

## Good Friday Homily - A (2026)

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews

John 18:1-19:42

'Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross.....' In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

These are the words of the Collect for Good Friday, without its conclusion. They are clear. They are unambiguous. While they don't tell the whole story, they certainly lay out the reason we're here this evening. We come before Almighty God, acknowledging Jesus' willing obedience to be betrayed, mercilessly abused by the hands of earthly power, and giving up all his privilege and rights to suffer a humiliating death on a cross for the souls of sinners, including you and me. This night is sobering beyond words.

It has been a long time since I last preached on Good Friday. I'm sure I attempted some doctrinal explanation because that's what I thought the congregation expected. I suspect I gave it my best shot, but it obviously wasn't memorable. I've traveled a while on this spiritual journey of mine since then. I arrive here tonight with a different mindset, one that tells me that we're asked to *experience* this night, to *encounter* the deep somberness, the injustice, the pain and terror, and finally succumb to the sheer magnitude of the unfolding events of this week leading to Easter Sunday. How does one explain the unexplainable? It's like trying to grasp the wind.

What began with shouts of 'Hosanna' is now but a memory, seemingly overtaken by the debilitating emotional despair and subsequent brutality. We left Sunday's service to the haunting sounds of 'Were you there?', a stark reminder of what lay ahead this week. Tonight must touch the heart through words, silence, and actions that dispel the need for explanations while creating the space for the work of the Spirit.

We have heard the unvarnished truth of this night through the Prophet Isaiah, the poetry of the psalmist, and John's account of the Passion. We will offer the church's prayers for peace, comfort, honorable governance, for the lifting up of the needs of the sick and oppressed, for those still in the shadow of spiritual darkness, buoyed by the promise that what has been cast down is being raised, and what has grown old is being made new. We will confess our sins and share in Christ's body and blood. We will experience all of this, then retreat into the night, into the safety of our homes. We will then spend the rest of this evening and tomorrow in vigil, remembering the sights, sounds, words, sacraments, and wonder of it all that has led us to this point. Easter is coming, but tonight and tomorrow are for experiencing the heaviness, right here, right now.

Dear friends, as a relatively new deacon, I remember seeking my former bishop's advice and tips on a sermon I was preparing to preach to a group of fellow clergy that included a bishop or two. Bishop Jim told me, 'Say what you need to say, then sit down.' With this as my cue, I've said what I needed to say.