

The Tenebrae

Introduction & Meditation #1

Meditation on Luke 23:32-37 Christ's 1st Word from the Cross

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” ³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me;
They pierce my hands and my feet. *Psalm 22:16*

They divide my garments among them
And cast lots for my clothing *Psalm 22:18*

He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors. *Isaiah 53:12*

Lights OFF

Introduction

The Cross of Christ, it is a defining moment in our faith and our lives as followers of Jesus. Christ Himself announced on Maundy Thursday as He taught His disciples, ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He who hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’ Jn 15:18-25

Yes, dear friends, the cross reminds us that we will face crosses of our own. Yet even in the struggles, Christ's cross provides strength and hope for here we see Jesus, who remained perfect in our stead that we would be counted among God's own children. Here we see Jesus, who suffered for our sins that we need not fear judgment.

Flip Page

Meditation #1

Two of the three had earned their places on the cross, One had not. It's a greater travesty even than that! All of humanity, save One, had earned places on those crosses, earned places in the final judgment of God. Yet One hangs for all. Stripped of all dignity, naked before His accusers, perfection is ridiculed and tormented. Pulverized and abused, Jesus must endure the snarling temptations of satan which fall so freely from their mouths. What is asked of Him? To undo the very act He has come to this moment for. Come down from the cross, save Himself, save Himself from all that would save us.

One wonders how often satan's voice has filled our mouths with the foul taste of his torturous accusations. How often have we accused God of not loving us in the crosses of this life? How often have we raised our voices to the King of Creation letting Him know that our will should exceed His own? As if He never warned us that crosses would come, even force us to give up the things of this world for the heavenly treasure that will comfort us for all eternity.

Over all of it, the voice of God is heard even as hands and feet are pierced with nails, as blood so freely flows from His thorn-pierced head and flagellated and beaten body, as they gamble for the clothes that once covered Him. *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* Those words aren't meant just for Roman soldiers or the Jewish crowd so hungry for blood. Those words are spoken for you, they are spoken for me. Forgiveness is what He wants for all of us. He lifts our eyes from this sin-filled world to His ultimate goal, He would have you for all eternity.

We pray:

Gracious Savior, You did not strike back with revenge against Your enemies as they ridiculed You and crucified You, but prayed for their forgiveness. In Your compassion, pardon us for our secret sins and sins we do not discern, and enlighten us to know and do Your will. Amen.

The First Candle is extinguished

Lights ON

Son of God, by God Forsaken (#421: 1-2, 5-6)

sung to the tune Beach Spring (517: Praise the one who breaks the darkness)

Meditation #2

Meditation on Luke 23:38-43 Christ's 2nd Word from the Cross

³⁸ *There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.* ³⁹ *One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"* ⁴⁰ *But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"* ⁴¹ *We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.* ⁴² *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."* ⁴³ *Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

All who see me mock me;

They hurl insults, shaking their heads. *Psalm 22:7*

"He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him."

Let him deliver him, since he delights in him. *Psalm 22:8*

Remember me, Lord when You show favor to Your people.

Come to my aid when You save them. *Psalm 106:4*

Lights OFF

Meditation #2

Now one of the two guilty parties joins the fray. His mind has bought the lie satan had spewed from the crowds. Yes, if Jesus is the Messiah, if He's really God incarnate, then He should be able to make my life easier. Oh, how quickly we forget. My problems, though I very rarely see them that way, are often caused by my sin. We need someone to jolt us back to reality, we need a voice.

It comes from an odd source on this day. The other criminal reminds him of why he hangs there, even as he points with faith to the one who hangs between them. The Law stings but it's needed. It exposes my feeble attempts to cast blame in other directions when it really needs to land on me. I need this that I may by grace and through faith travel from one side of the cross to the other. Calling out to Christ for help only he can provide.

Dear friends, this Good Friday as once again find ourselves peering up at the cross of Savior. May we be honest with ourselves. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of our God. Because of it, we deserve far worse than the crosses these criminals endured. Yes, sometimes ... more times than we ever really want to admit ... crosses are not placed upon us by others. We endure hardship because of our sin. And when we do, may a voice call us from our foolhardy attempts to pass our failure off on others or even onto God and back to the wonderful reality of what our savior does for us.

Yes, in the faith of the second criminal, may we turn to the one who has done everything for us and pray "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*" Jesus' answer is always the same, "*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.*"

We pray:

Mighty Redeemer, Remember us as we walk through the darkest valleys of life and realize that our time on earth is ending. Stay close to us we we feel the pain and loneliness of dying and take away our fears with Your certain promise of paradise. Amen.

The Second Candle is extinguished

Lights ON

Jesus, in Your Dying Woes (#435:1-2, 6)

Meditation #3

Meditation on John 19:25-27 Christ's 3rd Word from the Cross

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel,
and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

And a sword will pierce your own soul too. *Luke 2:34-35*

Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?

Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven

is my brother and sister and mother. *Matthew 12:48 & 50*

Lights OFF

Meditation #3

Loneliness, if the talking heads are correct, we live in an epidemic of it in our world today. More connected to information than ever before, we seem ever so distant from one another. Blame what you will for this reality but every problem, every evil which we endure is caused by one little word, sin. It has plagued the lives of humanity ever since the fateful day in Eden. It plagues us still. How often in as we lead our own lives, are consumed by our own problems do we pass by the needs of others? How often do we pretend not to see when we aren't consumed by problems but just don't want to get down in the dirt with someone who may need us more than we could possibly imagine? Ah, how often when we could use someone else don't we lash out to embarrassed by what we think as failure to cry for help? Loneliness, it may be an epidemic but it too is so often of our own making.

Notice again, the depth of Jesus love. Even in the depth of suffering we could never fully comprehend, because of Him will never comprehend, He does not draw inward but still even here thinks of others. Still even here His heart goes out to His mother, His beloved disciple.

Yes, even here, but even for us. Yes, even for us, His love shines forth to provide perfection where our sinfulness shines forth to grant forgiveness even when I turn inward, even when I would lock others out. Even here, especially here, He is perfect for all the times our crosses get the better of us. Ah, yes, dear Christian, you are His family too.

We pray:

Precious Jesus, You consider us friends and care about the needs of our bodies and souls. Keep us in Your care as we walk the road of life and provide the blessings we need to gain safety, contentment, and joy in Your service. Amen.

The Third Candle is extinguished

Lights ON

O Perfect Life of Love (#431: 1-4)

Meditation #4

Meditation on Matthew 27:45-49 Christ's 4th Word from the Cross

⁴⁵ From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ Immediately, one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

**Why are You so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?.**

Psalm 22:1

My God, I cry out by day but You do not answer,

By night, but I find no rest.

Psalm 22:2

"In that day," declares the sovereign Lord,

"I will make the sun go down at noon"

And darken the earth in broad daylight.

Amos 8:9

Lights OFF

Meditation #4

Ah, now loneliness seizes Jesus. Having assured us of His loving care and concern, who will care for Him? The answer pierces the heart. For no one, no one can render aid as he cries out. Nothing can console the pain caused when God turns His back. This is hell, very literally Jesus is suffering hell here on the cross.

It is too much! We want to cry out for God to stop. The pain of his battered and torn body pressed on the rough and splintered wood, thorns pressing into the bones of his skull even as nails tear at sinew and tendon, blood and fluid slowly filling His lungs as His body panics for air, this is all bad enough, horrific enough but hell!?! Jesus never deserved this, has not earned this! Why should God turn His back on Him?

The answer is hard to hear. For You! For all the times you turned and ran instead of standing and fighting. For all the times pain or simply the prospect of it had you turn your back on God and fail to stand and be counted with Him. Here He is, God abandoned by God because it is what you, what I deserve for all of our sin. He faces this moment, torment we will never know for precisely that reason ... that instead of hell, we might look forward to heaven through His cross.

We pray:

Lord Jesus, You endured the horrific penalty of our sins as Your Father turned His face from You on the cross. Compel us to see in Your sacrifice the dreadful nature of sin and call us to acknowledge the amazing depth of Your love. Overcome our shame, dear Savior, and give us grateful faith. Amen.

The Fourth Candle is extinguished

Lights ON

O Dearest Jesus (#432: 1, 3, 4)

Meditation #5

Meditation on John 19:28-29 Christ's 5th Word from the Cross

²⁸ Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;

You lay me in the dust of death

Psalm 22:15

I am worn out calling for help;

My throat is parched.

Psalm 69:3

They put gall in my food

And gave me vinegar for my thirst.

Psalm 69:21

Lights OFF

Meditation #5

The sun in Israel is hot. His body has hung in pain and agony all day. Hell has assaulted Him with fiercer blows than the soldiers could have ever mustered. Now, dehydration adds itself to the long list of agony. But John is careful to let us know that this is more than a simple note to let us know that Jesus' suffering was real, that He felt it all, just as we would, just as those criminals did. No, even here Jesus' words carry deeper meaning.

It has been said that during His life Jesus fulfilled over 300 Old Testament Prophecies. I believe we can go farther even than that. For every word of the Old Testament drives us to Him. This is no different. "I am thirsty" fulfills as many prophecies as there are words and why? For you and me.

It's all that we might be saved. That we might be forgiven and in forgiveness find strength and purpose even in our own sufferings, our own crosses. For the same God who fulfilled every word of Scripture has promised that your crosses aren't pointless but accomplish good, even when we struggle to see it. That even then, He stands beside us, cares for and comforts us. And here we see it perhaps better than anywhere else. For if He loved you this much, to endure all this, well surely, He remains with you still today ... just as He promises.

We pray:

Dear Jesus, as our brother on earth, You endured the agony of pain that besieged Your body when Your sacrifice was complete. Knowing our experiences, hover over us with Your care and compassion when our bodies and hearts are hurting. Provide us with strength that we may confess You with confidence and power. Amen.

The Fifth Candle is extinguished

Lights ON

I Lay My Sins On Jesus (#372:1-2)

Meditation #6

Meditation on John 19:30 Christ's 6th Word from the Cross

³⁰ When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David
and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
to cleanse them from sin and impurity. *Zechariah 13:1*

Because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. *Zechariah 9:11*

I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. *Zechariah 3:9*

**For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."** *Hebrews 8:12*

Lights OFF

Meditation #6

It's a message we struggle to understand. It is but one word Loudly spoken: Tetelestai ... It is Finished! The world immediately cries "impossible!" It may be done for Jesus but there is still so much for us to do. We must live in such a way that gain this prize He has won. We must grasp the forgiveness He so willingly holds out. We must do something!

They all would call Him a liar here even in His final moments. Jesus says all is done and He means it. Yes, dear Christian, behold how great the love of the Father that He sent His Son to suffer the penalty of our guilt fully, perfectly, completely! Behold how beyond measure is the love of the Son that He willingly came and endured it all for me, even for me, and for you, even for you! Behold the love so above all understanding that He sent and still sends the Holy Spirit in Word and in Sacraments so that – are you ready for it? – we might actually believe this message so beyond our human reason, so utterly past human love or sentiment.

"It is Finished!" My penalty hanging over me is paid for in full! The devil's chains are shattered and hell's claim to my guilt-ridden body and soul are cancelled! All the righteous wrath of God is gone! The fear of His anger when I suffer in life, the fear of death as I approach the next, all of it is done for! The dread though that I must do something to earn God's favor, the burden of knowing that nothing in me can undo what I have done, all that is gone! IT IS FINISHED!! Listen to that Word! Jesus, and Jesus alone – the Son of God and Mary's Son – He has done it all, fulfilled it all, finished it all!

May this message never grow old; for there is not a day, not an hour, not a moment, when I do not need Your finished work for me. Therefore give me this my gracious God, May I Hear these words and cry out with the church of every generation: Thee we adore, O Savior, because by your holy cross and passion You have redeemed the world – and therefore have redeemed me, even me!

We pray:

Gracious Redeemer, You paid the full price for our redemption and have released us forever from the hold of satan, the power of sin, and the fear of death. Protect us from the devil's claim that we need to do more and from the accusation of our conscience that we have not done enough. Lord, lead us to place our entire confidence in You and to live our lives secure in Your grace. Amen.

The Sixth Candle is extinguished

Lights ON

Christ, the Life of All the Living (114:1,6,7)

Mediation #7

Meditation on Luke 23:44-49 Christ's 7th Word from the Cross

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." ⁴⁸ When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. ⁴⁹ But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Into Your hands I Commit my spirit;

Deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

Psalm 31:5

He has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one;

He has not hidden His face from him

but has listened to his cry for help.

Psalm 22:24

I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. *Zechariah 3:9*

For I will forgive their wickedness

and will remember their sins no more."

Hebrews 8:12

He poured out his life unto death,

and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,

and made intercession for the transgressors. *Isaiah 53:12*

Lights OFF

Mediation #7

It sounds ridiculous when we say it. This is not a defeat. How could it be? With His dying breath, He quotes His powerful Word. Psalm 31 is on His lips as He calls in peace to God and addresses Him as "Father" again. It was the Father who sent Him, the Father who so loved the world that He would spare His Son no agony, no torment, to accomplish our redemption. It was the Father who sent Him with this loving goal in mind, giving His Son the honor only He could win and that by the cross, the honor of being the Savior of the World (Phil. 2:9-11). Jesus dies not in defeat but in triumph. He was perfectly committed to the work and as it draws to its perfect completion He trust his Father still completely.

Because He does we can pray Psalm 31 as well. That's why He came – to put this prayer into our hearts and souls to pray as we fall asleep tonight and in the hour of our death, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*"

We pray:

Loving Savior, at the moment of Your death You gave Yourself into the loving hands of Your Father. As we close our eyes into death, lead us to commit our bodies and souls to Him who has summoned us by name and made us His own because of You and Your Love. Then, let us depart in peace. Amen.

The Christ Candle is Removed.

It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mark 15:42–46

**The Strepitus
("Great Noise")**

Moment of silence

**The Lord's Prayer
(spoken in darkness)**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Lights ON

Rest O Christ from all Your Labor (#437:1-3)

Lights OFF

Mediation #8

Meditation on Isaiah 53:10-12

the history is not yet done!

¹⁰ Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Christ candle is returned

It seems so final. Death has claimed Him. A tomb waits for Him. Yet, the history is not yet over. Isaiah promised that there was more and dear friends there will be. *After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.*

For when we gather together again it will be amidst the confusion of women at the tomb and the disciples who struggle to comprehend it. Death will not hold Him and because He lives so do we, both now and forever with Him.

While we await that joyous celebration on Easter morning, know that what Isaiah prophesied stands fulfilled. Know that your salvation is accomplished and because it is there will come a time when crosses are no more. When the sufferings of this life shall yield forever to the glorious perfection of the life to come.

And so dear friends we watch, we wait, we rejoice in the this dark day we call good *because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Blessing

Lights ON

His Robes for Mine

Verse 1-2 sung by soloist join as you are comfortable.