

# Shadows: A Tenebrae Service

HOLY WEEK 2023

CHRIST CHURCH, RIDLEY PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

*This is an adaptation of the Tenebrae (tén-eh-bray) service with both worldly and sacred readings that tell the story of our brokenness. The service typically moves from light to darkness, and it doesn't resolve our broken, sinful, lostness. It contemplates it honestly before the Cross. As this year it is shared as a podcast, we encourage an embodiment with your listening:*

- *You may have seven candles and extinguish one after each Shadow,*
- *Or find 7 stones (or nails or other objects) and drop it in a bowl or jar after each Shadow,*
- *Take a piece of paper and write a virtue (compassion, love..) on it, and then rip that paper after each Shadow.*
- *If you are listening out in the world you may want to mime one of the above actions, or choose a physical ritual to make after each Shadow.*

*Begin in silence.*

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## FIRST SHADOW

Let them draw back and be disgraced who take pleasure in our misfortune.

**Arise, O God, maintain our cause.**

Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked:

**From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.**

O God, make speed to save me;

O Lord, make haste to help me.

**Let those who seek my life**

**be put to shame and confusion;**

let them be turned back and disgraced

who wish me evil.

**Let those who mock and deride me**

**turn back because of their shame.**

But let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;

let those who love your salvation say always,

‘Great is the Lord!’

**As for me, I am poor and needy;**

**come to me quickly, O God.**

You are my help and my deliverer;

O Lord, do not delay.

*Psalm 70*

How lonely sits the city

that once was full of people!

How like a widow she has become,

she that was great among the nations!

She that was a princess among the provinces

has become a vassal.

She weeps bitterly in the night,

with tears on her cheeks;

among all her lovers

she has no one to comfort her;

all her friends have dealt treacherously with her,

they have become her enemies.

Judah has gone into exile with suffering

and hard servitude;

she lives now among the nations,

and finds no resting-place;

her pursuers have all overtaken her

in the midst of her distress.

*Lamentations of Jeremiah 1. 1-3*

You are my help and my deliverer; **O Lord, do not delay.**

“But a planet can also become dark because of “too strong a desire for security ... the greatest evil there is.” Meg resists her father’s analysis. What’s wrong with wanting to be safe? Mr. Murry insists that “lust for security” forces false choices and a panicked search for safety and conformity. This reminded me that my grandmother would get very annoyed when anyone would talk about “the power of love.” Love, she insisted, is not power, which she considered always coercive. To love is to be vulnerable; and it is only in vulnerability and risk—not safety and security—that we overcome darkness.”

*Madeleine L'Engle, A Wrinkle in Time*

*Silence for Reflection:*

How do we dwell in the shadow of sin and evil because we of panic and conformity?

On the mount of Olives Jesus prayed to the Father: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. While we sat in darkness, Lord Jesus Christ, you interrupted us with your life. Make us, your people, a holy interruption so that by your Spirit's power we may live as a light to the nations, **even as we stumble through this world's wretchedness. Amen.**

*First Candles are Extinguished*

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## *SECOND SHADOW*

Arise, O God, maintain your cause:  
defend the poor for your name's sake.

**Remember, O Lord, how the enemy scoffed:  
how a foolish people despised your name.**

Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts:  
never forget the lives of your poor.

**Look upon your covenant:  
the dark places of the earth**

are haunts of violence.

*Psalm 74: 17– 19*

The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to the festivals; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan; her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter.

Her foes have become the masters, her enemies prosper, because the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe.

From daughter Zion has departed all her majesty. Her princes have become like stags that find no pasture; they fled without strength before the pursuer.

*Lamentations of Jeremiah 1. 4-6*

Arise, O God, maintain your cause: **defend the poor for your name's sake.**

“In uncertainty I am certain that underneath their topmost layers of frailty men want to be good and want to be loved. Indeed, most of their vices are attempted shortcuts to love...We have only one story. All novels, all poetry, are built on the never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil. And it occurs to me that evil must constantly respawn, while good, while virtue is immortal. Vice has always a new fresh young face, while virtue is venerable as nothing else in the world is.”

“I believe that there is one story in the world, and only one. . . . Humans are caught—in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too—in a net of good and evil. . . . There is no other story. A man, after he has brushed off the dust and chips of his life, will have left only the hard, clean questions: Was it good or was it evil? Have I done well—or ill?”

*John Steinbeck, East of Eden*

*Silence for Reflection:*

What net of trouble do you keep repairing even though it hurts what God loves?

My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death; remain here, and watch with me.

**Now you shall see the crowd who will surround me;  
you will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.**

Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

You will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.

Lord, in our efforts to serve, help us be true to who we are in you.

Make us see and understand the gifts and talents you have given us,

**and give us courage to use them for the building up of your kingdom. Amen.**

*Second Candles are Extinguished*

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## *THIRD SHADOW*

Save us, Lord, but not us alone:

redeem your whole creation.

**In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge:  
let me never be ashamed.**

In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free:

incline your ear to me and save me.

**Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe:  
you are my crag and my stronghold.**

Do not cast me off in my old age:

forsake me not when my strength fails.

*Psalm 71: 1–3*

All you beasts of the field, come and eat, all you beasts of the forest! The lookouts are blind; they all lack sense. They are all mute dogs that can't bark, dreamers, loungers, loving to sleep. But the dogs have monstrous appetites.

They never have enough. They are shepherds who don't understand. All of them have turned to their own ways, every last one greedy for profit.

*Isaiah 56.9-11*

Save us, Lord, but not us alone: **redeem your whole creation.**

They had a struggle to get out of the thicket. The thorns and briars were as tough as wire and as clinging as claws. Their cloaks were rent and tattered before they broke free at last. 'Now down we go, Sam,' Frodo whispered. 'Down into the valley quick, and then turn northward, as soon as ever we can.'

Day was coming again in the world outside, and far beyond the glooms of Mordor the sun was climbing over the eastern rim of Middle-earth; but here all was still dark as night. The mountain smoldered and its fires went out. The glare faded from the cliffs. The easterly wind that had been blowing ever since they left Ithilien now seemed dead. Slowly and painfully they clambered down, groping, stumbling, scrambling among the rock and briar and dead wood in the blind shadows, down and down until they could go no further.

*J.R.R. Tolkien, Lord of the Rings*

*Silence for Reflection: Where and what are your thorns, briars, thickets?*

Lo, we have seen him without beauty or majesty, with no looks to attract our eyes.

**He bore our sins and grieved for us, he was wounded for our transgressions,  
and by his scourging we are healed.**

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows:

And by his scourging we are healed. Savior of the world, save us from our sin, our sadness, and our self-deception.

Give us courage to live in a world we cannot fix, **with the trust that it has already been redeemed. Amen.**

*Third Candles are Extinguished*

Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies:  
it cannot bear fruit or bless others' lives.

**Incline my heart to your decrees: and not to unjust gain.**

Turn my eyes from watching what is worthless:  
give me life in your ways.

**Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies:**

it cannot bear fruit or bless others' lives.

*Psalm 119: 34, 37*

Look to the west as far as the shores of Cyprus and to the east as far as the land of Kedar. Ask anyone there: Has anything this odd ever taken place? Has a nation switched gods, though they aren't really gods at all?

Yet my people have exchanged their glory for what has no value. Be stunned at such a thing, you heavens; shudder and quake, declares the Lord. My people have committed two crimes: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water. And they have dug wells, broken wells that can't hold water.

*Jeremiah 2.10-13*

Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies: **it cannot bear fruit or bless others' lives.**

Despereaux shuddered. His own brother was delivering him to the dungeon. His heart stopped beating and shrunk to a small, cold, disbelieving pebble. But then, just as quickly, it leapt alive again, beating with hope. "Furlough," Despereaux said, and he took one of his brother's paws in his own. "Please, let me go. Please. I'm your brother." Furlough rolled his eyes. He took his paw out of Despereaux's. "No," he said. "No way." "Please," said Despereaux. "No," said Furlough. "Rules are rules." Reader, do you recall the word "perfidy"? As our story progresses, "perfidy" becomes an ever more appropriate word, doesn't it? "Perfidy" was certainly the word that was in Despereaux's mind as the mice finally approached the narrow, steep stairs that led to the black hole of the dungeon. They stood, the three mice, two with hoods and one without, and contemplated the abyss before them. And then Furlough stood up on his hind legs and placed his right paw over his heart. "For the good of the castle mice," he announced to the darkness, "we deliver this day to the dungeon, a mouse in need of punishment. He is, according to the laws we have established, wearing the red thread of death."

"The red thread of death?" repeated Despereaux in a small voice. "Wearing the red thread of death" was a terrible phrase, but the mouse didn't have long to consider its implications, because he was suddenly pushed from behind by the hooded mice. The push was a strong one, and it sent Despereaux flying down the stairs into the dungeon. As he tumbled, whisker over tail, through the darkness, there were only two words in his mind. One was "perfidy." And the other word that he clung to was "Pea." Perfidy. Pea. Perfidy. Pea. These were the words that pinwheeled through Despereaux's mind as his body descended into the darkness.

*Kate DiCamillo, The Tale of Despereaux*

*Silence for Reflection: Perfidy is a deliberate betrayal, a state of deceit. Can you see your perfidy before God and neighbor?*

See how the righteous one perishes, and no one takes it to heart.

The righteous are taken away, and no one understands.

**From the face of evil the righteous one is taken away, and his memory shall be in peace.**

Like a sheep before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth.

**By oppression and judgment he was taken away: And his memory shall be in peace.**

Lord, we know the world will kill your prophets.

Nevertheless, give us words to convict, to heal, to raise up others for justice,

**and to offer forgiveness for those who harm us. Amen.**

*Fourth Candles are extinguished.*

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## *FIFTH SHADOW*

Freedom, how long have we sought you:

dying, we now may behold you.

**We have heard with our ears, O God, our forefathers have told us:**

**the deeds you did in their days, in the days of old.**

You have made us fall back before our adversary:

and our enemies have plundered us.

**Indeed, for your sake we are killed all the day long:**

**we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

Freedom, how long have we sought you: dying, we now may behold you.

*Psalm 44: 1, 10, 22*

Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to help her, the foe looked on mocking over her downfall.

Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face away.

Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her. 'O Lord, look at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!'

Enemies have stretched out their hands over all her precious things; she has even seen the nations invade her sanctuary, those whom you forbade to enter your congregation.

Freedom, how long have we sought you: **dying, we now may behold you.**

"I'd rather you shot at tin cans in the backyard, but I know you'll go after birds. Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." That was the only time I ever heard Atticus say it was a sin to do something, and I asked Miss Maudie about it. "Your father's right," she said. "Mockingbirds don't do one thing except make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corn cribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

*Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird*

*Silence for reflection: Where do we cause God grief in our acts and attitudes?*

I was like a trusting lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying,

**Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living.**

All my enemies whispered together against me, and devised evil against me, saying:

**Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living.**

Lord, reveal to us all that makes itself an enemy to the life you want for us.

Help us hunger so deeply for the freedom of all your people  
that we risk walking among enemies who subvert justice.

**Reveal to us when we ourselves act as enemies to your kingdom of justice and peace. Amen.**

*Fifth candles are extinguished*

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## *SIXTH SHADOW*

He who hung the earth upon the waters:

he is hung upon the cross.

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**

**and are so far from my cry and from the words of my distress?**

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer:

by night as well, but I find no rest.

**Be not far from me, for trouble is near: and there is none to help.**

He who hung the earth upon the waters: today he is hung upon the cross.

See, O Lord, how distressed I am; my stomach churns, my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death.

They heard how I was groaning, with no one to comfort me. All my enemies heard of my trouble; they are glad that you have done it. Bring on the day you have announced, and let them be as I am.

Let all their evildoing come before you; and deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my transgressions; for my groans are many and my heart is faint.

*Lamentations of Jeremiah 1. 20-22*

He who hung the earth upon the waters: **today he is hung upon the cross.**

“We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others. The closer we get to mass incarceration and extreme levels of punishment, the more I believe it's necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and-perhaps-we all need some measure of unmerited grace.”

*Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy*

*Silence for Reflection: What deep dark inclinations and shadows do we let defeat us?*

Darkness covered the whole land when Jesus had been crucified;

and about the ninth hour he cried with a loud voice:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? **And he bowed his head and handed over his spirit.**

Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

**And he bowed his head and handed over his spirit.**

While we were still your enemies, Lord Jesus Christ, you suffered and died for us, winning the victory over death for our sakes. Give us grace to lift you up as we follow the way of your cross, **so that all who need your grace may be drawn unto you. Amen.**

*SIXTH candles are extinguished*

Remember me in your mercy,  
Lord: and unite us by your cross.

**How long, O Lord?**

**Will you forget me for ever?**

How long will you hide your face from me?

**How long shall I have perplexity in my mind,  
and grief in my heart, day after day?**

How long shall my enemy triumph over me?

Remember me in your mercy, Lord: and unite us by your cross.

*Psalm 13*

I thought, I must depart in the prime of my life; I have been relegated to the gates of the underworld for the rest of my life. I thought, I won't see the LORD. The LORD is in the land of the living. I won't look upon humans again or be with the inhabitants of the world. My lifetime is plucked up and taken from me like a shepherd's tent. My life is shriveled like woven cloth; God cuts me off from the loom. Between daybreak and nightfall you carry out your verdict against me.

*Portion of the Song of Hezekiah from Isaiah 38.10-12*

"Mercy!" cried the voice. "Mercy! Even if you are only one more dream, have mercy. Take me on board. Take me, even if you strike me dead. But in the name of all mercies do not fade away and leave me in this horrible land." "Where are you?" shouted Caspian....A wild, white face appeared in the blackness of the water, and then, after some scrambling and pulling, a dozen friendly hands had heaved the stranger on board. Edmund thought he had never seen a wilder-looking man. Though he did not otherwise look very old, his hair was an untidy mop of white, his face was thin and drawn and, for clothing, only a few wet rags hung about him. But what one mainly noticed were his eyes, which were so widely opened that he seemed to have no eyelids at all, and stared as if in an agony of pure fear.

The moment his feet reached the deck he said: "Fly! Fly! About with your ship and fly! Row, row, row for your lives away from this accursed shore." "Compose yourself," said Reepicheep, "and tell us what the danger is. We are not used to flying." The stranger started horribly at the voice of the Mouse, which he had not noticed before. "Nevertheless you will fly from here," he gasped. "This is the island where dreams come true." "That's the island I've been looking for this long time," said one of the sailors. "I reckoned I'd find I was married to Nancy if we landed here." "And I'd find Tom alive again," said another. "Fools!" said the man, stamping his foot with rage. "That is the sort of talk that brought me here, and I'd better have been drowned or never born. Do you hear what I say? This is where dreams—dreams, do you understand—come to life, come real. Not daydreams: dreams." There was about half a minute's silence and then, with a great clatter of armor, the whole crew were tumbling down the main hatch as quick as they could and flinging themselves on the oars to row as they had never rowed before; and Drinian was swinging round the tiller, and the boatswain was giving out the quickest stroke that had ever been heard at sea. For it had taken everyone just that half-minute to remember certain dreams they had had—dreams that make you afraid of going to sleep again—and to realize what it would mean to land on a country where dreams come true.

*Silence for reflection. How do you comprehend the nightmare our foolishness can be for ourselves and God?*

The veil of the temple was torn in two, and the earth shook,  
and the thief from the cross cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

**The rocks were split, the tombs were opened,  
and many bodies of the saints who slept were raised:**

And the earth shook, and the thief from the cross cried out,  
Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Sometimes we don't realize the intensity of the things for which we pray, Lord.

Keep us courageously mindful **that your way is laden with tears on the way to resurrection. Amen.**

*All except one candle are extinguished.*

Christ for us became obedient unto death,

**even death on a cross;**

therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him

**the Name which is above every name.**

*A silence is observed*

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross.

***NOTHING FURTHER IS SAID; BUT A LOUD NOISE IS MADE.***

SOURCES

*BOOK OF OCCASIONAL SERVICES 2003 (KINDLE LOCATIONS 1147-1158). CHURCH PUBLISHING INC. KINDLE EDITION.*

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