

April 2, 2010

**Good Friday, Year C, Hour 1**

Luke 22:39-53

All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta, Georgia

*The Rev'd Charles M. Girardeau, associate rector*

The meal has concluded.

The important teachings have been repeated one last time.

Love God.

Love each other.

Serve one another.

A way to remember has been given.

A means to be spiritually fed has been offered.

Take.

Bless.

Break.

Share.

A small piece of bread and a sip of wine – taken in remembrance.

An act of sharing spiritual food with all who approach the table.

Now the time has come for preparation for what lies ahead.

It is time to pray.

With trusted friends and disciples Jesus goes out.

He goes out to a beloved place.

Jesus has been here many times before to pray.

A place outside the safety of the city walls.

Beyond the dim lights of Jerusalem.

He walks into the darkness of the night.

To speak to the One who sent him.

Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane.

Leaving friends behind.

One last chance for uninterrupted prayer.

One last opportunity to kneel before the Lord His maker.

One last time to feel the cool, night dew upon the grass.

One last moment of solitude.

But His prayers are unlike any He has ever offered before.

He knows what looms just out of sight.

The evil one is lurking in the darkness.

Poised like a cat, ready to pounce.

It wasn't so long ago that his disciples had asked him to teach them to pray.

The words came so easily.

“God in heaven, you are holy.”

“You rule over all things in heaven and on earth.”

“We receive from you all we need.”  
“Forgive us as we know we are to forgive.”

Yet none of these words are upon his lips at this moment.  
Right now, it is the final words of this earlier prayer that cry out.  
They press in upon him.  
“Do not bring us to the time of trial.”  
“Rescue us from the evil one.”

Now is the time of trial.  
The evil one is here.

Jesus, alone and vulnerable.  
Afraid and frail as he contemplates the agony that is to come.  
Is there a way out?  
Can he turn around and go back?

This is the opportune time for which Satan has waited.  
Again the offer once made in the desert is presented.  
Accepting it would take Jesus from the light of God’s presence.  
The decision would throw him into the darkness of separation and denial.

“Yes, yes, turn to me and live,” the evil one whispers.  
“Embrace the darkness and live!”

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me...”

“NO!”  
“Wait!”  
“What am I saying?”  
“What am I praying?”  
“Why to I waver?”  
“My God is with me.”  
“I know my God will stay with me!”  
“Lord, forgive my fear!”

“Your will be done.”

The matter it is finished.  
Faith and knowledge have defeated the evil one.  
The agony of the cross can be endured.  
The sting of death will be taken away.  
God’s will will be done.

It is time to go, time to leave this place of peace and presence.  
Like a river gathering speed as its waters approach a rapids, the darkness unfolds.  
Those who have come with him here are slumbering.  
They awake to find that the time of trial is fully at hand.

Outnumbered by those who come to take away their teacher.  
The crowd descends upon them.

They are led by one of their own.  
Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.  
A kiss of respect and peace a devoted disciple gives to a beloved Rabbi.  
Now it is a kiss of bitter betrayal.

Swords are drawn.  
Injuries inflicted.  
Out of the chaos comes a voice.  
A voice no longer filled with anguish or fear.  
The voice of one who knows what must be done.  
“No more of this.”

Those waiting for this moment take hold of Jesus.  
They lead him away.  
The hour is theirs.  
This time belongs to the power of darkness.  
There is no reason to fight it.  
It is the evil one’s “hour,” if only for a short time.

Long before this time of trial Jesus had learned.  
He learned about the power of prayer.  
He learned about the power of God.  
As fear was about to overtake Him in the garden the anchor held strong.  
As he “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears,  
to the one who was able to save him from death,  
he was heard.”

The One who had sent Him knew His voice.  
God knew the Son’s voice from countless, previous prayers.

Now Jesus is lead away into the hour of darkness.  
He walks with perfect trust that God is in charge.  
He is the only one at this moment who knows this.  
And his knowledge is complete.

Jesus of Nazareth.  
Our Savior.  
Our Redeemer.  
Being lead away into darkness.

“Keep us from the time of trial, O Lord.  
And rescue us from the evil one.”

Amen.