

Good Friday Resources

April 18, 2014

Good Friday is the holy day on which we remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus. At First UCC, we will observe this day with a simple time of scripture reading, prayer, and silence at noon. If you are unable to join us at church, we invite you to use this resource as a guide for observance at home. These are just a few suggestions for practice, reading, meditation, and prayer; please draw from it as you see fit.

READINGS

These are the Revised Common Lectionary readings for Good Friday 2014.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

This section is the part of the so-called “Servant Songs”—four poems in Isaiah concerning the suffering and redemption of “the servant of God.” This Servant is portrayed as chosen by God to bring justice to the nations; he is abused and suffers for the iniquities of the people; eventually God vindicates the Servant and the people are collectively healed. The New Testament frequently refers to the Servant Songs; as such, Christians traditionally believed that Isaiah was prophesying the death and resurrection of Jesus. In its original context, however, the Servant is a metaphor for Israel.

Psalm 22

This psalm is a lament for deliverance from suffering. Jesus quotes the opening verse from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” As such, from a Christian perspective, this psalm serves as a powerful evocation of Jesus’ passion and his faith in God. In Jewish tradition, the rabbis often linked Psalm 22 with the story of Esther and the threat against the Jewish people.

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

The Book of Hebrews is an anonymous treatise on Jesus Christ. Its central thesis is that Christ is the sole mediator between God and humanity. Many scholars see Hebrews as an attempt to prevent apostasy. That is, the author was concerned that followers of the early Christian church would return to their Jewish or pagan traditions.

Both of these passages seek to show that Jesus’ suffering and death created a new covenant between God and humanity.

John 18:1–19:42

This is one account of Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial. John’s version of the story is very troubling to modern readers for its hostility toward Judaism. In the original context, the negative portrayal of Jews reflects in-fighting among various Jewish sects. Tragically, the Book of John has been misused for centuries to justify mistreatment and violence against Jews for “deicide.” As modern churchgoers, we are called to wrestle with this legacy of Christian anti-Semitism.

GOOD FRIDAY & KIDS

With its themes of violence and suffering, Good Friday can be a difficult day to share with children. We would encourage you to share the story of the crucifixion with your kids, perhaps using a children’s Bible or your own words, and allow your child to reflect on it, have honest reactions, and ask questions. You might also share in a brief prayer that marks the day (some samples can be found below).

Another beloved Good Friday ritual is the baking of Hot Cross Buns. Although commonly associated with Good Friday, these pastries have a long history dating back to pre-Christian times. In fact, Hot Cross Buns provide a great illustration of how Christianity drew from ancient pagan traditions. Some background can be found here:

<http://www.foodtimeline.org/easter.html#hotcrossbuns>

The recipe can be found here:

<http://www.kingarthurfLOUR.com/recipes/easy-hot-cross-buns-recipe>

The traditional English nursery rhyme goes like this:

Hot-cross Buns!
Hot-cross Buns!
One a penny, two a penny,
Hot-cross Buns!

Hot-cross Buns!
Hot-cross Buns!
If ye have no daughters,
Give them to your sons.

PRAYERS

He needs you
that's all there is to it
without you he's left hanging
goes up in Dachau's smoke
is sugar and spice in the baker's hands
gets revalued in the next stock market crash
he's consumed and blown away
used up
without you

Help him
that's what faith is
he can't bring it about
his kingdom
couldn't then couldn't later can't now
not at any rate without you
and that is his irresistible appeal

[“When He Came” (excerpt), Dorothee Solle,
Cries of the Spirit, Beacon Press, 1991]

Cross-carrying Jesus
As you stagger on your lonely journey
time slips
worlds reel.
Forgive us that we turn away
embarrassed
uncaring
despairing.

Help us to stay with you through
the dark night
to watch and wait
to sense the depths of your anguish
and to realize that you carry us
forgive (even) us,
love us.

Forgive us, that we get on with our work
unthinking
that we gamble unknowing with precious things.

Cross-carrying Jesus,
nailed to the tree of life,
forgive us
and grant us your deliverance.

[adapted from *The Pattern of Our Days*,
The Iona Community, 1996]

The Images In My Head
O you who bear the pain of the whole earth,
I bore you.
O you whose tears give human tears their worth,
I laughed with you.
You, who, when your hem is touched, give power,
I nourished you.
Who turn the day to night in this dark hour,
light comes from you.
O you who hold the world in your embrace,
I carried you.
O you who laughed and ate and walked the shore,
I played with you.
And I, who with all others, died for,
now I hold you.
May I be faithful to this final test,
in this last time I hold my child, my son,
His body close enfolded to my breast,
the holder held: the bearer bare.
Mourning to joy: darkness to mourn.
Open, my arms: your work is done.

[“Mary Speaks,” Madeleine L’Engle, *The Ordering of Love*, 2005]