



April 9 / Maundy Thursday

Matthew 27:57-61

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

To ponder

By your deep expiring groan, by the sad sepulchral stone,
by the vault whose dark abode held in vain the rising God,
oh, from earth to heav'n restored, mighty, re-ascended Lord,

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bending from your throne on high, hear our penitential cry!
—Robert Grant, “Savior, when in dust to you,” ELW 601, st. 4

Even the stones will shout

At this point in Matthew’s gospel all hope is gone. Jesus has been arrested, put on trial, and crucified. Now he is dead. Buried in a tomb chiseled out of rock. A “sad sepulchral stone” seals the tomb. To the world’s eye, this stone also seals his fate. The misguided Messiah’s ministry has ended. The prophet is silenced. The charade is over.

It seems odd to describe a silent, inanimate stone as “sad.” But in Luke, when some Pharisees begged Jesus to tell his disciples to stop shouting their hosannas, Jesus said, “If these were silent, the stones would shout out” (19:40). It seems that even stones can’t stay quiet about Jesus.

The one who lies in the tomb behind the stone is the one who was present at creation when stones were first formed. Stones scattered beneath his feet as he made his way to the cross. Very soon, behind this stone blocking the tomb’s entrance, God will raise Jesus from death and turn all creation’s longing into joy. Perhaps even the stones will shout!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, open our lips, that we may join the stones and all creation in singing your praise. You alone have given your life for the love of all people. And you alone are risen from the dead. Amen.