue: My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?** (*Martha Duncan and Rev. Tom Watson*)

Tom: The sky was dark that day.

Darker than a thousand nights.

Dark for 3 solid hours in the afternoon, from the sixth hour to the ninth hour.

Darkness over all the land,

While a man hung dying on a Cross.

Martha: Darkness? Why speak we of darkness?

Darkness is unfriendly.

Evil sows its seeds in the darkness.

Doubt spreads like cancer in the darkness.

Darkness brings fear, and loneliness, and forsakenness.

Speak not of darkness!

Speak of light! Or truth! Or love!

Speak of things which inspire the soul,

And lift the human heart to see the grand plans of God

Out of which worlds are born anew.

Besides, what has the darkness of a day more than 20 centuries ago to do with me?

Tom: Ah! But I speak of darkness because this man on the Cross...this is darkness!

Martha: Is he not only one among all the rest

Who suffered the capital punishment of their day...

The eternal fate of anyone who dares to be out of step with their times?

What has his death, his darkness, to do with me?

His life? Perhaps.

An example of humanity in its finest form.

The gracious neighbour, the suffering servant,  
Loving all, caring about all, withholding himself from no person.  
A lesson in idealism.

But an idealism that leads to death...  
Surely that has nothing to do with me.

Tom: You say his death has nothing to do with you? Perhaps not.  
Perhaps not you as an individual. But what about all the others?  
Those who fight afresh each day the hounds that bay at the door?  
Those who struggle unceasingly with loss of plan, and loss of purpose, and loss of hope,  
Seeking to live and keep sane in a world gone mad on power, betrayed by greed, rent asunder  
by hate, seemingly bent on destruction at the hand of its own selfishness?

Martha: His death has nothing to do with me because it's not Death I need to know about.  
It's Life!  
Life in this kind of world. How to live. Just live!  
Not in idealism, but in the naked realism  
which by times surrounds me like a smothering blanket.  
Show me life! Show me light!  
These are my quests.

Tom: Ah, I see. But is your world really that much different from his?  
A world that crucifies not only its worst but its best.  
A world which hangs justice and hope and peace on crosses.  
Your world. My world. His world. They're the same world...  
And in that world he was forsaken.  
Forsaken by all.

Forsaken by the high priest. Far better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish.  
Forsaken by a friend. For thirty pieces of silver.  
Forsaken by all those closest to him. Forsaken by falling asleep, and denial, and running away.  
Forsaken by the common people who once heard him gladly,  
but in the moment of testing chose Barabbas.  
Forsaken by onlookers at the foot of the Cross—jeering, taunting.  
Forsaken by soldiers whose only allegiance was duty—trying desperately to isolate their senses  
from their cruelty by making sport of their victim's agony, throwing dice to see who would take  
his tunic home as a prize. It's all in a day's work.  
Forsaken by his only companions in suffering—two thieves, insulting him from both left and  
right.

Even the place of death was forsaken.  
The Place of the Skull they called it.  
Golgotha. A garbage dump.  
All is forsaken in that place.

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.  
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Martha: Wait! Forsaken...even by God?

The truest and noblest and finest and best of humankind forsaken by God? Could it be so?

Forsaken by humanity...yes, I can see that...

But by God?

Could it be? Can it ever be?

(in subdued tone) Hush! Our thoughts lead us onto holy ground.

"My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Tom: Have all of us not felt this forsakenness?

Yes...if we're honest, we have felt it.

Felt it in that Eternal Why that envelopes us like a shroud...

When we stand at the graveside of a loved one, whose death has shattered hopes and dreams like a mirror splintering into a million pieces.

When a problem of untold magnitude occupies our every waking thought.

When a fire of tragedy rages with such intensity that no earthly water can quench its flames.

Yes, forsaken even by God. I have felt it.

I feel it even now.

I feel it in the picture of a child who starves in a world of plenty.

I feel it in the downcast face of a brother or sister about whom no one cares.

I feel it in the searching eyes of someone who for years played such a vital part but whose health now limits them to watching as the world they no longer understand whirls past on its busy daily round.

I feel it in the pulse of those who are far from equal in a society that prides itself on equality.

Martha: Ah, I see what you mean by the forsakenness of God?

And if it is thus...Yes, it is real.

And to feel it is to be real.

For to feel it is to plumb the greatest depths of human personhood.

To feel it is to come face to face with one's own inadequacy.

To feel it is to search longingly for something more.

Tom: To feel it is to hear again that cry from the Cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" and to realize that cry is...sometimes...my own cry.

For there is still too much brokenness, too much suffering, and not enough justice, and peace, and love— those things about which the Crucified One spoke.

Indeed, the things about which he spoke are the very reason he hangs on that Cross.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.

My God...my God.

(pause as if listening)

But be still! Be still now!

Out of his darkness he begins to speak.

It comes first as a whisper...a hush...

Martha: But then as a shout...

A shout so loud that it tears the temple curtain in two!

And the earth shakes! And the rocks split!  
And the tombs of despair and doubt and fear and death are opened wide  
never to be sealed again.  
Never to be sealed again!  
Because they have been broken open.

Tom: Love has broken them open!  
A love so strong it was willing to be crucified that that Love might live.

Out of the darkness this Crucified One reaches.  
His light penetrates even the blackest corner of our existence.  
And in it comes healing, and redemption, and newness, and light  
And hope...

Martha: The only hope that is worthwhile,  
The only hope that restores meaning and purpose to life.  
A hope based on the God who never forsakes this world  
But constantly works to save it.  
No matter what it takes.  
A hope in the God whose love knows no limits!

BOTH: To this God be all praise and glory,  
Forever and ever.  
Amen.

**Hymn: VU 142 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross (vv. 1 and 4)**

1. Jesus, keep me near the cross, there a precious fountain,  
Free to all, a healing stream, flows from Calvary's mountain.  
    In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,  
    Till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever,  
Till I reach the golden strand just beyond the river.  
    In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,  
    Till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

**Song: Annabel performed by Colleen Weber and Rev. Tom Watson**

**Our Good Friday Prayers**

**Hymn: Stay With Us Through the Night      VU 182**

1. Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the pain.  
Stay with us, blessed stranger, till the morning breaks again.

2. Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the grief.  
Stay with us, blessed stranger till the morning brings relief.

3. Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the dread.  
Stay with us, blessed stranger till the morning breaks new bread.

*the sanctuary candles are now extinguished  
the cross and Bible are covered with a black cloth*

**Benediction**

The candles go out. And we take our leave, to watch and wait in other places...

**Until we return on the third day hence.**

For then the voice of God...

**Will once again pierce the pervading darkness with sounds of new life.**

Until then...with all the world...

**We will await the good news of Easter!**

*We leave the sanctuary in silence.*

**Welcomers:** Annie Denny, Mary Lloyd

**Worship Schedule**

April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Sunday	Rev. Linda Butler
April 27 <sup>th</sup>	Actively Responding	Social Justice & Outreach
May 4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter	Rev. Linda Butler
May 11 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	Rev. Felicia Urbanski