

There are no alleluias today.

No bright flowers. No brass. No white linens. No triumphant hymns to lift us out of ourselves. The church grows quiet. The candles flicker low. And at the centre of it all stands the cross—unadorned, unsoftened, casting its long shadow across everything.

And we are not here to fix anything.

We are not here to explain it all away or rush toward a happier ending. We are here to keep watch. To stand still long enough to tell the truth. To listen again to the Passion according to Gospel of John—a story not only of suffering, but of strange, unsettling glory.

Because John does not tell this story as a tragedy alone. He tells it as a revelation.

Jesus is not simply overtaken by events. He walks toward them. He speaks with authority even as he is arrested. He stands before Pontius Pilate not as a victim scrambling for his life, but as one who knows exactly who he is.

“My kingdom is not from this world.”

In John’s telling, even the cross becomes a kind of throne.

Which is almost too much to take in.

Because what we see is still brutal. Still confronting. Still, by any human measure, a gross injustice. An innocent man executed by the machinery of empire. A body broken by violence. A life extinguished in public shame.

And if we are paying attention—not just to the text, but to our world—we recognise this pattern.

We have seen it again and again.

In the headlines of 2026. In places torn apart by war and fear. In communities still reeling from flood and fire. In the quiet suffering that never makes the news at all—the griefs carried in hospital rooms, in strained homes, in anxious hearts. The sense, at times, that the world is unravelling faster than we can hold it together.

And so the question presses in on us again, perhaps more urgently than ever:

Why call this day *good*?

There is nothing superficially good about what happens here. The suffering is real. The cruelty is real. The silence of God—at least as it feels to those watching—is real.

But John invites us to look again. To look deeper.

Because in this moment, we are not watching God stand at a safe distance, permitting suffering from afar. We are watching God enter it. Fully. Without reserve.

This is not an aloof deity, untouched by pain.

This is a crucified God.

One who knows what it is to be betrayed, misunderstood, abandoned. One who knows what it is to stand before power that distorts truth. One who knows what it is to suffer under systems that crush the vulnerable and protect themselves.

In a world still marked by violence and injustice, that matters.

Because it means that wherever such suffering exists—and it does—God is not absent from it.

God is there.

Not as the author of suffering, but as the one who bears it. Who refuses to step back. Who chooses, in love, to stay.

In John's Gospel, Jesus' final words are not a cry of despair, but a declaration:

"It is finished."

Not: *I am finished.*

But: *It is finished.*

Something has been completed. Fulfilled. Brought to its end.

What is finished is not simply Jesus' life. It is the full revelation of God's heart.

A love that does not retaliate.

A love that does not abandon.

A love that does not save itself.

"No one takes my life from me," Jesus had said earlier. "I lay it down of my own accord."

And here, on this cross, we see what that looks like.

This is not divine revenge. This is divine solidarity.

This is God saying: there is nowhere you can go—not even into suffering, not even into death—where I will not go with you.

And that is why, somehow, this day is called *good*.

Not because suffering is good.

But because love has gone all the way to the bottom of it—and has not turned back.

There is a temptation, always, to look away. To move quickly past this day. To skip ahead to Easter, where things are brighter, clearer, easier to celebrate.

But if we do that, we miss something essential.

We miss the truth that the life of God is not revealed in avoidance of suffering, but in the midst of it. We miss the truth that the cross is not a detour in the story of God, but the very centre of it.

Here is the meaning of love.

Here is the shape of grace.

Here is the pattern we are invited into—not because we are called to seek suffering, but because we are called to love in a world where suffering is real.

To choose compassion over indifference.

To choose truth over convenience.

To choose self-giving over self-protection.

To stay, when it would be easier to walk away.

This is not abstract theology. It is lived reality.

It looks like forgiveness when resentment would be easier.

It looks like honesty when denial would be more comfortable.

It looks like standing alongside those who suffer, even when we cannot fix what is broken.

It looks like entrusting ourselves—our grief, our fear, our helplessness—to the God who has already entered those places.

Today is not about our best selves.

It is about our most honest ones.

Because Good Friday meets us not in our strength, but in our vulnerability. Not in our certainty, but in our questions. Not in our control, but in our need.

And here, at the foot of the cross, we are invited simply to remain.

Like Mary.

Like the beloved disciple.

We do not have to explain it. We do not have to resolve it. We do not have to make it meaningful.

We just stay.

Because this is where God is.

And even now—especially now—there is something stirring beneath the surface of this stillness. A promise not yet visible, but already alive.

A love that death cannot extinguish.

A life that will not be contained.

But that is for another day.

Today, there are no alleluias.

Only the quiet.

Only the cross.

Only the mystery of a God who would rather be broken open in love than remain distant from the world.

And that—strange as it sounds—is what makes this day good.

Amen.