

# CHRIST HAS *died*

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## A REFLECTION ON HOLY SATURDAY

trigger warning: this reflection contains detail of violence, trauma, still birth, and death

On Sundays we proclaim the mystery of faith, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

Today, we pause in that mystery.

Christ has died.

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I watch as Jesus sits with his friends. I hear the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine as it trickles into the silver cup. I listen as he says to his friends 'take, eat, this is my body broken for you... and this is my blood, shed for you.' I

wait as Jesus goes around his friends with his towel wrapped around his waist, cleaning their feet, and I feel his warm and tender hands as he washes mine. I see his eyes and feel the depth of love that he feels for me, for us all. Then, I walk with Jesus as he goes to the Mount of Olives. I stand at a distance as I watch him ask his disciples to stay awake with him. I look on as Jesus takes himself away.

My heart begins to ache as I watch Jesus fall down on his knees, calling out in despair and anxiety to God, as something is about to happen, something I don't fully understand. I watch the disciples fall asleep as Jesus cries and wails, calling out to God. I watch the sweat fall from Jesus' brow, mingled with tears; sweat like drops of blood. I try to stay awake as Jesus asked, but I watch the disciples fall deeper into sleep, and I too, close my eyes in exhaustion.

As the scene quickly turns, I watch as the soldiers appear, as one of Jesus' friends has betrayed him. I watch on as the other disciples panic, and Jesus is taken. I follow Peter as he follows Jesus, and I feel the blow when we both deny knowing him. I watch on as Jesus is taken to the court and I watch through my squinted, hand-covered eyes, as the soldiers begin their cruelty, too cruel to even mention. I stop watching, I can hardly breathe. I walk along behind the crowd as Jesus is forced to carry his own cross.

I cry as Jesus cries; I weep as Mary weeps. I help him carry the cross part of the way, and finally we arrive at the place of crucifixion. I watch with the crowd, and I watch as one by one, almost everyone leaves. I remain at the cross with Mary and the other women, and I weep with them as all hope seems lost.

I watch as Mary, Jesus' mother, weeps as her child takes his final breath. My heart aches at her longing to hold, to protect, and to save her eldest son, her eldest child, helpless as he dies, at the hands of others, pinned to a tree. I watch as Mary Magdalene, a woman whose identity was restored and life transformed, watches her friend and redeemer cry out for water, and his body limp into stillness. I watch as my Lord and Saviour dies for my sins and the sins of all people. I feel the weight of his sacrifice, even though I don't fully understand.

I shiver in the coldness as dark clouds cover the sky, and the light of this world is extinguished.

When the soldiers have decided Jesus is dead, I watch as Joseph of Arimathea asks to bury him in a tomb that has not yet been used. And I watch, and follow along with the women, as Jesus' lifeless body is removed from the cross on which he hung and is carried to the tomb. I watch as he is clothed for burial, placed inside, and the stone rolled in front, sealing the entrance. I wait in the silence. In the stillness. I watch the faces of the women who can hardly believe what has happened to their beloved, weep in despair, and return to their homes to prepare spices.

All is dark. All is cold. All hope seems lost.

Today, this dark day, is Holy Saturday.

Jesus has died and all is quiet. All is silent. All is still. All is lifeless. All hope is gone.

I can hear the wind blowing across the sealed tomb. No birds sing, no body laughs, no other noise can be heard. Just the silence of nothingness. The stillness of darkness.

The harrowing silence.





Sometimes our lives are echoes of what happened to Jesus that day. In our lives, we experience pain, there is death, there is violence, there is agony, there is anxiety, there is darkness. Our lives are painted by the brush stroke of death.

And in this moment, in this silence, I try to make sense of what happened to Jesus this week.

What did Jesus mean when he, just a few days ago, broke bread and told his disciples to take and eat it as the bread is his broken body, broken for us? Is it, that Jesus himself experienced the depth of brokenness, a broken body, a body bruised and battered?

Is it, as some say, that Jesus is like the innocent woman, child, or man, who has been beaten, bruised, ignored, harassed, neglected, and abused? Scarred by those who only meant to do him harm? Laughed at by passersby? And ignored by those who should love him?

Jesus was beaten. Christ has died.

And how is it possible that God, the living God, endures and holds within itself, death? How is it that God has died?

Is it, as some say, like when a mother endures the agony of stillbirth? Within her very being, there is death. Pregnant with a stillness, a lifeless silence. An ache, and longing, where life has gone.

Is that how it felt for the Trinity as Jesus died? That in the womb of God, Jesus laid there dead. Breathless and lifeless, in the very being of the Trinity. Did God the Trinity weep like the mother of the stillborn child, as Jesus took his last breath and life ceased? Did God the Trinity's heart break, as the mother's of the stillborn child, and did pain overcome their senses?

**Christ has died.**

And what does Jesus' death mean for us?

Jesus took bread and broke it. He gave it to his disciples saying, 'take, eat, this is my body broken for you.' Does this mean that Jesus identifies with us? Does this mean that Jesus understands me?

Is it, as some say, that in his brokenness, Jesus knows and understands my own brokenness?

Jesus sees us who have been traumatised. Jesus knows us who are broken. Jesus loves us who are hurting. Jesus sits with us who mourn, who hold the lifeless bodies of their beloveds. Jesus understands us who have been beaten and abused. Jesus identifies with us, the afflicted and those who suffer pain. Jesus is our companion in anxiety. Jesus is our companion in the darkness, those of us whose eyes never seem to be able to look up.

**Yes. Jesus identifies with me.**

In this stillness, in this pause, I remember that Jesus' body wasn't just broken. He was broken for us. In the depth of his being, Jesus knows and understands. And in our helpless state, in our hopeless lives, Jesus breaks in.

**In his brokenness, our brokenness is held; I am held.**

Because out of the grave, Jesus rose. Tomorrow will dawn, and tomorrow we will proclaim that not only did Christ die, but that Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. It is in Jesus' death that we see hope, that we see healing and transformation for our own lives and our brokenness, and in that, we see life, we see eternal life.

Now I see clearer, through the darkness, and the fog, that Jesus rescues and saves. Because in his death, we have a hope that lifts our eyes from the depths of our own grief, sadness, pain, anxiety, and darkness, up towards a God who came to earth and understands my pain and suffering, and who cares so much for me that he was broken, to save me.

But today I don't need to rush to tomorrow. I wait, safe and secure in the knowledge that Easter morning is coming, change is coming, salvation is coming, and hope is coming. Grief, anxiety, pain, and darkness still surround me.

But I know that Christ is coming.

For tomorrow, I will boldly proclaim the mystery of faith:  
Christ has died, Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.

