

St. Margaret's Uniting Church

Mooroolbark

Friday 14th April, 2017

Good Friday

GATHERING

This is the day when life is raw, quivering, terrifying;
The day of numbed emotions,
The day of blunt nails and splintered wood
of bruised flesh and red blood.
The day we loathe when all is made meaningless,
the day we long for, when pretences fall away -
Because the worst that we can do - cannot kill your love.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

Hello. My name is Joseph; I am from Arimathea. You know, no one knows where that town was. Perhaps that's best – my part in the gospels is a small one, almost an insignificant one. Where I come from is not important.

And yet, all four gospels tell how I was present at the time of the crucifixion. I didn't do much – indeed, no one really knew I liked Jesus' stories. I liked his message. I liked the things he taught. But, you understand, I was important in the community. What would people have said if I had spoken up for him? I was a member of the council, you see, and could have voted against putting him to death. But then so could Nicodemus, and he didn't either. It wasn't worth it.

Or was it? I wish I knew. So I did the best I could – I offered my tomb. Some will say, "too little, too late" And perhaps they are right. But it was something, I suppose.

So come, on this sad and heavy day, and listen again to the story. And imagine your place in it all. Reflect with me on how we could do

things differently, on how the things we say and do proclaim the words of Jesus in our world.

WE SING 'O sacred head sore wounded' (TIS 339)

[1]

O sacred head sore wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
O kingly head surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown!
Death's pallor now comes o'er thee,
the glow of life decays;
yet hosts of heaven adore thee
and tremble as they gaze.

[2]

What language shall I borrow
To praise Thee, heavenly Friend,
For this, Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
O agony and dying!
O love to sinners free!
Jesus, all grace supplying,
turn thou thy face on me.

[3]

In this thy bitter Passion,
good Shepherd, think of me
with thy most sweet compassion,
unworthy though I be;
beneath thy cross abiding
for ever would I rest,
in thy dear love confiding,
and with thy presence blest.

[4]

Be thou my consolation,
my shield, when I must die;
remind me of thy passion

when my last hour draws nigh.
 Mine eyes shall then behold thee,
 upon thy cross shall dwell,
 my heart by faith enfold thee;
 who dieth thus, dies well.

MARY, WIFE OF CLOPAS

I was one of the women who watched – who dared to stand until the end. I watched them nail Jesus to a cross, watched them abuse him to death. You have no idea what it was like, but I knew I had to stay there – to support his mother, and Mary Magdalene, and stand witness that, just as Jesus would not run away, we would not, either. Will you join me in prayer?

*With heavy hearts and a heavy world,
 we meet you this day/this night, O Christ.
 In your clenched hands,
 stretched and nailed,
 you gather us.*

*In holy sorrow,
 we find silence our only friend.
 With strength only you can give, even now,
 and with a courage only you can know,
 may we find ourselves beside you, O God.*

*And as life teeters and eternity weeps,
 may we see through love's pain,
 into love's promise and love's destiny.
 And may we even now,
 even now,
 hear the echo.*

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

I am Jesus' mother. Perhaps you are only used to me as a quiet character in the Christmas story. But I never went away – I stayed with Jesus through his ministry, challenging him when he needed it,

and comforting him when he needed it. You will meet me again in one of the first stories of the early church, where I was a part of the group that decided we would carry on. I could only do that because I was there this day. Like Mary, the wife of Clopas, I could not turn my head away – I stood and watched, too. Do you know what it is like to watch your child die? To stand helpless as they beat him almost senseless, and caused him pain beyond my worst imagining? But I stayed. There was nowhere to go.

Listen, now, as the story is told of Jesus' last hours.

READING John 18:1-27 (The Message, Eugene Peterson)

Seized in the Garden at Night

18 Jesus, having prayed this prayer, left with his disciples and crossed over the brook Kidron at a place where there was a garden. He and his disciples entered it.

²⁻⁴ Judas, his betrayer, knew the place because Jesus and his disciples went there often. So Judas led the way to the garden, and the Roman soldiers and police sent by the high priests and Pharisees followed. They arrived there with lanterns and torches and swords. Jesus, knowing by now everything that was coming down on him, went out and met them. He said, "Who are you after?"

They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene."

⁵⁻⁶ He said, "That's me." The soldiers recoiled, totally taken aback. Judas, his betrayer, stood out like a sore thumb.

⁷ Jesus asked again, "Who are you after?"

They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene."

⁸⁻⁹ "I told you," said Jesus, "that's me. I'm the one. So if it's me you're after, let these others go." (This validated the words in his prayer, "I didn't lose one of those you gave.")

¹⁰ Just then Simon Peter, who was carrying a sword, pulled it from its sheath and struck the Chief Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. Malchus was the servant's name.

¹¹ Jesus ordered Peter, "Put back your sword. Do you think for a minute I'm not going to drink this cup the Father gave me?"

¹²⁻¹⁴ Then the Roman soldiers under their commander, joined by the Jewish police, seized Jesus and tied him up. They took him first to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the Chief Priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it was to their advantage that one man die for the people.

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

Jesus before the Chief Priest

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. That other disciple was known to the Chief Priest, and so he went in with Jesus to the Chief Priest's courtyard. Peter had to stay outside. Then the other disciple went out, spoke to the doorkeeper, and got Peter in.

¹⁷ The young woman who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, "Aren't you one of this man's disciples?"

He said, "No, I'm not."

¹⁸ The servants and police had made a fire because of the cold and were huddled there warming themselves. Peter stood with them, trying to get warm.

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

The Interrogation

¹⁹⁻²¹ Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered, "I've spoken openly in public. I've taught regularly in meeting places and the Temple, where the Jews all come together. Everything has been out in the open. I've said nothing in secret. So why are you treating me like a conspirator?"

Question those who have been listening to me. They know well what I have said. My teachings have all been aboveboard.”

²² When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face, saying, “How dare you speak to the Chief Priest like that!”

²³ Jesus replied, “If I’ve said something wrong, prove it. But if I’ve spoken the plain truth, why this slapping around?”

²⁴ Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas.

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

²⁵ Meanwhile, Simon Peter was back at the fire, still trying to get warm. The others there said to him, “Aren’t you one of his disciples?”

He denied it, “Not me.”

²⁶ One of the Chief Priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with him?”

²⁷ Again, Peter denied it. Just then a rooster crowed.

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

O God - help us consider how we betray others, how we abandon them in their time of need, how we think of ourselves first. We too have been betrayers.

O God - do not let us deceive ourselves. Our acts of betrayal hurt us and create walls between us and others.

O God, we know too that our betrayal hurts you.

(Silence)

O God - help us consider how we deny others, how we act like we love them to their face, but disown our friends before others.

O God - do not let us deceive ourselves. Our acts of denial hurt us and create walls between us and others.

O God, we know too that our denial hurts you.

(Silence)

O God - help us consider how we gossip about others, how we say things behind their backs, whether they are true or not. And just like Jesus, they stand silent, because they cannot answer our words.

O God - do not let us deceive ourselves. Our acts of gossip hurt us and create walls between us and others.

O God, we know too that our gossip hurts you.

(Silence)

O God - help us consider how we are cruel to others, how we malign and slander others and add to the evil that comes upon them.

O God - do not let us deceive ourselves. Our cruelty hurts us and creates walls between us and others.

O God, we know too that our cruelty hurts you.

(Silence)

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Because of what Jesus Christ has done, we can declare and own that we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

READING John 18:28-19:16 *(The Message, Eugene Peterson)*

The King of the Jews

²⁸⁻²⁹ They led Jesus then from Caiaphas to the Roman governor's palace. It was early morning. They themselves didn't enter the palace because they didn't want to be disqualified from eating the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and spoke. "What charge do you bring against this man?"

³⁰ They said, “If he hadn’t been doing something evil, do you think we’d be here bothering you?”

³¹⁻³² Pilate said, “You take him. Judge him by your law.”

The Jews said, “We’re not allowed to kill anyone.” (This would confirm Jesus’ word indicating the way he would die.)

³³ Pilate went back into the palace and called for Jesus. He said, “Are you the ‘King of the Jews’?”

³⁴ Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you this about me?”

³⁵ Pilate said, “Do I look like a Jew? Your people and your high priests turned you over to me. What did you do?”

³⁶ “My kingdom,” said Jesus, “doesn’t consist of what you see around you. If it did, my followers would fight so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But I’m not that kind of king, not the world’s kind of king.”

³⁷ Then Pilate said, “So, are you a king or not?”

Jesus answered, “You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.”

³⁸⁻³⁹ Pilate said, “What is truth?”

Then he went back out to the Jews and told them, “I find nothing wrong in this man. It’s your custom that I pardon one prisoner at Passover. Do you want me to pardon the ‘King of the Jews’?”

⁴⁰ They shouted back, “Not this one, but Barabbas!” Barabbas was a Jewish freedom fighter.

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

The Thorn Crown of the King

19 ¹⁻³ So Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. The soldiers, having braided a crown from thorns, set it on his head, threw a purple robe over him, and approached him with, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they greeted him with slaps in the face.

The reader pauses as a crown of thorns and a purple cloth are placed on the cross.

⁴⁻⁵ Pilate went back out again and said to them, “I present him to you, but I want you to know that I do not find him guilty of any crime.” Just then Jesus came out wearing the thorn crown and purple robe.

Pilate announced, “Here he is: the Man.”

⁶ When the high priests and police saw him, they shouted in a frenzy, “Crucify! Crucify!”

Pilate told them, “You take him. You crucify him. I find nothing wrong with him.”

⁷ The Jews answered, “We have a law, and by that law he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

⁸⁻⁹ When Pilate heard this, he became even more scared. He went back into the palace and said to Jesus, “Where did you come from?” Jesus gave no answer.

¹⁰ Pilate said, “You won’t talk? Don’t you know that I have the authority to pardon you, and the authority to—crucify you?”

¹¹ Jesus said, “You haven’t a shred of authority over me except what has been given you from heaven. That’s why the one who betrayed me to you has committed a far greater fault.”

¹² At this, Pilate tried his best to pardon him, but the Jews shouted him down: “If you pardon this man, you’re no friend of Caesar’s. Anyone setting himself up as ‘king’ defies Caesar.”

¹³⁻¹⁴ When Pilate heard those words, he led Jesus outside. He sat down at the judgment seat in the area designated Stone Court (in

Hebrew, Gabbatha). It was the preparation day for Passover. The hour was noon. Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your king.”

¹⁵ They shouted back, “Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!”

Pilate said, “I am to crucify your king?”

The high priests answered, “We have no king except Caesar.”

¹⁶⁻¹⁹ Pilate caved in to their demand. He turned him over to be crucified.

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

PONTIUS PILATE, THE ROMAN GOVERNOR

I am Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. Yes, I know, you think I could have stopped it. And maybe I could have – but the crowd was so huge, and their anger was so intense. I’m sure you know what that’s like – the newspapers are full of stories of masses of people carrying a mood to extremes. I mean, I know I had the army and all that, but there must have been hundreds, even thousands of them. I could only do so much, you know?

I asked him why he was there, what it was all about. Was he trying to overthrow me? Did he want to sit on a throne somewhere? His answers didn’t make any sense: “I’m here to proclaim the truth,” he said. I don’t have time for that! I have to maintain order and discipline.

They could have had me release him, but they cried out for Barabbas. My hands were tied. You know what that’s like, don’t you? Some boats are just not worth rocking.

REFLECTION

Oh Pilate, surely that’s where you are wrong.

Many have condemned you as coward. Many have seen you didn’t want to rock the boat but believe you could have stopped this farcical abuse of power.

Sure you made some efforts to redress your part in it. The crimes of all who hung to die on crosses were written above as reminder of their shame. And yet you wouldn't budge from your position "This is the king of the Jews". You wouldn't even settle for the revision they wanted, "He said he was the king of the Jews."

What great irony there is in your life. For a start, we would likely not remember you except for what is written in the Scriptures. Power has a way of being fleeting. As humans we try so hard to hold onto that which escapes us.

So you, once powerful ruler, are soon exiled by the Roman emperor, and stripped of all power and possessions. But you could never be stripped of the memory of sending an innocent one to be crucified.

You can't wash your hands as though it never happened.

But tempting as it is to scapegoat you, or the Jews, or the High Priests, we remember that Jesus warned us not to judge, lest we be judged ourselves. On this dark day, those without sin are free to pick up stones and cast them. But of course none of us are as pure or innocent as we'd like to be.

We are you, Pontius Pilate. We have left people hang out to dry. We have looked the other way. We have used what little power we have to protect our own skin at the cost of others. We have taken what is not ours and broken what belongs to others. We are the people for whom Jesus was led to the cross to die.

And we are like Peter who denied Jesus. When things are hard, it is hard to stay true, especially when we don't feel strong or courageous. Or like Judas who betrayed the Lord with a kiss.

We doubt, we fear, we sell out, we deny.

And this day the cock crows to reveal to us the truth of human nature.

While we attempt to stay with Jesus in this moment, in this day, and while we cannot rush to Sunday and push these events aside, we also see today in the light of what Jesus has done.

And the good news is that for deniers there is a way back.

But to find our way back, we need to face the cross, to embrace it, to die to all the powers that take us away from Jesus the Christ.

And perhaps that is the greatest of challenges.

For Pontius Pilate knew what was right to do, and yet he could not let Jesus go free, at least not once his weakness was exploited so brilliantly by the Jews who wanted blood. "If you pardon this man, you're no friend of Caesar's. Anyone setting himself up as 'king' defies Caesar."

Pilate feared Caesar. His hold on power was fragile enough, and this could unravel all he had fought for. And the crowd knew had to manipulate this troubled man to get what they wanted.

Like Caesar we need to let go of the powers that have hold of us and look to the cross of Jesus Christ in order to find life.

In other words, we need to get our allegiances right.

As the Jews and High Priests manoeuvre to get what they want, they sacrifice all that had been important to them, such is their desire to get rid of Jesus. They are as blinded this day as the darkness of this story. The Jews invoke the power of Caesar, and offer him their allegiance as king.

What incredible irony. Every time Jews gather for worship they claim God as their rightful king. Every worship they pray that the kingdom of God be established in their time.

This day we are called to align to the right power.

Judas couldn't.

Pilate couldn't.

The crowd couldn't.

The High Priests couldn't.
Even the disciple Peter could not.

Yet this day calls us to lay all that gets in the way and come to the foot of this cross and align ourselves to the way of God through Jesus Christ.

While there is a long list of villains in this story, there is yet hope for us. We have something that these first inhabitants of the story did not have. We know how it will end.

While we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves this day, there is an important story about the disciple Peter who has an encounter with his risen Lord. He remains haunted with his three-fold denial and the sound of a crowing rooster. But Jesus comes to him on the other side of Easter, on the beach, and offers a way for Peter to turn around. What is important is that Jesus re-frames the question of power. He helps Peter be free from the powers that caused him to deny his Lord. He does this by asking three times a question of allegiance.

'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

As Peter responds with 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you', Peter is invited to pick up the mantle of Jesus' love and risen presence by following and caring for the 'sheep' as Jesus has done.

In this Peter becomes the rock of the church. This is repentance, or aligning ourselves with the will of God. It takes a dying of our old selves – in Peter's case his fear of being strung up on a cross just like Jesus – in order to find life in Jesus' name.

Repentance is possible for all of us. It is possible for all who betray with a kiss; for all who give allegiance to other powers; for all who fear; for all who deny.

Do you love Jesus more than these?

Whatever it is that gets in the way, you are invited to bring to the cross and offer to Jesus who takes away the sin of the world. There

will be a time to do this in our worship today, as we do that symbolically by offering sprigs of rosemary at the cross.

READING John 19:17-22 (*The Message, Eugene Peterson*)

The Crucifixion

They took Jesus away. Carrying his cross, Jesus went out to the place called Skull Hill (the name in Hebrew is Golgotha), where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, Jesus in the middle. Pilate wrote a sign and had it placed on the cross. It read:

JESUS THE NAZARENE
THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁰⁻²¹ Many of the Jews read the sign because the place where Jesus was crucified was right next to the city. It was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The Jewish high priests objected. "Don't write," they said to Pilate, "'The King of the Jews.' Make it, 'This man said, 'I am the King of the Jews.''"

²² Pilate said, "What I've written, I've written."

The reader pauses as a sign identifying Jesus as the king of the Jews is placed on the cross. The Christ candle is moved from the table to the cross.

WE SING 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' (TIS 345)

[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?

READING John 19:23-37 (*The Message, Eugene Peterson*)

²³⁻²⁴ When they crucified him, the Roman soldiers took his clothes and divided them up four ways, to each soldier a fourth. But his robe was seamless, a single piece of weaving, so they said to each other, "Let's not tear it up. Let's throw dice to see who gets it." This confirmed the Scripture that said, "They divided up my clothes among them and threw dice for my coat." (The soldiers validated the Scriptures!)

The reader pauses as a black ribbon is placed on the cross.

²⁴⁻²⁷ While the soldiers were looking after themselves, Jesus' mother, his aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her. He said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother.

²⁸ Jesus, seeing that everything had been completed so that the Scripture record might also be complete, then said, "I'm thirsty."

²⁹⁻³⁰ A jug of sour wine was standing by. Someone put a sponge soaked with the wine on a javelin and lifted it to his mouth. After he took the wine, Jesus said, "It's done . . . complete." Bowing his head, he offered up his spirit.

The candle is extinguished. We keep a long silence.

³¹⁻³⁴ Then the Jews, since it was the day of Sabbath preparation, and so the bodies wouldn't stay on the crosses over the Sabbath (it was a high holy day that year), petitioned Pilate that their legs be broken to speed death, and the bodies taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man crucified with Jesus, and then the other. When they got to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. One of the soldiers stabbed him in the side with his spear. Blood and water gushed out.

³⁵ The eyewitness to these things has presented an accurate report. He saw it himself and is telling the truth so that you, also, will believe.

³⁶⁻³⁷ These things that happened confirmed the Scripture, “Not a bone in his body was broken,” and the other Scripture that reads, “They will stare at the one they pierced.”

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

The readers lay down a white cloth and place the cross on top of it.

People are invited to come and place herbs on the cross.

CHOIR ANTHEM ‘Walk him along’

READING John 19:38-42 (*The Message, Eugene Peterson*)

During the reading, the cross is wrapped in the white cloth, containing the herbs and flowers, and is carried out to the garden.

³⁸ After all this, Joseph of Arimathea (he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he was intimidated by the Jews) petitioned Pilate to take the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission. So Joseph came and took the body.

³⁹⁻⁴² Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus at night, came now in broad daylight carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. They took Jesus’ body and, following the Jewish burial custom, wrapped it in linen with the spices. There was a garden near the place he was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been placed. So, because it was Sabbath preparation for the Jews and the tomb was convenient, they placed Jesus in it.

NICODEMUS – WHO CAME TO JESUS IN THE NIGHT

It is only John who tells my story – three small glimpses – but they say so much. Perhaps you can relate. My name is Nicodemus; you may recall that I went to see Jesus one night, filled with questions. What did he mean by being born again? Was someone like me – a

leader of the people, an upstanding figure in the religious community, someone who had studied long and hard to find answers to life's problems – was I supposed to start over? It seemed preposterous.

He said something curious to me: God's Spirit goes where it will. It does what it wants – does what it must. I didn't really understand it then.

Some time later when Jesus was speaking in Jerusalem, people were arguing: could he be the Messiah? I wanted the other leaders to give him a fair hearing, but they just sneered and said "the Messiah can't come from Galilee." I held my tongue after that. And look where it brought us: to this moment.

It was with a heavy heart that I brought some myrrh and ointment for his body. How might things have happened if I had acted differently? What if I had spoken up and said, "he doesn't deserve to die"? What then? I was afraid they would kill him anyway, and perhaps me as well (*pause*). Now I suppose we'll never know.

WE SING 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' (TIS 345)

[3]

Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?

Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?

[4]

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?

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Who was Jesus?

He began his ministry by being hungry,

Yet he is the Bread of Life.

He ended his earthly ministry by being thirsty
Yet he is the living water.

He was weary,
Yet he is our rest.

He paid tribute,
Yet he is our King.

He was accused of having a demon,
Yet he cast out demons.

Jesus wept,
Yet he wipes away our tears.

He was sold for thirty pieces of silver,
Yet he redeemed the world.

He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
Yet he is the Good Shepherd.

Jesus died,
Yet by death he destroyed the power of death.

Gregory of Nazianzus, AD 381

MARY MAGDALENE

I, too, was one of the women who stayed. What else could I do?
Jesus had changed my life beyond measure.

I was despised before I met Jesus, and after as well. My name is Mary and I come from Magdala. I was one of the women who followed Jesus, and we were not treated well. As Jesus spoke of how God's view of the world included all people, we felt welcome. The men tried to include us, but they had grown up in a world that didn't give us much time and attention, and sometimes they resented that there were women in the group of followers.

I had struggled for many years with ailments that made it hard to function. Some say I had demons; I only know that I would have fits from time to time, and Jesus put an end to them. I was forever

grateful, and stayed with him out of appreciation for what he had done. I wanted others to know that the message he brought and the things he did offered new life and new hope to all of us.

And yet I also knew that it would not last. No one can proclaim the things that Jesus did without raising serious opposition. No one can keep declaring that God's love is for all people, without those in power and control needing to put a stop to it. Imagine! If the world understood that we are all sisters and brothers in God's family, what might it be like?

History has not been kind to me – because I was such a powerful testimony to the message Jesus brought, they discredited me, claiming I was a prostitute and calling me all sorts of horrible things. As you know, that's not the story the Bible tells. Only that I was Jesus' friend.

I will come back. When the Sabbath is over, I shall return to this tomb, and spend time with Jesus once again. I will come here often, and pray that he might still speak to me and guide me. Will you do that, too?

WE SING 'O God, why are you silent?' (*Marty Haugen, PASSION CHORALE*)

[1]

O God, why are you silent? I cannot hear your voice;
the proud and strong and violent all claim you and rejoice;
you promised you would hold me with tenderness and care.
Draw near, O Love, enfold me, and ease this pain I bear.

[2]

My hope lies bruised and battered, my wounded heart is torn;
my spirit spent and shattered by life's relentless storm;
will you not bend to hear me, my cries from deep within?
Have you no word to cheer me when night is closing in?

[3]

Through endless nights of weeping, through weary days of grief,
my heart is in your keeping, my comfort, my relief.
Come, share my tears and sadness, come, suffer in my pain,

oh, bring me home to gladness, restore my hope again.

[4]

May pain draw forth compassion, let wisdom rise from loss;
oh, take my heart and fashion the image of your cross;
then may I know your healing, through healing that I share,
your grace and love revealing, your tenderness and care.

BLESSING AND SENDING OUT

Nothing we could ever do to God
can diminish God's love for us.
Though we bang nails into the cross,
none will stop God loving us.

Our God through Jesus Christ,
continues to be the bearer
of hope and life for all.

Go as we hold in tension death, and waiting
knowing that the worst we can do,
cannot kill his love.

The Scriptures proclaim it boldly.
Let us live this truth boldly.

May you know his love and peace for yourself,
May those you love and those you are learning to love
know his love and peace.

God now into this waiting space
with the blessing of God upon you: