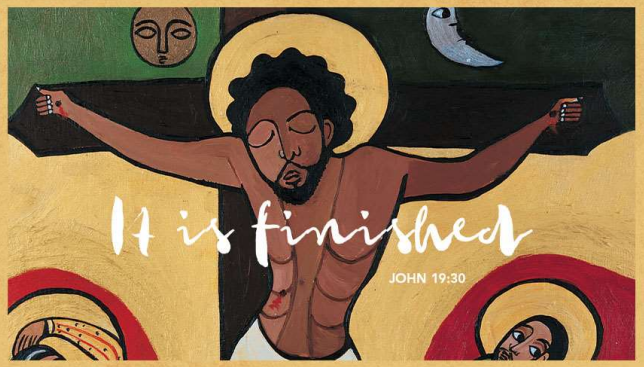
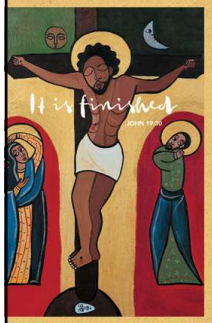


Good Friday Meditation – Pastor Paul Nuechterlein
"The Wood Between Two Worlds" – *April 18, 2025*

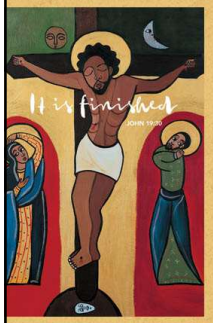
1



Good Friday Meditation

- Jesus tells Pilate, "My kingdom isn't the sort that grows in this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my supporters would have fought to stop me being handed over to the Judeans. So, then, my kingdom is not the sort that comes from here."
- Two kingdoms clearly differentiated:
  - Kingdoms of this world depend on fighting, having 'armed forces' to defend our lives
  - God's kingdom, not of this world, comes into the world precisely through the events of Good Friday and Easter – suffering violence to give life

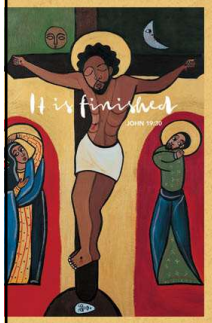
2



Good Friday Meditation

- Is the cross a portal between two worlds?
- A favorite preacher, Brian Zahnd, titled his book about the cross: *The Wood Between the Worlds*
- It occurs to me to ask: if the cross is a portal between worlds, do we see it both ways?
  - We have definitely seen it as the portal to God's reign in heaven, saving individual 'souls,' right?
  - But how long has it been that we've seen it as the portal for God's kingdom coming into the world to actually save the world? To give new life to our reigns thru God's justice and by suffering violence rather than inflicting it?

3

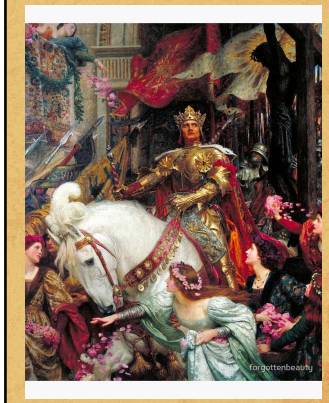


Good Friday Meditation

- There's evidence that the early church saw it that way: they were willing to become nonviolent martyrs and had rules against joining any imperial forces (known today as "conscientious objection")
- Since the Roman Empire made Christianity the "imperial religion" (an oxymoron?):
  - Have we ceased or downplayed seeing the cross as a portal for God's reign coming into the world to save us from our deadly violence?
  - So that we've come to almost exclusively see the cross as a portal to save individuals for 'going to heaven'? And no longer saving the world?

4

Good Friday Meditation – "The Wood between Two Worlds"



- Painting by Frank Dicksee, "The Two Crowns" (1900)
- Has our Christian culture for the past thousand years or so simply revived the confrontation between Pilate and Jesus? Between two kingdoms?
- The Cross is "the Wood Between Two Worlds," but have we come to see the portal primarily in only one direction? Mostly unsettled to see the cross as a portal in the other direction – of God's reign coming into the world?

5

Pilate vs Jesus

Is this closer to what the confrontation might look like in recent history between our human reigns and God's reign trying to enter our world? Seeking greater justice and abundant life for everyone?

March from Selma for Voting Rights in 1965

6

A Glimpse of Beloved Community?

Is this a glimpse of the Beloved Community striving for justice by being willing to suffer violence? The wood between the worlds as a portal for God's reign to begin to enter? What would that look like right now?

March from Selma for Voting Rights in 1965

7