

## **Were You There?**

*(Preached at Footscray Baptist Church on Good Friday April 10, 2020 by Cheryl Williams– Matthew 26: 57- 27:66)*

*Good Friday.*

*A day of sorrow.*

*Remembering a Messiah hanging on a tree.*

*A Messiah mocked by the world*

*A Messiah suspended somewhere between heaven and earth.*

*Were you there when the high priest who asks many questions and cannot tolerate Jesus silence, and in the end calls him a blasphemer? Were you there as he hears them call for blood? Were you there as he allows them to humiliate Jesus, as they spit and strike him?*

*Were you there when the scribes, the elders and chief priests mount a fraudulent case to ensure Jesus is silenced but will not dirty their hands, preferring another to do that?*

*Were you there when the false witnesses were keen to help the cause, to lie through their teeth for a favour or some perverted pleasure?*

*Were you there when Peter, hot and cold, all for Jesus on minute, and when the going gets tough, is the first to bail? Were you there as he denies he ever knew Jesus, first to a servant girl and then to another servant girl and then to some bystanders? Were you there when he hears the cock crow and just knows?*

*Were you there when Pilate the consummate politician, who doesn’t want to condemn an innocent man, who knows the truth but cannot help let politics get in the way? Were you there as he is racked with guilt or not? Were you there as he realises, he is just a pawn in another’s game, as he washes his hands of the whole mess? Were you there as he has a sign placed that declares Jesus is the King of the Jews in three languages – ironically testifying to the universality of God?*

*Were you there when Judas betrays his friend with a kiss? Were you there as he realises his desire for money has led to this situation for Jesus? Were you there as he realises all too late, the outcome for Jesus and for himself? Were you there when he can no longer live with himself?*

*Were you there when Barrabas, the one who has done the crime and should do the time, is set free? Were you there as he asks no questions about his release?*

*Were you there as Pilate’s wife senses trouble, who tries to talk him out of what he is about to do? Were you there when she tells him to have nothing to do with this kangaroo court?*

*Were you there when the crowds who one week were celebrating and now who want blood and are prepared to have it on their heads?*

*Were you there when the soldiers can’t help themselves but humiliate Jesus?*

*Were you there as Simon of Cyrene is grabbed from the crowd and asked or maybe forced to help Jesus carry his load?*

*Were you there as the two bandits who are paying the price for their actions have the gall to mock, to even, as they draw their last breath, make fun of Jesus?*

*Were you there as the passers-by continue to deride him?*

*Were you there with the centurion and those keeping watch with him feel the earth shake, who conclude it must have been God’s Son after all?*

*Were you there with the many women, all the Mary’s who have journeyed with him for so long, providing care and hospitality? Were you there sharing their shock, their grief?*

*Were you there as Joseph of Arimathea, the secret disciple, risks ridicule, announces his faith to all around, and uses his wealth to give Jesus some dignity in death?*

*Were you there as the guards of soldiers are put in place to make sure there will be no conspiracy stories circulating, such is the fear of those who have ensured this has all happened?*

*Were you there when Jesus pleads with God? As he asks where is God? Were you there when Jesus looked out at his friends – the one who betrayed him with a kiss, the one who denied him three times, the ones who fled because they were so scared?*

*Were you there as he caught the eyes of the women who could not bring themselves to abandon him, so stand with him at the cross?*

*Were you there when it seems that God has even abandoned his own Son?*

*Are you there saddened, disgusted at the injustice of it all? Does it all seem a failure?*

*As we watch Jesus die on the cross – do we see God in a new way? Do we see God, who in Jesus, has been to the depths of despair? Do we see God, who in Jesus knows our pain, validates our pain, knows our darkness?*

*God will not allow death to have the final word. Despite the seemingly hopelessness, God will not let hopelessness have the final word. Even in the midst of horror and cruelty God will not let that be the last word, but we must wait.*