

**Notes for Brian's Sermon with Brentwood Presbyterian Church
Good Friday Reflection – Apr 10, 2020**



**Facing the Darkness of Death
(John 18:1 – 19:42)**

**Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
(John 19:30b)**

None of us know the darkness of death.

We have imagined it, in varying ways.
We have feared it, to varying degrees.
We have tried to avoid it, with varying distractions.
But none of us really knows it.

We do know we have to face it.
It will happen to us all.

We do know our families and friends
will be deeply pained by our passing.

We can see and hear that far more often than normal these days,
during these pandemic times.

The death we have heard about and sung about this morning,
inflicted so long ago,
was fully human,
more gruesome than many,
and as final as any.
Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

He had been adored and abused,
respected and rejected,
appreciated and abandoned.

His life, what little we really know of it,
seemed to be a flash in the pan,
a brief shooting star in a maze of radical reformers,
another bothersome insurgent in a remote corner of the Empire.
He was consigned to the darkness of death and could be forgotten.

But there is something at the end of John's account of Jesus' death,
something that suggests more than we see.

He writes it in four words, five syllables – "... gave up his spirit."

What is Jesus giving up?

To whom?

For what?

Opening Prayer

Our ancestors listened and feared.
You called them to account.
You faced them and confronted them with
their death-dealing ways
so powerfully
that they had pay attention -
and executed you.

On your head
they jammed down into your flesh
a mock crown made of thorns,
cut from the thickets of their traumas.

They faced you back.
They confronted you with their best shot –
death.

This morning you invite us
to face that darkness of death with you
once again.

Help us hear and feel
deeper dimensions of your story.
Surprise us with a phrase, an image.

And in that surprise,
give us a renewed sense
of the depth and breadth
of your forgiving and reconciling love
for all your world.

Closing Prayer

What is your spirit up to, dear Friend,
back then, and now.

The darkness of death
has not disappeared.
We all pass through it.
At times, like ours,
it overwhelms us
with its pandemic presence.

Remind us again,
as we close our worshiping,
of what we heard this morning,
through the inner witness of your Spirit.

Remind us you do not leave us alone.
Family and friends stay close
as we face the darkness of death.

Remind us you do not leave us alone.
Your Spirit continues to fill your world
with your energy
of forgiving and reconciling love.

Remind us to stay open
to the surprises
your Spirit has in store.