

The passion of our Lord according to St John

in dialogue form with chorale verses

St John's passion narrative in dialogue form was released by the Department of Liturgics in 1989 for use in the Lutheran Church of Australia. The following revised version, with chorale verses, was issued by the Department in 1994.

NOTES

- 1 This passion narrative is for use in the Good Friday service. Alternatively, it may be used on Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday).
- 2 The narrative consists of the full gospel reading appointed for Good Friday (John 18,19). The text is from the *Good News Bible: Today's English Version* (Revised Australian Edition copyright © American Bible Society New York 1993), adapted for different readers to read the parts of the various speakers. It is interspersed with hymn (chorale) verses in modernised wording. The seven chorale tunes are ones used in JS Bach's Passions; six of them occur in his St John Passion and one (O sacred head) in his St Matthew Passion.
- 3 The chorale verses break up the long reading, and also provide congregational responses to the passion narrative, helping to relate it to the lives of the hearers.
- 4 The chorale verses chosen here link thematically with the narrative at the points where they occur. Most, if not all, should be singable by most congregations. However, some verses may be sung or led by a choir. Other suitable hymn verses may be substituted or added.
- 5 The hymn references are to *Lutheran Hymnal* (LH). For some tunes, the *Australian Hymn Book* gives alternative settings. The *old Australian Lutheran Hymn Book* also gives isometric (rather than rhythmic) versions for Chorale 2, Chorale 3, and Chorale 6. An alternative harmonisation for Chorale 7 may be found in the *American Lutheran Book of Worship* (no.325). A choir may choose to use Bach harmonisations for the chorales.
- 6 Chorale preludes are also available for all of the tunes, eg by J S Bach, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, and J G Walther; these may be found in *the Concordia Hymn Prelude Series*, particularly volumes 7–9. The use of preludes would be more appropriate for a Palm Sunday presentation rather than at a good Friday service.
- 7 The congregation does not need to have the gospel narrative printed out, but only the chorale verses with the headings and the gospel references in between, eg 'Jesus is arrested (John 18:1–11)'. Congregations are hereby given permission to reproduce the chorale verses for use in worship.
- 8 The minister introduces the reading in the Good Friday order as normal. The liturgical response at the end of the gospel may be omitted since the final chorale verse follows as a response immediately after the conclusion of the reading.
- 9 The number of readers can be adapted. Some of the minor parts may be read by the same reader; the girl, guard, other person, and slave speak only once, and Peter twice.
- 10 Those taking part in the reading should rehearse well beforehand. The parts must be read clearly and with meaning, but not overdramatically. Restraint, rather than overstatement, is appropriate, particularly on Good Friday, since this is a public liturgical reading of the gospel, which should be allowed to speak for itself.
- 11 A simple reading, rather than an acting, may be preferable, particularly on Good Friday; the readers may be hidden and the voices heard over a PA system. If the narrative is acted out as a drama on Good Friday, the presentation should be restrained, with few props, in keeping with the austerity of the day.
- 12 The number of other hymns in the service may be reduced, and the sermon may be shorter than usual. Other optional parts of the service may be omitted.

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The parts: Narrator

Jesus

Group

Girl

Peter

Guard

Other person

Slave

Pilate

JESUS IS ARRESTED (JOHN 18:1–11)

Narrator: Jesus left with his disciples and went across the Kidron Valley.

There was a garden there, and Jesus and his disciples went in.

Judas, the traitor, knew where it was, because many times Jesus had met there with his disciples. So Judas went to the garden, taking with him a group of Roman soldiers, and some Temple guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees; they were armed and carried lanterns and torches. Jesus knew everything that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward and asked them,

Jesus: Who is it you are looking for?

Group: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus: I am he.

Narrator: Judas, the traitor, was standing there with them. When Jesus said to them, 'I am he', they moved back and fell to the ground. Again Jesus asked them,

Jesus: Who is it you are looking for?

Group: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus: I have already told you that I am he. If, then, you are looking for me, let these others go.

Narrator: He said this so that what he had said might come true: 'Father, I have not lost even one of those you gave me'.

Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the High Priest's slave, cutting off his right ear. The name of the slave was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter,

Jesus: Put your sword back in its place! Do you think that I will not drink the cup of suffering which my Father has given me?

CHORALE 1

Lord, may your will on earth be done

as it is done before your throne.

If joy or sorrow comes our way,

help us, with patience, to obey.

Curb flesh and blood and every ill

that sets itself against your will.

Martin Luther

Tune: Vater unser, LH 421

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS (JOHN 18:12–23)

Narrator: Then the Roman soldiers with their commanding officer and the Jewish guards arrested Jesus, tied him up, and took him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jewish authorities that it was better that one man should die for all the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. That other disciple was well known to the High Priest, so he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest's house, while Peter stayed outside by the gate. Then the other disciple went back out, spoke to the girl at the gate, and brought Peter inside. The girl at the

gate said to Peter,

Girl: Aren't you also one of the disciples of that man?

Peter: No, I am not.

Narrator: It was cold, so the servants and guards had built a charcoal fire and were standing around it, warming themselves. So Peter went over and stood with them, warming himself.

The High Priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered,

Jesus: I have always spoken publicly to everyone; all my teaching was done in the synagogues and in the Temple, where all the people come together. I have never said anything in secret. Why, then, do you question me? Question the people who heard me. Ask them what I told them — they know what I said.

Narrator: When Jesus said this, one of the guards there slapped him and said,

Guard: How dare you talk like that to the High Priest!

Jesus: If I have said anything wrong, tell everyone here what it was. But if I am right in what I have said, why do you hit me?

CHORALE 2

**My Lord, who dares to beat you,
so badly to mistreat you,
and bring you to your death?
Though meekly you've submitted,
no sins have you committed,
while we are sinful from our birth.
I caused your grief and trembling
with countless sins, resembling
the sand-grains by the sea;
my sins brought your distresses,
the burden that oppresses
and tortures you so painfully.**

Paul Gerhardt

Tune: O Welt, ich muss dich lassen (Innsbruck), LH 58

PETER DENIES JESUS (JOHN 18:24–27)

Narrator: Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to Caiaphas the High Priest. Peter was still standing there keeping himself warm. So the others said to him,

Other

person: Aren't you also one of the disciples of that man?

Peter: No, I am not.

Narrator: One of the High Priest's slaves, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, spoke up.

Slave: Didn't I see you with him in the garden?

Narrator: Again Peter said 'No' — and at once a cock crowed.

CHORALE 3

**Jesus, help me ponder now
on your holy passion;
send to me your Spirit's power
for such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
may the image cherish
of your suffering, pain, and death,
that I may not perish.**

Siegmund von Birken

Tune: Christus, der uns selig, LH 59

or Jesu Kreuz, Leiden und Pein, Supplement (Harmony ed) A6

JESUS BEFORE PILATE (JOHN 18:28–38A)

Narrator: Early in the morning Jesus was taken from Caiaphas' house to the governor's palace. The Jewish authorities did not go inside the palace, for they wanted to keep themselves ritually clean, in order to be able to eat the Passover meal. So Pilate went outside to them

and asked,

Pilate: What do you accuse this man of?

Group: We would not have brought him to you if he had not committed a crime.

Pilate: Then you yourselves take him and try him according to your own law.

Group: We are not allowed to put anyone to death.

Narrator: This happened in order to make the words of Jesus come true, the words he used to indicate the kind of death he would die.

Pilate went back into the palace and called Jesus.

Pilate: Are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus: Does this question come from you or have others told you about me?

Pilate: Do you think I am a Jew? It was your own people and the chief priests who handed you over to me. What have you done?

Jesus: My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here!

Pilate: Are you a king, then?

Jesus: You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth listens to me.

Pilate: And what is truth?

CHORALE 4

**O King eternal, Lord so true and mighty,
how can I thank you, praise such kindness rightly?**

**No gifts are worthy, nothing could I offer,
now or forever.**

**My loving Saviour, I cannot repay you
for all your mercy; I can only pray you:
Grant me your Spirit, since you died to win me,
and reign within me.**

Johann Heermann

Tune: *Herzliebster Jesu*, LH 55

JESUS IS SENTENCED AND CRUCIFIED (JOHN 18:38B–19:22)

Narrator: Then Pilate went back outside to the people and said to them,

Pilate: I cannot find any reason to condemn him. But according to the custom you have, I always set free a prisoner for you during the Passover. Do you want me to set free for you the king of the Jews?

Narrator: They answered him with a shout,

Group: No, not him! We want Barabbas!

Narrator: Barabbas was a bandit.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. The soldiers made a crown out of thorny branches and put it on his head; then they put a purple robe on him and came to him and said,

Group: Long live the King of the Jews!

Narrator: And they went up and slapped him.

Pilate went back out once more and said to the crowd,

Pilate: Look, I will bring him out here to you to let you see that I cannot find any reason to condemn him.

Narrator: So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Look! Here is the man!

Narrator: When the chief priests and the Temple guards saw him, they shouted,

Group: Crucify him! Crucify him!

Pilate: You take him, then, and crucify him. I find no reason to condemn him.

Group: We have a law that says he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.

Narrator: When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid. He went back into the palace and asked Jesus,

Pilate: Where do you come from?

Narrator: But Jesus did not answer. Pilate said to him,

Pilate: You will not speak to me? Remember, I have the authority to set you free and also to have you crucified.

Jesus: You have authority over me only because it was given to you by God. So the man who handed me over to you is guilty of a worse sin.

Narrator: When Pilate heard this, he tried to find a way to set Jesus free. But the crowd shouted back,

Group: If you set him free, that means that you are not the Emperor's friend! Anyone who claims to be a king is a rebel against the Emperor!

Narrator: When Pilate heard these words, he took Jesus outside and sat down on the judge's seat in the place called 'The Stone Pavement'. (In Hebrew the name is 'Gabbatha'.) It was then almost midday on the day before the Passover. Pilate said to the people,

Pilate: Here is your king!

Group: Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!

Pilate: Do you want me to crucify your king?

Group: The only king we have is the Emperor!

Narrator: Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took charge of Jesus. He went out, carrying his cross, and came to 'The Place of the Skull', as it is called. (In Hebrew it is called 'Golgotha'). There they crucified him; and they also crucified two other men, one on each side, with Jesus between them. Pilate wrote a notice and had it put on the cross. 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews', is what he wrote. Many of the people read it, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city. The notice was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The chief priests said to Pilate,

Group: Do not write 'The King of the Jews', but rather, 'This man said, I am the King of the Jews'.

Pilate: What I have written stays written.

CHORALE 5

**When darkness gathers round me,
your name and cross, still bright,
deep in my heart are gleaming
like stars in blackest night.
In this may I find comfort,
that you, so patiently,
have shed your blood and suffered,
and died, my Lord, for me.**

Valerius Herberger

Tune: Valet will ich dir geben (St Theodulph), LH 474

JESUS DIES (JOHN 19:23–30)

Narrator: After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe, which was made of one piece of woven cloth without any seams in it. The soldiers said to one another,

Group: Let's not tear it; let's throw dice to see who will get it.

Narrator: This happened in order to make the scripture come true:

They divided my clothes among themselves
and gambled for my robe.

And this is what the soldiers did.

Standing close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

The congregation stands.

Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother,

Jesus: He is your son.

Narrator: Then he said to the disciple,

Jesus: She is your mother.

Narrator: From that time the disciple took her to live in his home. Jesus knew that by now everything had been completed; and in order to make the scripture come true, he said,

Jesus: I am thirsty.

Narrator: A bowl was there, full of cheap wine; so a sponge was soaked in the wine, put on a stalk of hyssop, and lifted up to his lips. Jesus drank the wine and said,

Jesus: It is finished.

Narrator: Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

A moment of silence may be observed.

CHORALE 6

**O sacred head sore wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down;**

**O royal head surrounded
with thorns your only crown:
death's shadows rise before you,
the glow of life decays;
yet hosts of heaven adore you
and tremble as they gaze.**

**Lord, when I am departing,
O do not part from me;
when pangs of death are darting,
come, Lord, and set me free;
and when my heart must languish
amid the final throe,
release me from my anguish
by your own pain and woe.**

Paul Gerhardt

Tune: Herzlich tut mich (Passion Chorale), LH 52

JESUS IS BURIED (JOHN 19:31–42)

Narrator: Then the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to allow them to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, and to take the bodies down from the crosses. They requested this because it was Friday, and they did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the Sabbath, since the coming Sabbath was especially holy. So the soldiers went and broke the legs of the first man and then of the other man who had been crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, plunged his spear into Jesus' side, and at once blood and water poured out. (The one who saw this happen has spoken of it, so that you also may believe. What he said is true, and he knows that he speaks the truth.) This was done to make the scripture come true:

'Not one of his bones will be broken'.

And there is another scripture which says,

'People will look at him whom they pierced'.

After this, Joseph, who was from the town of Arimathea, asked Pilate if he could take Jesus' body. (Joseph was a follower of Jesus, but in secret, because he was afraid of the Jewish authorities.) Pilate told him he could have the body, so Joseph went and took it away. Nicodemus, who at first had gone to see Jesus at night, went with Joseph, taking with him about thirty

kilograms of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes.
The two men took Jesus' body and wrapped it in linen with the spices according to the Jewish custom of preparing a body for burial. There was a garden in the place where Jesus had been put to death, and in it there was a new tomb where no one had ever been buried. Since it was the day before the Sabbath and because the tomb was close by, they placed Jesus' body there.

CHORALE 7

**Lord Jesus, let your angels come,
when I must die, to bear me home,
my soul to heaven taking.
My resting body safely keep
secure in gentle painless sleep,
till earth's last great awaking.
Then raise me, Lord, that I may be
with you in joy, and always see,
O Son of God, your glorious face,
my Saviour, and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ,
O grant to me, grant this to me,
I'll sing your praise eternally.**

Martin Schalling

Tune: Herzlich lieb, LH 385