

## The Passion According To John.

Each reading and short reflection should be followed by music and/or silence. Images and symbols can also be used. It can be very effective to extinguish a candle at the end of each meditation.

Reading 1: Taking charge - John 19:13b- 16.

Meditation: Taking charge.

Well that's what they thought anyway. Taking charge.

Taking charge of this man Jesus.

Taking charge of the teacher, the healer, the messiah, the Christ, the Son of God,  
the one through whom all things were made,  
the one who gave us life, and in whose hands all things are held together.

How could they have ever thought that this was possible?

Taking charge? Taking charge of him?

The brutal hands of careless soldiers may well for a moment hold him, push him, beat him,

tear his flesh in ignorant savagery,

but taking charge? Taking charge of him?

No, if only they knew. If only they knew that this man that they bind,

apparently powerless, apparently helpless,

if only they knew that in their hands they hold the one who is the source of all power,  
the source of all being.

The one who gave them their strength and now in unparalleled humility, submits to their brutality.

Not out of shackled helplessness, but out of total and unconditional love, even for them.

Taking charge? How could they have ever thought that this was possible?

Taking charge? Taking charge of him?

Reading 2: Here they crucified him. - John 19:16-18.

Meditation: Jesus in the middle.

One on his right, and one on his left,

Jesus in the middle, in the middle,

in the very centre.

There was of course only one way to do this,

only one way, and that was this way, to step out into the middle.

The middle of the sorrow, the middle of the tears, the middle of the pain.

There was only one way,

to enter into the middle of this tortured, and dark, and broken, and grief stricken world,  
and to stretch out his arms in love,

to irrevocably burn into the fabric of history the symbol of his love,

the symbol of his heart bearing all of the sorrow, all of the tears, all of the pain,

all of the grief that he found in the middle.

And with nails and thorns and whip and spittle, the middle closes in around him.  
Closes in with demon dancing fury and hammer blows of bestial brutality.  
We see him, frozen in the middle, pinned, immobile.  
One on his right, and one on his left,  
Jesus in the middle, in the middle, in the very centre.

Reading 3: The King of the Jews - John 19:19-22.

Meditation: This man claimed.

This man? Do you really mean this man?  
Claimed to be King? King of the Jews?  
This ragged, tortured, bleeding man, a King?

The opened eyes of the once blind Bartimaeus gaze upon this dreadful site.  
A man with a once withered arm, stretches his hands out to this dying man.  
The beating heart of the once dead Lazarus swells with uncontrollable sorrow.  
A woman with a strikingly beautiful complexion cries her tears as she remembers the  
touch of those nail torn hands, a touch that had rid her for ever of the stinking stigma of  
leprosy.

This man claimed to be King? Only claimed?  
How blind those blind eyes. How deaf those stopped ears. How dead those hearts of  
stone.  
To say that this man claimed, only claimed, to be the King of the Jews?

This man? Do you really mean this man?  
only Claimed to be King? King of the Jews?

Reading 4: Let's decide by lot. - John 19:23-24.

Meditation: This garment was seamless.

Yes that one was, the garment they cast lots for.  
Seamless, woven in one piece,  
and they, they satisfied themselves with that.

But as they stripped him of every vestment, as they argued over his clothes and cast  
their lots, they could not strip him of the one thing he wanted to wear.  
The one thing he wore with pride, the one thing that gave him purpose and reason and  
meaning, even now.

For those who look through blinded eyes, this is a naked man lifted up to die.  
For those who look through opened eyes, this man bears in his nakedness,  
nothing less than the mantle of God, the mantle of God's love,  
A mantle that with seamless continuity has flowed from God's broken heart.  
Flowed to touch, to embrace, to bless, to heal, to turn the world that he loves so much.

And now he stretches out his arms, stretches them out to share that mantle,  
to welcome others, any, all who come to him.  
To welcome us in to be clothed, to share that mantle,  
to be caught up in God's seamless continuity and to bear that same love.

But they? They satisfied themselves with a vest.  
Seamless? Yes that one was, the garment they cast lots for.  
Seamless, woven in one piece, and they, they satisfied themselves with that.

Reading 5: Here is your son, here is your mother - John 19:25-27.

Meditation: When Jesus saw,

Even now, even here, through the drousey fog of piercing pain,  
in the head spinning, blood draining heat of the afternoon sun,  
even now, even here, he sees.

The jeering crowds, their insults breaking one over the other  
like waves crashing on the beach on a stormy night.  
The passers-by, heads turned away, hurrying past, keen not to be caught up in such a  
scene.  
The silent, standing, staring people, looking on from a distance, in cold self-interest  
enjoying a spectacle, amusement for a sultry afternoon.  
The Soldiers, dice throwing, card playing, cussing soldiers with their backs turned,  
indifferent to the pain they cause.  
And those that weep, gathered at his feet, their minds and bodies numbed as their dying  
friend, their teacher, their master, their healer, looks down at them.

And in his eternal agony, stretching through time and space, Jesus looks down again.  
Looks down through his tear filled, pain filled eyes.  
Looks down at those who jeer and shout,  
at those who shake their heads and pass by,  
at those who stand unmoved and stare,  
at those who turn their backs in selfish indifference,  
and at those who gather close and weep.  
In his eternal agony, stretching through time and space, Jesus looks down on us, each  
of us.

Even now, even here, through the drousey fog of piercing pain,  
in the head spinning, blood draining heat of the afternoon sun,  
even now, even here, he sees.

Reading 6: It is finished. - John 19:28-30.

Meditation: I am thirsty.

A thirst that burns his throat, that swells his tongue,  
that robs him of speech and sight and rational thought,  
A thirst so gripping that it twists his body, tearing every muscle, squeezing every organ.  
Throwing him into convulsions that grip him and throw him and ....

And yet this is not a thirst for water, not a thirst that can be quenched in any physical  
way,  
for this is the thirst for love.  
The thirst that gripped him with it's full force as the garden gate closed  
and the crown of his creation walked away from him.  
Turning their backs, leaving him behind, saying that they no longer needed him,

no longer needed his love.

That was when he first knew this thirst, when he first felt it's burning pain,  
when his heart raced and he cried from the very depth of all that he is,  
"I love you, and I need your love!"

And now here he is, thirsty, thirsty for love, thirsty for the love of those that he loves so much. Thirsty to the point of death.

A thirst that burns his throat, that swells his tongue,  
that robs him of speech and sight and rational thought.

A thirst so gripping that it twists his body, tearing every muscle, squeezing every organ.  
Throwing him into convulsions that grip him and throw him and ....and ....  
It is finished.

Reading 7: Blood and water. - John 19:31-34.

Meditation: Pierced Jesus side.

They were not content,  
not content with whip and flails,  
not content with thorns and nails,  
not content to bruise him and break him,  
not content to beat him and kill him.  
But they had to pierce him.

With thrusting spear,  
with final contempt,  
they pierce him.  
And yet in that act of final brutality,  
that final act to rid the world of all that this man was,  
they release him.  
For out flows blood and water,  
flowing, running, trickling, soaking into the bare earth,  
the life blood of the creator returning to his creation,  
sowing the seed of new life,  
planting the hope of rebirth,  
quenching a thirsty world,  
and still quenching the thirsty today.

They were not content,  
not content with whip and flails,  
not content with thorns and nails,  
not content to bruise him and break him,  
not content to beat him and kill him.  
But they had to pierce him.

Reading 8: They laid Jesus there. - John 19:38-42.

Meditation: In strips of linen.

Slowly, gently, they wrap his tired body,  
Slowly, Gently, they lay him down,  
Slowly, gently, they close his eyes, and let him sleep.

And the silence of the grave pervades the world,  
an all consuming, all embracing silence,  
a silence that drains all light and life and joy and love,  
the silence of darkness.

And silence consumes the heights of heaven,  
as with flowing tears and fallen heads  
all heaven watches this tragedy unfold,

He is laid in darkness, the very source of all light,  
He is laid in cold, the very source of all warmth,  
He is laid in death, the very source of all life.

But planted in the cossetting earth,  
as the stone is rolled and sealed  
and men go out to buy and sell,  
All heaven waits,  
waits and watches, watches and waits.

Slowly, gently, they wrap his tired body,  
Slowly, Gently, they lay him down,  
Slowly, gently, they close his eyes, and let him sleep.

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