

Paintings and reflections on John's Passion

The Theme is the Cup of Suffering/ the cup of God's anger, and the cup of Salvation.

Jeremiah 25:15 reflects on the cup of the Lord's anger. "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: 'Take from my hand this cup filled to the brim with my anger, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink from it.'" This cup was to be drunk by various nations, including both those who are considered 'the people of God', as well as those surrounding them from every side.

In Romans 3:10-18, we are called to recognise that the cup of God's wrath/anger should fall upon each and every one of us, for none of us are righteous. ¹⁰ As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one. ¹¹ No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. ¹² All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." ¹³ "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵ "They rush to commit murder. ¹⁶ Destruction and misery always follow them. ¹⁷ They don't know where to find peace." ¹⁸ "They have no fear of God at all."



Painting and Reflection 1: Jesus Identification with his Father and his agreed mission

Jesus is Betrayed and Arrested: ¹⁸ After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. ² Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. ³ The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove. ⁴ Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked. ⁵ "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. "**I AM he,**" **Jesus said.** (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) ⁶ As Jesus said "I AM he," they all drew back and fell to the ground! ⁷ Once more he asked them, "Who are you looking for?" And again they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene." ⁸ "**I told you that I AM he,**" Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." ⁹ He did this to fulfil his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me." ¹⁰ Then Simon

Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave. ¹¹ But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. **Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?**"

We look down into the cup of suffering (modelled on one of the chalices at GWAC. It is filled to the brim with the sufferings that we inflict upon ourselves, through our sin, and through our unrighteousness. However, God has a plan, and that plan has been put into place. It centres around Jesus. Jesus identified himself as I AM, the name of the Lord, given to Moses long ago. We have been reflecting on his identification as I AM over the last 8 weeks. Here, we see that Jesus is one with his Father, and this plan is according to God's purposes of salvation for us human beings. It is entered into willingly by Jesus, in accordance with the plans determined before time. This cup of wrath/anger of God, becomes the cup of suffering that Jesus is now prepared to drink. The symbolism for this is the image of a boat made up of the letters YHWH and JESUA, representing God's solution to our needs that Jesus picks up for us.

Painting and Reflection 2: Jesus Is betrayed by his closest friends.



Peter's Three Denials of Jesus: ¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶ Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷ The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself. ⁵ Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not." ²⁶ But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it.

Image of a cock crowing is universal for betrayal. Part of the suffering that Jesus must drink is to experience the betrayal of those closest to him. God's wrath/anger comes to us because we disrespect others made in God's image and likeness, through betrayal, even of our nearest and dearest. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, with a kiss, and now Peter through denying association with him. As human beings we have all done this, from fear, anger frustration, whatever, we are all Peter. Jesus is the only one who never betrayed anyone, whether a friend, a loved one, or enemy. You will note the liquid of the cup of wrath/anger/suffering, the dark mass of our need is starting to recede as it is drunk by Jesus. As you look more closely, you will see the inner rim of the chalice begins to reveal writing. This is the mysterious plan of God being revealed, but more of that as we see the cup of suffering willingly drunk by Jesus, on our behalf.

Painting and Reflection 3: Jesus, abused by those in authority.



Jesus, at the High Priest's House on trial: ¹² So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up. ¹³ First they took him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people." ¹⁹ Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰ Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret. ²¹ Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said." ²² **Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face.** "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded. ²³ Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?" ²⁴ Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest. ²⁸ Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning.

for trial. Why? What have you done?”³⁶ Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”³⁷ Pilate said, “So you are a king?” Jesus responded, “You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.”³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, “He is not guilty of any crime.”³⁹ But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this ‘King of the Jews’?”⁴⁰ But they shouted back, “No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!” (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent of these crimes, but could not, would not stand up to the powerful lobby before him, which cried out for Jesus death. The face is all of us who consider ourselves good, but shut our senses to the injustice we see around us. The face is outline only so that the words of God’s plan are still able to be seen. There are 5 hands showing the ways in which we ignore our conscience and turn away from need in the face of abuse. WE say nothing in the face of evil. WE refuse to see evil, and avert our eyes because it is uncomfortable to watch. We block our ears to the sound of evil, and the plea of the poor, the weak and the asylum seeker. Our inactivity, our refusal to respond with our eyes, our ears and our voice, when we see injustice, is the very sins of omission that we pray for each week, the things we don’t do when we should. They deserve the anger of God to be poured out upon us, but instead, it is Jesus who drinks it for us, as part of God’s plan to bring us back into relationship with him.

Painting and Reflection 5: Hated by the people he loved and came to save.



Jesus, sentenced to death: 19 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip.² The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him.³ “Hail! King of the Jews!” they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.⁴ Pilate went outside again and said to the people, “I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty.”⁵ Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, “Look, here is the man!”⁶ When they saw him, the leading

The death of Jesus: So they took Jesus away. ¹⁷ Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, *Golgotha*). ¹⁸ There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it. ²¹ Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, “Change it from ‘The King of the Jews’ to ‘He said, I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate replied, “No, what I have written, I have written.” ²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴ So they said, “Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.” This fulfilled the Scripture that says, “They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing.” So that is what they did. ²⁵ Standing near the cross were Jesus’ mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.” ²⁷ And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home. ²⁸ Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfil Scripture he said, “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. ³⁰ When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. ³¹ It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn’t want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was Passover week). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. ³³ But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn’t break his legs. ³⁴ One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. ³⁵ (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe.) ³⁶ These things happened in fulfilment of the Scriptures that say, “Not one of his bones will be broken,” ³⁷ and “They will look on the one they pierced.”

The cup has been completely drunk, and the plan of God has been revealed. It is finished! Jesus has drunk the cup of God’s wrath, which should have been drunk by all of us. He has been betrayed by us who would call ourselves his closest friends, abused by our wielding of authority, abused by our refusal to see, hear or speak out against injustice, and hated by us all, as we condemn him by our unrighteousness. He has drunk it all, even to death on this cross. It is finished. There is nothing more than needs to be done, it has all been completed through the sacrificial love of God in Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Christ, who never sinned, to become sin itself, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.** Now the mystery of God’s plan is completely revealed. Reading from Ephesians 1:⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfil his own good plan. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. ¹¹ Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

In the light of this revealed plan of God, we now move on to our last painting of the resurrection.

Painting and Reflection 7: The cup of Salvation/Blessing



The Resurrection: 20 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ² She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” ³ Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. ⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. ⁸ Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— ⁹ for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Ephesians 2:1-4 tells us that once we were dead because of our disobedience and our many sins. We used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil, the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else. This is the problem that faced God. How was he to solve it? Ephesians 2 goes on to tell us “God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because

of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Our final cup is the cup of God's blessing. In Ephesians 1:3-14 we read of all the Spiritual Blessings we receive because of what Christ has done for us. We are so loved by God, that he chose us to be holy and without fault in Christ. We are adopted into God's family, through our incorporation into Christ. We have freedom purchased through Jesus blood poured out for us, and we have the forgiveness of all our sins. We have experienced God's gift of great kindness, wisdom and understanding. This is the Good News that God saves us through Jesus. We know this to be true because we have been given the Holy Spirit, promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that God will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

We are now the boat of salvation swimming in the blessings of God for us. The abundance of the blessings is shown by the overflow of the cup; pressed down, shaken together and overflowing.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Christ, who never sinned, to become sin itself, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. This is the exchange, like a Maths equation. Jesus drinks the cup of wrath, his cup of suffering; willingly becoming SIN ITSELF; our sin; so that we can be made right with God through Christ. And as a result, we are showered to overflowing with all these blessings! This is the message of Easter.