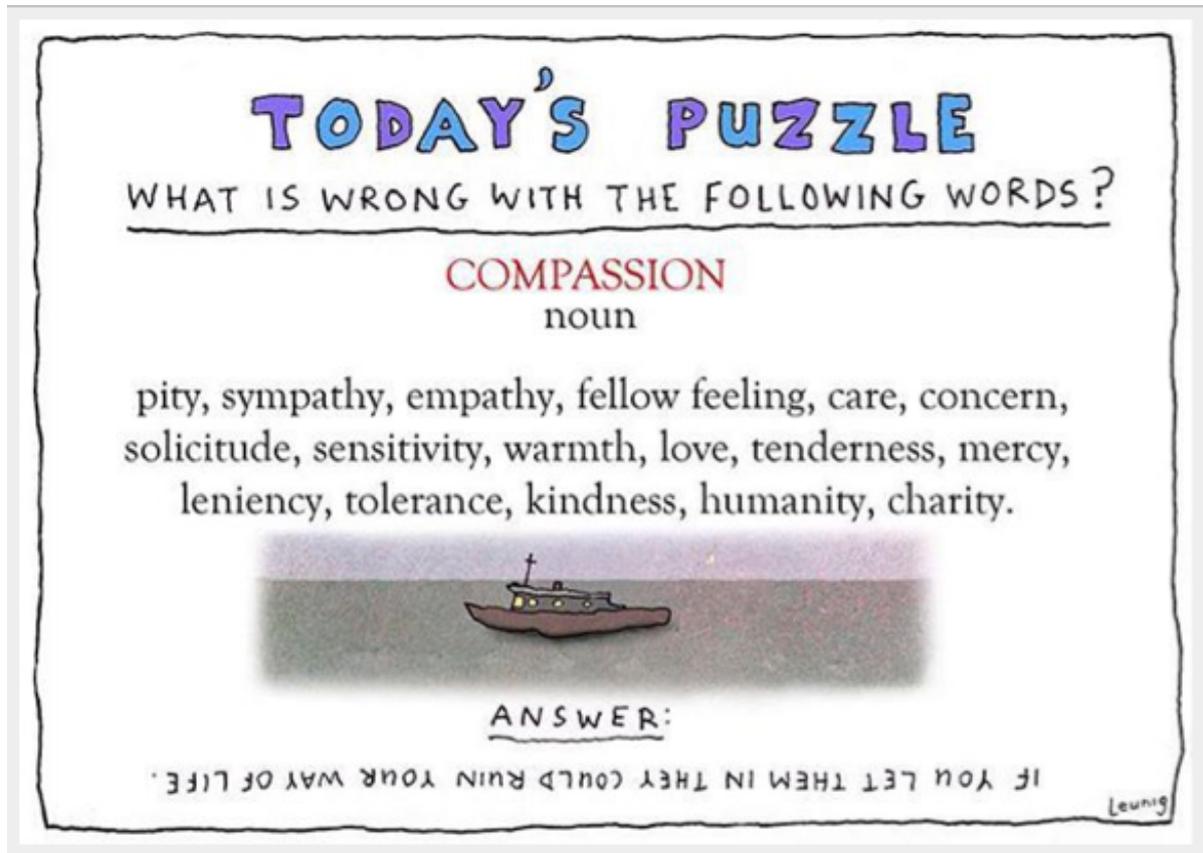


## Good Friday 2014 – MRC



### **Gathering: What makes this day good?**

They call today Good Friday  
but what could make this day good?

If you have ever believed that love inevitably leads to betrayal,  
this day says it doesn't.

If you have ever believed that some people are irredeemable,  
this day says they aren't.

If you have ever believed that there is a limit to forgiveness,  
this day says there isn't.

If you have ever believed you aren't worth saving,  
this day says you are.

If you have ever believed that you don't deserve freedom,  
this day says you do.

If you have ever believed that fear, anger, hate and despair will  
always win,  
this day says it won't.  
And this day is good for you.

**Sing: When I survey the wondrous cross**

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.

[Isaac Watts, Used under CAL license]

**Reading: Jesus before Pilate [Luke 23:1-5]**

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, 'We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the

emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.’ Then Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ He answered, ‘You say so.’ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no basis for an accusation against this man.’ But they were insistent and said, ‘He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.’

## **Reflection**

What was it about Jesus  
that was so confusing for governments  
and for ordinary people.

Pilate couldn’t make sense of Jesus  
and half the time we can’t either.

We want a God who comes in might and power to take all  
before him  
and yet we get Jesus:  
unmistakably human and vulnerable,  
trouble-maker  
peace-lover,  
political subversive  
always on the side of love, not power  
human, even to the point of death.

We keep asking the question,  
‘God, who are you?’  
in the hope we’ll get a different answer.  
And God just keeps coming back with this one.

**Reading: Jesus before Herod [Luke 23:6-12]**

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

### **Prayer for others**

Let us pray.

It seems from the story, God,  
that you know what it's like  
to be at the mercy of the systems beyond our control;  
to be tossed from person to person  
to be used as a pawn in political battles.

You always stood up to the politicians and the  
powerbrokers,  
even to the point of death.  
You never reacted to their taunts;  
you simply lived the way of love.

We pray for those in our world who are victims of systems  
that choose power over love:  
for asylum seekers and refugees  
for those who are homeless and the mentally ill  
for the prisoner and the victim seeking justice  
for the unemployed

and the pensioner  
and the disabled  
and the abused.

It is in their company that we will find you, God.  
This is where we will know you.

And we thank you for that.

Amen.

### **Reading: Jesus Sentenced to Death [Luke 23: 13-32]**

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him.’

Then they all shouted out together, ‘Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!’ (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’ A third time he said to them, ‘Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.’ But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him... Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

**Prayer of confession:**

Forgive us God,  
for the times, like Pilate, when we betray what is right  
and choose self-interest instead;  
for the times we bow to the way of power and public  
opinion  
over the way of justice and freedom.

Forgive us God,  
if we have betrayed the trust you put in us  
when you made Jesus human, like one of us,  
dependent, like each of us,  
on those around us for survival and for love.

Forgive us God,  
for the times we have strayed from the way of love  
and in the silence we bring our confessions to you.

[pause]

God, we pray for some of the courage that you showed  
to the end,  
where every choice you made was one of hope,  
not fear;

where every word you spoke was one of love,  
not anger.

In the name of Jesus we pray,  
Amen.

**Declaration of forgiveness:**

Jesus said that if we come to him with hearts that seek forgiveness, God will give us mercy.

So I say to you, our sins are forgiven,

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**Reading: Jesus is crucified [Luke 23:33-43]**

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

**Reflection:**

The criminal who was hanging next to Jesus said,  
'Are you not the Messiah, Jesus?  
Save yourself and us.'

But this is how you save us, Jesus:  
by never giving up on love  
by not betraying the people on either side of you  
by not even trying to escape the hardness of our world  
but by putting yourself right in the middle of it.

You save us by making every choice, every moment, every  
word  
one of love,  
not judgement.

So this is how you save us, Jesus:  
You show us that the worst thing that can happen is not to  
die,  
it's to give up on love.

[silence]

**Reading: The Death of Jesus [Luke 23:44-49]**

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed

his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’ And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

### **Sing: Were you there**

1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
O 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?  
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble,  
tremble;  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
3. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble,  
tremble;  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

### **Reflection:**

The meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus has filled thousands of books over the years.

Some people believe that Jesus died as a sacrifice to God, to atone for the sins of humanity.

Some people believe that Jesus died as an inevitable result of standing up to the powers of the world, and saying 'enough'.

Whatever we believe, we can be confident that Jesus' death shows us, once and for all, that God knows what it is to be in the depths of pain and despair; and that God has lived our hell before us.

So now we pray for ourselves, and the hells we live in, and for those we know and love who are also living in hell, and we pray for the comfort of God's company, for ourselves and for them.

[Time of silence and candle lighting]

**Reading: The Burial of Jesus [Luke 23: 50-56]**

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

## **Sending Out:**

There is much we still need to bury:  
our hope that God will rescue us by taking us away from  
the world,  
not by entering into this one and changing it;  
the idea that God will magically fix the world  
instead of us living faithfully to change it.

But this is where the story ends today.  
And while it's a dark space in which to end,  
there's comfort in that:

God knows darkness, like we do.

So go in peace,  
and may the suffering God who never stops living the way  
of peace  
be your comfort and your company until we meet again.

Amen.