



Holy Saturday

Service of Prayer

Opening Words

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Today we remember and believe that Jesus died and that he was buried.

**We gather to read the Scriptures,
to remember and believe,
and to pray on this day of all days.**

From this day forward we know that
there is nowhere we can go
where God is not with us.

Even in the darkest places.

Quiet

Scripture Reading: Mark 15: 42-47

It was the 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 linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

Quiet

Today we recognize that the tomb is full. We wait, with Joseph of Arimathea, for the kingdom of God. We stand vigil, witnesses to the tomb of Christ with the women of Galilee, and mourn that he is dead.

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

We wait through that long Sabbath day with Mary, and Peter, and Joseph, and all those who followed Christ - who did not expect him to lead them to a cross, who never expected him to be laid in a tomb. We sit in silence now, and think about what that long day was like for them: a day of rest - no work to distract; a day of Scripture and prayer - without Jesus to interpret and teach; a day of celebration and family - with an absence at the table. We wait through this long Sabbath with those who experienced the fullness of the tomb on that particular Sabbath day.

Quiet

We feel your death, Jesus. We feel the tomb is full, and say to each other:

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

Quiet

Scripture Reading: Psalm 88

Lord, you are the God who saves me;
day and night I cry out to you.
May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.

I am overwhelmed with troubles
and my life draws near to death.
I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I am like one without strength.
I am set apart with the dead,
like the slain who lie in the grave,
whom you remember no more,
who are cut off from your care.

You have put me in the lowest pit,
in the darkest depths.
Your wrath lies heavily on me;
you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.
You have taken from me my closest friends
and have made me repulsive to them.
I am confined and cannot escape;
my eyes are dim with grief.

I call to you, Lord, every day;
I spread out my hands to you.
Do you show your wonders to the dead?
Do their spirits rise up and praise you?
Is your love declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in Destruction?
Are your wonders known in the place of darkness,
or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

But I cry to you for help, Lord;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
Why, Lord, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?

From my youth I have suffered
and been close to death;
I have borne your terrors and am in despair.

Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.
All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.
You have taken from me friend and neighbor -
darkness is my closest friend.

Quiet

We wait in darkness. We acknowledge the darkness of the world around us: its wars, its hate, its hunger, its mis-ordered desires. We acknowledge the darkness within and among us: our own mis-ordered desires, our doubt, our depression, our despair, our hate.

Quiet

We feel the tomb full, and say to each other:

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

We wait in sadness. We acknowledge the sadness of the world around us: its sickness, its grieving, its inequality. We acknowledge the sadness within and among us: our losses, our missed opportunities, our deep grief.

Quiet

We feel the tomb full, and say to each other:

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

We wait in fear. We acknowledge the fear of the world around us: its injustice, its instability, its distrust, its anxiety. We acknowledge the fear within and among us: our fear of scarcity, our fear of loss, of pain, of missing out, of being found out, our fear of death.

Quiet

We feel the tomb full, and say to each other:

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

We wait in darkness, in sadness, in fear. But we do not wait without hope.

**The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?**

When the wicked advance to devour, it is them who will stumble and fall. Though an army beseege me, and war break out around us, even then we will be confident.

**One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.
In the day of trouble he will lift me out of the tomb
and set me high upon a rock.
He will keep me safe in his dwelling.**

So, as we wait in the tomb together with the body of our Lord - let us acknowledge the darkness, the sadness, the fear - but let us also allow him to fill our in-between spaces, our waiting, with his glory.

Teach us your way, Lord.

Let him guide, and direct, and shape us even as wait.

Lead us on a road that is straight.

Let us acknowledge Christ in the tomb - help us understand that he really died, that he was buried. But let us stand vigil in that tomb with confidence.

**We remain confident of this:
we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.**

Psalm 27

Let us wait, in silence, in sorrow, in darkness, in pain...but let us wait knowing that light is coming.

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

Prayer for the World, for the Church, for Us

On this day, we remember and believe that Jesus died, was buried, and descended into hell. On this day, we remember and believe the promise of Psalm 139 that there is nowhere we can flee from the Spirit of God. Not in the highest heights or in the darkest depths. Jesus is our God with us. Everywhere. And in all things. So let us pray in all things for the world, for the church, for us...

You are invited to the Table to take slips of paper and write out prayers. This can be just a name or a word or a whole sentence. As you finish writing, please place them back on the Table. We will not be reading them aloud or sharing them, so please feel free to be honest without fear.

At the close of our time of prayer, we will end with the prayer Jesus taught us...

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen.**

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:22-27, 38-39

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to this present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

**For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels or demons,
neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers,
neither height or depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.**

You are invited to stay and continue to pray or to leave in silence and reflection....

This service adapted from "Waiting in the Tomb: A Holy Saturday Liturgy" by Stacey Gleddiesmith, thinkingworship.wordpress.com.