

Welcome to

First Mennonite Church

Denver, CO



I Was There

Good Friday
April 15, 2022

*That you may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

We invite you to join the congregation in singing the songs marked with ♪.

Good Friday: I Was There

Wondrous Love (arr. Johnson)

Opening Words

Barabbas Monologue

Charlie Ferguson

I, Barabbas, am a rebel, a thief and a murderer! I am a criminal in the eyes of Rome. And the council isn't very fond of me either. I defy them all and I expect to die for it, too. I have stolen from the fat cows that populate this land. When they tried to stop me, I killed one of them. Just yesterday... Do I regret it? No. I only regret getting caught.

My bad luck. But life is mostly bad luck anyway. If I hadn't robbed and killed, I'd have starved in the street and nobody'd care. Dead. Dead either way.

The cruelty of the cross: strung up like so much rotting meat and dying slowly in the sun. The humiliation, the mocking. I am a tough guy, but that... I can't even imagine... I don't want to die that way. Who would? Wouldn't you do what you could to get out of such a cruel and painful death!? Wouldn't you fight it?!

I want to get out of this miserable death. And my luck may be about to change. Pilate, during this... whatever holiday... lets the local people pick one prisoner to go free. I was thinking, however, that they would never let me go free. However, there's this "rabbi," Jesus of Nazareth, who was arrested on some ridiculous charges. I could believe he was set up by the ruling religious council because he teaches peace and love; he doesn't follow all the rules. He even heals the Sabbath! He challenges the status quo. He scares them to death! I gotta respect anyone who can scare those pompous windbags. I am hoping he has scared them bad enough they will not let them go. I, at least, am doing something to stop the oppression, and not just doing a lot of talking.

Hang on, I hear something... I can't believe it. The crowd is calling my name. Wait. Wait! Pilate's asking them again who should be set free. The yelling my

name! They want Pilate to set me free and to crucify the rabbi! Pilate says they should crucify the rabbi themselves. The crazy crowd isn't going for it. They want Rome to do it for them. The crowd seriously wants to kill the man that preaches peace and love?! And the rabbi is doing nothing to defend himself. Such a great talker, but can't talk his way outta this mess.

There! They have condemned this Jesus, lover of peace. See what his message got him! A cruel death. A death that I should have died, but I was willing to fight for my freedom. Hey, Jesus! Thanks...for your meekness.

Hey, Legionnaire! You heard the crowd, come release me. Jesus is gonna die, not me.

Thanks to him, I have been set free!

Opening Prayer

♪ When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Voices Together 323

- Vs 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.
- Vs 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 through his blood.
- Vs 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 composed so rich a crown?
- Vs 4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 That were an off'ring far too small.
 Love so amazing, so divine,
 Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Call to Worship

Leader: Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

People: We were the hollow echo of hosannas once spoken in love.

Leader: Were you in the garden when the disciples fell asleep?

People: We were the betrayal in Judas's kiss.

Leader: Were you in the courtyard when the cock crowed?

People: We were the denial on Peter's lips.

Leader: Were you among the scoffers when Jesus was flogged?

People: We were the whip in the soldier's hand.

Leader: Were you in Pilate's chamber when he washed his hands of Jesus' fate?

People: We were the hatred of the crowd, and the indifference in Pilate's heart.

Leader: Were you with the powers of this world when the soldiers dressed Jesus as a king?

People: We were the mockery in the crown of thorns.

Leader: Were you among the spectators at Golgotha?

People: We were the nail that pierced Jesus' hands and feet.

Leader: Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

People: We were the silence when no bird sang.

♪ *Were You There* (vs 1)

VT 329

Vs 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?

Reader 1: Doubt

Arlen Hershberger

I am Doubt, yes, I was there. I was there through the whole ordeal. But I was with this One all along, right from the very beginning. I was there in the wilderness. It was I who said, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones be turned into bread." I was trying to convince this One even then that it was foolish for believing that he was the Promised One, that he could have any effect on humankind and its destiny. But this One was too strong

for me then. He pushed me aside and began his work. But I am not to be dismissed that easily.

I followed and I attacked him again and again. But I went about it in a different way. I lashed out through his followers, those who came to hear his teachings. But again I failed. For his words warmed even the saddest of hearts, the blind received their sight, the lame walked, and the dead returned to life.

But I was not to be outdone. I remain with his followers, and some of them I won. Through my efforts, some of them sought ways to trap him, discredit him, and finally destroy him. I even worked my way into his circle of friends. I convinced one of them to betray him.

It took a lot of doing, but I had him where I wanted him. Because of me he said, "Let this cup pass from me." He was wondering if it had to be this way. He was doubting the climax of his mission. Yes, he knew that I was there. He had seen my presence in the face of his followers, and once again he was feeling my attempt to surround him.

I am Doubt.

And I was there.

I was there, but I failed to destroy him. Once again, he dismissed me with, "Not my will, but thine be done." I was there, but this One overcame me.

Ah, Holy Jesus (arr. Carter)

Reader 2: Sorrow

Marylou Shelly

I am Sorrow, and I was there; believe me, I was there. I, too, attacked the One with a vengeance. Many have fallen from the broken heart that I inflict, but not this One. Many have abandoned their goals, their hopes and dreams, and have chosen to live in self-pity. But again, he did not.

I did my best to defeat him. I reminded him constantly that he was unwanted in this world. I came to him as rejection, scorn, and ridicule. I tried to tell him he was ridiculous for loving those who did not want him. I did my best, but I, too, failed.

Oh, I brought him plenty of heartache. I caused tears to fill his eyes on many occasions. But I could not break him; I couldn't even make him feel sorry for himself. Even as he was struggling under this cross, his thoughts were on others. He said, "Daughter of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children." I inflicted myself heavily upon him, but could not destroy him.

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (arr. Carter)

Reader 3: Fear

Jennifer Miller

I am Fear, and I was there. I literally surrounded this One. I was with him in the garden. It was I who placed those great drops of sweat upon his forehead. I danced at him in the soldiers flaming torches, and I winked at him in the glistening of their swords and spears. I was present in every crack of the whip, and I was in the descending hammer that drove the nails through his hands and feet.

I was quite effective against his disciples. One of them denied even knowing him, and they all ran like frightened children. I felt certain that I could destroy him. I longed to hear his voice beg for mercy. I longed to hear him promise to leave the country and abandon his foolish mission. I longed to hear this, but he remained silent. He refused to defend himself; he refused to retract anything he said. To be sure, he felt my presence, but I couldn't destroy him. I have failed.

♪ ***Were You There*** (vs 2)

VT 329

Vs 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?

Reader 4: Shame

Chris Grider

I am Shame, and, I, too was there. Perhaps I failed because he was so used to me by now. I have been with this One since his birth. I was in the manger, the "king's" "cradle. I was beside him in Nazareth when his friends and neighbors ran him out of town as a false prophet. I was in the sneering faces

of his tormentors. I was the crown of thrones around his head. I was in the dice that the soldiers threw as they gambled for his clothing. I was in the sign that they hung over his head. I was in the cross itself, making it heavier as he carried it. I was there, but I could not break his spirit.

Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed (arr. Martin)

Reader 5: Agony

David Yost

I am Agony, and, I, too was there. I did not let this One forget my presence for one minute. I burned into his forehead with the thorns. I caused the sweat to trickle into his lash marks. I caused him to fall with weariness under the burden of the cross. Then I attacked him as brutally as I could. I ran across his body as the nail pierced his flesh. I caused his tongue to swell and burn with thirst. I beat upon him with the hot rays of the sun, causing his body to dehydrate.

As I was increasing my attack to its strongest, I leaped for joy. I thought I had succeeded. I heard him cry, “my God, my God, why?” But my celebration was premature, for with his final words, he entrusted himself into God’s hands. I am Agony, and I inflicted him greatly, but I, too, failed to destroy him.

Were You There (arr. Martin)

Reader 6: Hate

Barb Stutzman

I am Hate, and, I, too was there. And how I hated this One. But you see I hated everybody, for I am hate. I do love my job well, and I intended to destroy this teacher of love. And I tried, believe me, I tried, but what were the results? He said, “Father forgive...” I couldn’t even make this One hate that miserable wretch hanging beside him who asked for mercy. He wouldn’t curse his tormentors, he wouldn’t curse his Father, and, worst of all, he wouldn’t curse himself for going through with this foolish endeavor. Oh, how I hated him, but I couldn’t make him hate me. This One is my greatest failure of all time.

♪ **Were You There** (vs 3)

VT 329

Vs 3 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?

Reader 7: Death

Stephanie Phibbs

I am Death, and, I, too was there. Unlike my colleagues, I did not fail. Sooner or later everyone falls beneath my power, and this One was no different from the rest. Yes, he made a lot of grand promises; even referring to himself as the Resurrection and the Life. But today I proved that all, even this One, must submit to my eternal darkness. I proved that the peace, joy, and the love this One spoke of will melt away in my presence. Tonight I reign victorious, and this One lies defeated.

This war is over!

I have won!

I am Death and the victory is mine!

♪ **Stay with me**

VT 627

Stay with me, remain here with me,
Watch and pray, watch and pray.

Amazing Grace

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Wondrous Love

Music: American traditional, *Southern Harmony*, 1840
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When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Text: Isaac Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 1707
Music: Lowell Mason, 1824, *Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection...*, 3rd ed., 1825

Were You There

Text: African American spiritual, *Journal of American Folklore*, April-June 1897
Music: African American spiritual, *Old Plantation Hymns*, 1899

Ah, Holy Jesus

Music: Johann Crüger, *Neues vollkômliches Gesangbuch, Vol. II*, 1640
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O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Music: Hans L. Hassler, *Lustgarten neuer Teutscher Gesäng*, 1601
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Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed

Music: Hugh Wilson, before 1824
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Stay With Me

Text: German; based on Matthew 26:38-42, Mark 14:32-36, Luke 22:39-46, *Music from Taizé*, vol. 2; English trans. Taizé Community
Music: Jacques Berthier, *Music from Taizé*, vol. 2
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Were You There

Music: African American spiritual
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Amazing Grace

Music: American traditional, *Columbian Harmony*, 1829

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Song Leader: Charlie Ferguson

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Sanctuary Arts: Paul Johnson and Jennifer Miller

Sound & Video Tech: Nikki & Steve Kandel

Bulletin & PowerPoint Production: Marie Voth

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Thanks to all who generously shared their attention and talents to make this service a time of encouragement and challenge in our walk of faith.



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