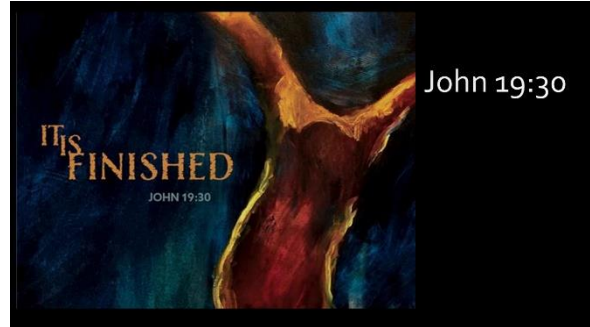


The Readings on This Day

***Click on the links for the Bible Verse(s)

Good Friday

In ancient times this second of the Three Days was called the Triumph of the Cross. English speakers now call the day Good (originally “God’s” Friday) because we know the end of the story, for the Three Days carry us into the resurrection. Friday’s Bible readings present several quite different ways to think about the death of Christ: Christ is the lamb, Christ is the high priest, and Christ is the king reigning from the cross. Christ is both human and divine: he suffers, and he is the I am. The service concludes when at the foot of the life-giving cross we pray for everyone and everything on earth and engage in a ritual of reverence for the cross on which hung Christ, the savior of the whole world.



[Isaiah 52:13—53:12](#)

Already in the writings of the New Testament, Christians viewed Jesus in light of the fourth Servant Song, seeing Christ’s voluntary suffering as effecting salvation for all. Reading Isaiah 53 provides a contrast to John’s passion narrative, since Isaiah stresses the suffering of one who is like a lamb led to the slaughter.

The Psalm for the Day

After hearing the fourth Servant Song, we sing [Psalm 22](#), a prayer for help in times of crisis, suffering, and despair. According to the synoptic gospels, Jesus prayed this psalm while on the cross, and its imagery also influenced John’s narrative details about the crucifixion. The Good Friday Service of the Word includes this prayer, as we plead to God along with Jesus on the cross and accompanied by all who suffer. However, as befitting the Three Days, the lament in Psalm 22 concludes in communal praise. To clarify this movement within the psalm, the chant line can be altered beginning with verse 23.

[Hebrews 10:16-25](#)

or

[Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9](#)

The imagery in Isaiah that describes the sacrificial lamb is contrasted with the imagery in Hebrews, in which Christ is the high priest whose ministry of prayer, life of obedience, and willingness to suffer for others constitute his appeal to God for our forgiveness.

[John 18:1—19:42](#)

To make clear that Christians are not to despair at the memorial of Jesus’ death, the gospel reading for Good Friday is the triumphant account in John 18–19. Christians gather on this day believing that Christ conquered death, and John’s account with its many unique details proclaims that this Jesus is the divine I am, whose death finishes the work of effecting eternal life.