

How did it come to this?

Let us begin our Good Friday reflection with a few moments of silent prayer, then read -

Psalm 22

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest. . . .

Gospel - Luke 23:26-34

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²⁶ As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

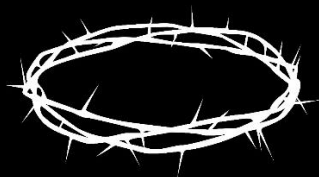
²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” ³¹ For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Let us sing, or hum, or listen to, the hymn “The Old Rugged Cross”

*On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross
the emblem of suffering and shame
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain*

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
till my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged cross
and exchange it some day for a crown*



Good Friday reflection: Father, forgive them!

Father, forgive them!

He could have said other words, but he didn't.

We heard him right. It was those particular words which came from Jesus' lips...

'Father, forgive them!

And they are recorded only by Luke.

All four gospels have very detailed accounts of the trial of Jesus and his crucifixion.

They all mention that he was crucified between two thieves, but only Luke records these critically important words:

"Father, forgive them!"

Oh, he could have said so many other words! - but he didn't.

He didn't call for his friends to avenge his death...

He didn't call down fire and brimstone

he did not demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Instead he prayed with words shot through with understanding and compassion...

for the criminals who hung on either side of him...

for the crowd shouting abuse below...

and maybe we hope...

With understanding and compassion for us too.

'Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.'

From the cross we hear no words of condemnation...

nor anger...nor self-pity...

but only words that echo what Jesus lived and taught

about who we should love

and who we should forgive...

and the blessed place of mercy in the divine scheme of things...

From the suffering viewpoint of God...

the human cycle of reprisal...revenge and retribution...

born from nationalistic, ethnic, and personal pride

will simply never... ever... save the world...

but forgiveness and mercy can.

The Gospel of Jesus proclaims there is no other way...

We cannot work or earn our way into God's love.

It's just there for us, offered freely.

There is no other religion that announces their good news in quite this way

Yet the notion of God's mercy, and forgiveness, and grace,

though held in common by the three Abrahamic faiths - Judaism Christianity and Islam -

is hard for any of us to accept, and even harder to put into practice.

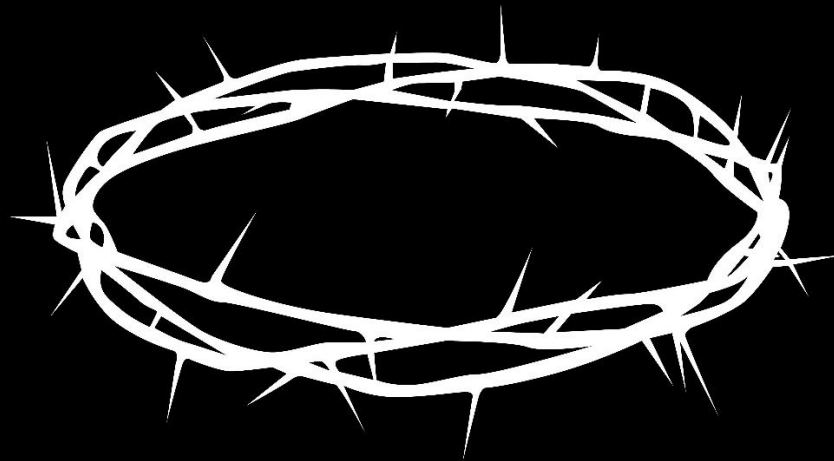
Trying to follow Jesus in this way remains completely counter intuitive, counter cultural....

You see, Jesus revealed on the Cross, that forgiveness always costs the forgiver; maybe to the extreme of pain, and ridicule, and death. God in Christ was prepared to suffer and to die rather than retaliate against a humanity free to reject their creator's love.

God bears the full cost of forgiveness on the Cross.

It's clear from the Gospel we proclaim
that Jesus reveals God's mind;
that Jesus reveals God's will;
that Jesus reveals God's eternal purpose;
and he still calls us to follow him, and to live his life
in our day to day world

"Father forgive them, he said, for they don't know what they're doing"



Psalm 22

22 I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.
23 You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
24 For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.

(RJW 2020)

Father forgive us

Creator, we disfigure your world.

Lord have mercy

Redeemer, we reject your redemption and crucify you daily.

Christ have mercy

Giver of life, we too often
choose death.

Lord have mercy

God of the new day and God of love
help us to know and believe
that as children of your love
we are forgiven
and free to begin again

Through Christ Our Lord

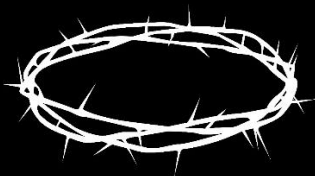
Amen

Let us sing, or hum, or listen to, the hymn "When I survey the wondrous cross"

*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*

*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?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine
that were an offering far too small
love so amazing, so divine
demands my soul, my life, my all*



The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the holy Spirit
is with us always

Amen