

in the big love living liturgies

Holy Week: "Questions" Holy Week Worship Service Readers' Script

• Liturgical Year C • Luke 22:14-23:56

prepared by Rev. Kathryn M. Schreiber

PREPARATION

ROLES & ATTIRE

- *Musician/s; possibly Soloist/s, Choir.*
- *Worship Leader: Minister and Lay Leader/s may share these responsibilities.*
- *Readers: Minimum of two Readers; first Reader is also Co-Celebrant.*
- *Communion Servers: in addition to Worship Leader and first Reader, may enlist additional team/s of Servers.*
- *Participants: Please wear black or dark clothing. Clergy may wear black with purple stoles or robes with no stoles.*

SET UP & PROPS

- *If the Altar is against the wall or away from the people, please set up a table closer to the congregation for the Communion Table.*
- *Altar/Communion Table is unadorned or decorated with black or purple fabric swag.*
- *Candles: Regular service candles may be lit before service begins; an unlit Christ Candle should be centrally located on the Communion Table.*
- *Communion Elements on Communion Table.*
- *Container with flower petals or herb leaves, white or off-white cloth coverings (napkins) and very large bowl or basket placed near the Communion Table.*
- *Sound for Readers, as well as speakers at Communion Table.*
- *Lights: Brighter while people are moving around, dimmed when seated. May need spot lighting for Readers and Musicians.*

CONTENT

Please feel free to change any content to fit the needs of your community. This service covers both Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, but content could be split into two services. The liturgy presumes an evening setting; please adjust for daytime use. Any of the congregational songs may be replaced with special music - solos, choir, or instrumental pieces.

We Gather

Prelude (*Musician*)

Music should be meditative, somber.

Greeting (*Worship Leader*)

Good evening. Welcome to ... *[name of congregation]*...

Tonight, we gather to remember Christ's Passion as recounted in the gospel of St. Luke.

Tonight, we focus upon the questions, actual and implied, found within text.

As we listen to this sacred narrative
we will hear the voice of Jesus,
his disciples, their community,
their regional religious and governmental leaders,
mourning women, dying criminals,
and a compassionate rich man.
All of them ask and answer haunting questions.
Two thousand years later,
these questions still resonate.

Our readers will present segments of scripture
followed by an invitation for us, the congregation,
to repeat critical questions.
These exchanges are printed in the bulletin.

Luke's account of Christ's Passion,
found in Chapters 22 and 23,
begins with the Last Supper.
You may notice a surprise or two,
as Luke's version is slightly different
that the script we usually follow.
Notice the difference.

We practice open Communion,
which means everyone is welcome to partake.
We use gluten free bread and juice instead of fermented wine.
When the time comes to share the elements
you'll be invited up to take a piece of bread,
dip it in the cup, and consume it.
We can also deliver the elements.

Tonight's service is contemplative.
We remain seated while singing
and will conclude the service with silence.
There will be no postlude tonight.
Please stay in the sanctuary for as long as you like.
We will preserve silence as we depart.

This evening, we open our hearts and minds to Christ's Passion.
May God use our questions, curiosity, and earnestness
to speak to our souls of things eternal. Amen.

Worship Leader goes to the Christ Candle on Communion Table.

Prayer of Invocation (Worship Leader)
let us pray:
Holy God, we call upon Your friends,

beloved souls on earth and in heaven,
to assemble among us tonight.
Faithful God, may we dwell in Your mercy, grace and love
as we listen, again, to this familiar story.

We light this candle - symbol of
our friend, teacher, and savior Jesus Christ -
invoking Your Divine Presence. Amen.

Worship Leader lights the Christ Candle.

Worship Leader:

Please remain seated while we sing:

Hymn: “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” PICARDY/Liturgy of St James

- 1) “Let all mortal flesh keep silence...
- 2) “Truly God, yet born of Mary...

Co-Celebrant/Reader joins Worship Leader at the Communion Table

“Which One of Us?”

Reading: Luke 22:14-23

Co-Celebrant/Reader:

When the hour of sunset arrived in Jerusalem,
as Jews began their annual observance of The Passover,
Jesus took his place at the table,
and the apostles with him.

Jesus said to them,
‘I have eagerly desired
to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;
for I tell you, I will not eat it
until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’

Then Jesus took a cup,
and gave thanks.
(Lift up the cup; offer a prayer of thanks to God)

Jesus said to them,
‘Take this and divide it among yourselves;
(Show the cup)

for I tell you that from now on
I will not drink of the fruit of the vine
until the kingdom of God comes.’

Worship Leader:

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread,

and gave thanks,
(Lift up the loaf; offer a prayer of thanks to God)

and Jesus broke it
(Break the loaf)

and gave it to them, saying,
(Show the loaf)

‘This is my body,
which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.’

And Jesus did the same
with the cup after supper, saying,
(Lift up and show the cup)

‘This cup, that is poured out for you,
is the new covenant in my blood.’

But see, the one who betrays me
is with me,
and his hand is on the table.

For the Son of Man is going
as it has been determined,
but woe to that one
by whom he is betrayed!’

Then the disciples began to ask one another:
“Which one of us could it be
who would do this?”

Reader: Tonight, we remember the question
the disciples asked each other:

All: Which one of us could betray Jesus?

Sharing the Elements

Worship Leader:

Everyone is welcome at God’s Table.

We come as we are,

open to whatever gifts God will bestow.

Worship Leader and Co-Celebrant invite Servers up.

Servers are given the elements.

Servers share elements.

Special Music

As meal is shared, provide solemn instrumental music or vocal solo

Servers return to the Communion Table.

The broken loaf and cup/s are left uncovered on the Communion Table.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Worship Leader)

Let us pray:

We give thanks, O Holy One,
for a seat at the Table,
for a life given,
for a new covenant,
for hope in the midst of our failings.
We thank You, too,
for the profound call
to enter the mysteries of Holy Week
in the company of dear souls. Amen. (kms)

Worship Leader sits down.

“Who’s the Greatest?”**Reading: Luke 22:24-34**

Reader:

A dispute also arose among Jesus’ disciples
as to which one of them
was to be regarded as the greatest.

Jesus said to them,

‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them;
and those in authority over them are called benefactors.
But not so with you;
rather the greatest among you
must become like the youngest,
and the leader
like one who serves.
For who is greater,
the one who is at the table
or the one who serves?
Is it not the one at the table?
I am among you as one who serves.

Jesus continued, saying,

‘You are those who have stood by me in my trials;
and I confer on you,
just as my Father has conferred on me,
a kingdom,
so that you may eat and drink at my table
in my kingdom,

and you will sit on thrones
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Reader: Tonight, we remember the question
Jesus asked his disciples at the Passover table:

**ALL: Who is greater -
the one who is at the table or the one who serves?**

“Who will deny Jesus?”

Reading: Luke 22:31-34

Reader:

Jesus spoke, saying:

‘Simon, Simon, listen!
Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat,
but I have prayed for you
that your own faith may not fail;
and you, when once you have turned back,
will strengthen your brothers.’

And Simon said to Jesus,
‘Lord, I am ready to go with you
to prison and to death!’

Jesus said,
‘I tell you, Peter,
the cock will not crow this day,
until you have denied,
three times,
that you know me.’

Reader: Tonight, we remember this question Jesus asked Peter:
All: “Will you deny knowing me?”

“Did You Lack for Anything?”

Reading: Luke 22:35-38

Reader:

Jesus said to the disciples,
‘When I sent you out
without a purse, bag, or sandals,
did you lack anything?’

They said,
‘No, not a thing.’

Jesus said to his disciples,
‘But now, the one who has a purse must take it,
and likewise a bag.

And the one who has no sword
 must sell his cloak and buy one.
 For I tell you,
 this scripture must be fulfilled in me,
 “And he was counted among the lawless”;
 and indeed what is written about me
 is being fulfilled.’

The disciples said,
 ‘Lord, look, here are two swords.’
 Jesus replied,
 ‘It is enough.’

Reader: Tonight, we remember this question
 Jesus asked his disciples:
ALL: “Did you lack for anything?”

“Why Are You Sleeping?”

Reading: 22:39-46

Reader:

Jesus left the meal and went, as was his custom,
 to the Mount of Olives;
 and the disciples followed him.

When Jesus reached the place,
 he said to them,
 ‘Pray that you may not come
 into the time of trial.’

Then Jesus withdrew from them
 about a stone’s throw,
 knelt down,
 and prayed,
 ‘Father, if you are willing,
 remove this cup from me;
 yet, not my will
 but Yours be done.’

When Jesus got up from prayer,
 he came to the disciples
 and found them sleeping because of grief,
 and Jesus said to them,
 ‘Why are you sleeping?
 Get up and pray
 that you may not come
 into the time of trial.’

Reader: Tonight, we remember the question
 Jesus asked his disciples in the olive grove:
ALL: "Why are you sleeping?"

Hymn: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" PRECIOUS LORD/Thomas A Dorsey

- 1) Precious Lord, take my hand, lead on...
- 2) When the way grows drear, precious Lord...
- 3) When the darkness appears and the night draws near...

Worship Leader:

Pastoral Prayer, The Lord's Prayer

"Betraying Kiss? Striking Sword? Bandit?"

Reading: Luke 22:47-53

Reader:

While Jesus was still speaking,
 suddenly a crowd came,
 and the one called Judas, one of the twelve,
 was leading them.

Judas approached Jesus to kiss him;
 but Jesus said to him,
 'Judas, is it with a kiss
 that you are betraying the Son of Man?'

When those who were around Jesus
 saw what was coming,
 they asked,
 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?'

Then one of them struck the slave
 of the high priest Caiaphas
 and cut off his right ear.

Jesus said,
 'No more of this!'
 And Jesus touched the slave's ear
 and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests,
 the officers of the temple police,
 and the elders who had come for him,
 'Have you come out with swords and clubs
 as if I were a bandit?'

When I was with you
 day after day in the temple,

you did not lay hands on me.
But this is your hour,
and the power of darkness!’

Reader: Tonight, we remember the questions
Jesus asked his betrayers:

**ALL: “s it with a kiss that you betray me?
Why treat me like a bandit now?”**

Reader: And we remember the question
the disciples asked Jesus:

ALL: “Should we strike with the sword?”

“Aren’t You with Jesus?”

Reading: Luke 22:54-62

Reader:

Then they seized Jesus and led him away,
bringing him to the high priest Caiaphas’ house.
But Peter was following at a distance.

When they had kindled a fire
in the middle of the courtyard
and sat down together,
Peter sat among them.

Then a servant-girl,
seeing him in the firelight,
stared at Peter and said,
‘This man also was with him.’
But Peter denied it, saying,
‘Woman, I do not know him.’

A little later someone else, on seeing Peter, said,
‘You also are one of them.’
But Peter said,
‘Man, I am not!’

Then about an hour later,
yet another kept insisting,
‘Surely this man also was with him;
for he is a Galilean.’
But Peter said,
‘Man, I do not know what you are talking about!’

At that moment,
while Peter was still speaking,
the cock crowed.

The Lord turned and looked at Peter.
 Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord,
 how Jesus had said to him,
 ‘Before the cock crows today,
 you will deny me three times.’

And Peter went out
 and wept bitterly.

Reader: Tonight, we remember the question
 the people in the courtyard asked Peter:

ALL: “Aren’t you with Jesus?”

Hymn: “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” *SOJOURNER/African-American spiritual*

- 1) I want Jesus, to walk with me...
- 2) In my trials, Lord, walk with me...
- 3) When I’m troubled, Lord, walk with me...

“Who Stuck You? The Son of God? Further Testimony?”

Reading: Luke 22:63-71

Reader:

Now the men who were holding Jesus
 began to mock him and beat him;
 they also blindfolded him
 and kept asking him,
 ‘Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?’
 They kept heaping many other insults on Jesus.

When day came,
 the assembly of the elders of the people,
 both chief priests and scribes, gathered together,
 and they brought Jesus to their council.

They said,
 ‘If you are the Messiah, tell us.’

Jesus replied,
 ‘If I tell you, you will not believe;
 and if I question you, you will not answer.
 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated
 at the right hand of the power of God.’

All of them asked,
 ‘Are you, then, the Son of God?’
 Jesus said to them,
 ‘You say that I am.’

Then they said,
 ‘What further testimony do we need?
 We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!’

Reader: Tonight, we remember the questions
 Jesus was asked at the high priest’s house:

**ALL: “Who struck you?
 Are you the Son of God?
 What further testimony do we need?”**

“Are You the King of the Jews?”

Reading: Luke 23:1-5

Reader:

Then the assembly rose as a body
 and brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate,
 the Prefect of the Roman Providence of Judea.

The assembly began to accuse Jesus, 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 Jesus,
 ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’
 Jesus 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 the chief priests were insistent and said,
 ‘He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea,
 from Galilee where he began even to this place.’

Reader: Tonight, we remember Pilate’s first question to Jesus:

ALL: “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Hymn: “Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley” *LONESOME VALLEY/ American Spiritual*

- 1) Jesus walked this lonesome valley...
- 2) We must walk this lonesome valley...

“Are You Galilean? (No Comment)”

Reading: Luke 23:6-12

Reader:

When Pilate heard this,
 he asked whether Jesus was a Galilean.
 And when Pilate learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction,
 Pilate sent him off to Herod Antipas,

Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.
Herod, himself, was 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 Herod had heard about him
and was hoping to see Jesus perform some sign.
Herod questioned him at some length,
but Jesus gave him no answer.

The chief priests and the scribes stood by,
vehemently accusing Jesus.
Even Herod with his soldiers treated Jesus
with contempt and mocked him;
then Herod put an elegant robe on Jesus,
and sent him back to Pilate.

That same day
Herod and Pilate became friends with each other;
before this they had been enemies.
Reader: Tonight, we remember Pilate's second question to Jesus:
ALL: "Are you a Galilean?"

Reader: And we remember that Herod questioned Jesus at length...
ALL: "But Jesus gave him no answer."

"What Evil Has He Done?"

Reading: Luke 23:13-25

Reader:

Pilate then called together
the Hebrew 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 the chief priests, the leaders, and the people
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 the crowd again;
but they kept shouting,
‘Crucify, crucify him!’

A third time
Pilate said to the chief priests, the leaders, and the people,
‘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 Jesus should be crucified;
and their voices prevailed.
So Pilate gave his verdict
that their demand should be granted.
Pilate 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.

Reader: Tonight, we remember Pilate’s question
to the chief priests, the leaders, and the people about Jesus:

ALL: “Why crucify him; what evil has he done?”

Hymn : *“Were You There?” WERE YOU THERE/African-American Spiritual*

- 1) Were you there when they crucified my Lord...
- 2) Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree...

“If They Do This to When the Wood is Green...?”

Reading: Luke 23:26-31

Reader:

As they led Jesus 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 Jesus,
and among them were women
who were beating their breasts

and wailing for Jesus.
 But Jesus turned to them and said,
 ‘Daughters of Jerusalem,
 do not weep for me,
 but weep for yourselves
 and for your children.
 For the days are surely coming
 when they will say,
 “Blessed are the barren,
 and the wombs that never bore,
 and the breasts that never nursed.”
 Then they will begin to say to the mountains,
 “Fall on us”;
 and to the hills,
 “Cover us.”

For if they do this when the wood is green,
 what will happen when it is dry?’

Reader: Tonight, we remember Jesus’s question
 to the Daughters of Jerusalem:

ALL: “If they do this when the wood is green,
 what will happen when it is dry?”

Hymn: “What Wondrous Love is This” *WONDROUS LOVE/ Appalachian Folk Hymn*

- 1) What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!...
- 2) To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing....

“Aren’t You the Messiah? Don’t You Fear God?”

Reading: Luke 23:32-43

Reader:

Two others also, who were criminals,
 were led away to be put to death with Jesus.

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.
 And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

And the people stood by, watching;
 but the leaders scoffed at Jesus, saying,
 ‘He saved others;
 let him save himself
 if he is the Messiah of God,
 God’s chosen one!’

The soldiers also mocked Jesus,

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 was hanged there,
 kept deriding Jesus saying,
 ‘Aren’t you the Messiah?
 Save yourself and us!’

But the other criminal rebuked him, saying,
 ‘Don’t you 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 the rebuking criminal said,
 ‘Jesus, remember me
 when you come into your kingdom.’

Jesus replied,
 ‘Truly I tell you,
 today you will be with me
 in Paradise.’

Reader: Tonight, we remember the question
 Jesus was asked upon the cross:

ALL: “Aren’t you the Messiah?”

Reader: And we remember the question
 one criminal asked another:

ALL: “Don’t you fear God?”

*Communion Servers, with items for tending the symbolic body of Jesus,
 go to Communion Table.*

“...?”

Reading: Luke 23:44-49

Reader:

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,
Jesus breathed his last.

One of the Communion Servers extinguishes the Christ Candle.

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 Jesus’ acquaintances,
including the women who had followed him from Galilee,
stood at a distance, watching these things.

Reader: Tonight, we join Jesus’ acquaintances, ripe with questions.

ALL: (silence)

Worship Leader: Hold silence for a couple of minutes.

“May I Have the Body of Jesus?”

Reading: Luke 23:50-56

Reader:

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.
Joseph came from the Jewish town of Arimathea,
and he was waiting expectantly
for the kingdom of God.

This man, Joseph of Arimathea,
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.

Communion Servers gently wrap broken loaf, cups and extinguished Christ Candle with cloth. Place wrapped items in the large bowl or basket. Leave in the center of the Communion Table.

Reader:

It was the day of Preparation, Friday,
and the Sabbath was beginning,
sunset was nearing.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed,
and they saw the tomb
and how Jesus' body was laid.
Then they returned,
and prepared spices and ointments.

Communion Servers sprinkle flower petals or herb leaves over the cloth wrapped items in the large bowl or basket.

Reader:

On the Sabbath, sundown Friday to sundown Saturday,
the women rested according to the commandment.

Reader: Tonight, we remember the question
asked by Joseph of Arimathea:

ALL: "May I have the body of Jesus?"

Hymn: "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go" ST. MARGARET/ Matheson, Peace

- 1) O Love that will not let me go...
- 2) O Light that follows all my way...
- 3) O Joy that seeks me through my pain...
- 4) O Cross that raises up my head...

We Depart

Benediction (*Worship Leader*)

My friends, tonight we leave this place with questions.
May we hold them close as we await
the rising of Christ on Easter morn. Amen. ✠ (kms)

SILENCE

*Worship Leader exits. No Postlude.
We leave the Sanctuary in silence.*

✠

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