

Angela Pound

From Rock to Cornerstone

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**Leader:**

Today, as we gather on Good Friday,  
we remember a stone.

Not only the stone that sealed the tomb,  
but the weight lifted onto the cross—  
rejection, suffering, and sin.

The stone speaks of finality,  
of Friday's grief  
and Saturday's silence.

It was heavy—  
heavier than our hearts could bear.  
Yet Christ bore it first.

On the cross,  
He carried our sin,  
our sorrow,  
and the weight of death itself.

The stone the builders rejected  
was lifted up—  
and in His suffering  
became the cornerstone of our salvation.

And so we wait.  
Not without grief.  
Not without hope.

Let us pray.

Holy and gracious God,  
on this day we gather in awe and sorrow,  
remembering the suffering of Your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who bore the weight of our sin and the brokenness of the  
world.

As we come to this place, we see the stones —  
stones that once proclaimed Hosanna that now hold our  
grief, our fears, our regrets,  
stones that remind us of the ways we have rejected Your  
love,  
and the ways the world has rejected Your Son.

As we lay them with you at the foot at the foot of the cross  
we do so not in despair, but in trust.

For even as the tomb is sealed,  
we remember Your promise: the stone is not the end.

May this act of placing these stones be a visible sign of our  
surrender,  
our repentance, and our hope in the One who died for us.  
May our hearts, too, be laid open before You,  
that in the silence and sorrow of this day,  
we might hear again the voice of Your love calling us to life.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord.

Amen.

## Song (When I Survey)

- Scripture: Matthew 27: 11-26

Matthew 27:11-26 NRSV

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas

and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!” Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!” So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

- Monologue One – “The Sign Maker”

(Looking at a blank piece of wood)

A sign.

(Sigh)

The day before Passover, and Pilate has ordered a sign. A sign that I do not want to make. I usually love

doing this work - carving, building, writing. And now here I am - asked to make a sign to hang on the

cross of the one I hoped would see the end to all of Rome’s cruelty. And now, he will be its victim.

You see Jesus will die shortly. I don't have much time. He has already been found guilty. The charges are nonsense of course. But as soon as the leaders even hinted that Jesus said he was a king, Pilate's hands were tied. He is scared of his Caesar, that is for sure. He cannot appear to spare anyone who claims his place. Which makes it so strange that he wants this sign: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews..." Does Pilate believe it? He can't, can he? Is he trying to antagonize the religious leaders? That IS something that he would do. Surely he will tell Caesar that it was meant to be ironic, tongue in cheek. Little could he know how many of us did believe it. Well, how many of us hoped it were true.

I was convinced that the Messiah had come in my lifetime. The words of the prophets have assured us that a Messiah, a Saviour would come to deliver us. Surely, this is the time that we need one. Living under Roman rule weighs on us. We are weary with Herod as a pseudo-king. My father, my grandfather and those before them spent their lives praying for deliverance, praying that the Almighty would hasten in

keeping his promises to us. A Saviour. A Redeemer. A King. And I was sure that I would see what they had longed to be. Freedom. Freedom for all of us. Now, instead, I make a sign.

(Looks at sign again)

There has been much talk of signs since Jesus came. And what else could they be? A wedding - where the water in the purification jars turns to wine! At Jesus' command. That young boy, the child of the man who worked for Herod - he hasn't been able to stop talking about how he was healed - from miles away, just because Jesus said it. That man who sat at the gates for years. I lost count how many. I saw him walking around just the other day! And then Lazarus, that man from Bethany. My neighbour assured me - he was there when they put him in the tomb - and now Lazarus is alive again! Miracles all of them, but something more, I hoped. Signs. Signs that our vindication was coming. Signs that our prayers were answered. Signs that a new King had arrived. And it was Jesus!

Signs.

And now another sign (looks again at sign).

Can it be just a few days ago that we heard he was coming into town and me and my friends rushed to

see him? We weren't the only ones - and there he was, on a donkey. He makes a point that Jesus. A

donkey, just like a king rides after a victory. And I could just feel the hope all around us. We couldn't help

but start to tear down the branches. I couldn't take my robe off fast enough to lay on the ground. I yelled

Hosannah until my voice was hoarse. We all did. Here was our King! I could hardly wait to see what it

would look like when Pilate, and Herod got kicked out.

When Jesus took over and we had a King from the

line of David again, as we are supposed to. It was all any of us could talk about.

But that was Sunday. Already so long ago.

That was before the trial. That was before the Sanhedrin filled the crowd with those who would yell

“Crucify Him!” That was before the death sentence.

I don't get it. Why didn't he stand up to Pilate? Why didn't he do one of his miracles and impress Herod -

or better yet - defeat him? He could have, couldn't he?

Unless - they weren't signs at all. Unless he was another miracle worker with impressive tricks. Unless the stories weren't true. Unless my story won't be any different than those who came before me. Unless I will also spend my life praying for what will never be, caught up in false hopes.

I should never have gotten my hopes up. I do not understand the ways of the Almighty. It was too much to hope for freedom in my lifetime. Like my father and grandfather and those before, I will go to the grave in longing, longing for the King of the Jews.

(Writes words on sign)

- Song (The Old Rugged Cross)
- Scripture: Matthew 27: 27-44

Matthew 27:27-44 NRSV

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King

of the Jews!” They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’ ” The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

- Monologue Two – “The Soldier”

(Holding sign, looking at it, laughs lightly)

Oh Pilate, you are something else. King of the Jews? That’s hilarious. I mean, I know we don’t usually put

signs up listing criminal’s crimes, but this Jesus guy is worth poking a little fun at, I must say.

Have you heard about what he’s been doing? If you haven’t, you must not have spent any time in Judea

the last couple of years. I think the first time I heard him mentioned was when someone told me that the

Jews were going all crazy for some healer. Apparently they were lining up to him in droves, and they were

claiming that he was making people who could never walk, walk and people who were born blind see for

the first time. Honestly, those Jews will believe anything, won’t they? They put all their faith in this one

God - ONE God! As if one God could be responsible for everything! And then it was like they thought God

had sent this guy to help them. And get this! You know who this guy was? A carpenter. From Nazareth!

You hear me right! NAZARETH! Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous? Like the gods - oh I’m sorry

- the "GOD" - would pick some nobody from Nazareth to do anything important.

Well, the healings were one thing, but then a few months later everyone was going on about how there had apparently been this whole crowd of people that Jesus had fed with one kid's lunch. It was something like 5000 people who supposedly had food left over after they all ate - because they thought that Jesus had miraculously multiplied food. So I guess he's Ceres now - our goddess of the harvest. I haven't even heard of her doing anything like that. But they believe it. Now, I mean all of this makes for some good stories - me and the guys have had some real laughs about this while on guard duty let me tell you. It never ceases to amaze me what these naive people believe.

But last week it did sound like things were getting out of hand. He came into the city, and we were told to stand by because they thought riots would start once he got here. Here's the funny thing - a lot of people love him, but the priests and the sanhedrin - the big guns - they can't stand him. Makes sense I guess - probably terrifying for them to think the people might

actually stand up to them for once, or that some other guy might have something to say besides them. I don't know how they even keep up with all their laws, but apparently this Jesus had suddenly become public enemy number one for them.

The trial last night was totally bizarre, I admit. I know I say that I think the Jews can be funny, but I really

didn't expect them to turn on Jesus like that. I never dreamed they'd pick Barabbas to be released over

Jesus. And right before one of their big fancy festivals. Ah well, it's nothing to me. We never get days off -

like them. So one crucifixion is the same as another to me.

Now Pilate, the guy who held the trial - he did seem a bit spooked. I guess Jesus got to him or something,

because apparently he ordered this sign that I'm supposed to hang. Well, I'd rather hang the sign than

put the nails in the bodies. I'm not squeamish, but I'll be honest: I always hate that part. I know these

criminals deserve it with the stuff they do, but the screams really do get to me. One thing I can say for

crucifixion: it's effective.

Oh here they all come (looks out)

Wow that's a big crowd...I think I see Jesus. Looks like someone else is carrying the cross for him. I guess that beating we gave him took its toll. Did I tell you about that part- we dressed him up in a robe and we took thorns and made it into a crown. This guy claimed to be able to know stuff right, so we'd hit him and see if he could tell who did it! He never could! Not once! King of the Jews indeed! This man never should have claimed the stuff he did. Too many of these Jews just can't accept that Rome's in charge now.

(NOTE DURING THIS PART SOUND UNCERTAIN/  
CONFLICTED)

(Pauses)

But you know he never once fought back, not even a little. He just stood there. I've never seen anyone do that before. (pauses).

And at one point he looked at me. Right at me. It was so weird. I thought he would scowl at me. He didn't.

He just looked. And you know for a moment I thought - maybe there's something to all that they're saying

(Straightens up, looks at sign in his hands again)

I wonder why Pilate worded it this way...Why he just said

“King of the Jews” and not that He SAID he was King of the Jews. Caiaphas is going to hate that.

(Pauses)

King of the Jews. I’ve never seen a king look at anybody the way that man looked at me. I can’t imagine

Caesar looking at anyone that way. Or Pilate. Or Herod.

King of the Jews. These Jews - they have a funny idea of a king.

- Song (Were You There)
- Scripture: Matthew 27: 45-56

Matthew 27:45–56 NRSV

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were

opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

- Monologue Three – “The Women who Watched”

Sharlene:

Come along daughter...we will find a place near the top of the hill, a little ways back. That will be easiest.

We shouldn’t get too close.

Mattea:

I still don’t understand how this could happen.

Sharlene (sighing):

From the day we started to follow Jesus, back in Galilee, we knew they were scared of him.

Mattea:

But mother, THIS afraid? THIS worried about a man who was so gentle, who has helped so many, who has done so many good things? (voice catches)

Sharlene:

It is hard to understand. But His ways scare them, daughter. They know that he distrusts them. They know he is calling them out for the ways they have pushed us out, and so many, for so long. I still laugh when I think of him turning over those tables in the Temple last week! Oh, he has let those arrogant Pharisees have it that's for sure.

Mattea:

But mother - crucifixion? A death sentence?

Sharlene (suddenly somber):

Yes a crucifixion. The harshest sentence of all. For the gentlest of men.

Mattea:

Must we watch? Must we be there?

Sharlene (pausing as they walk, hand on her daughter's shoulder):

Yes, my child, we will watch. We will keep vigil. Because we

said we would follow to the end.

Mattea:

The men aren't here. What of Peter, and James, and Phillip? And the others? They also followed.

Sharlene:

I do not know about the men. But I know that we women will stay with him. We are used to these things my child. We carry life and we know of its frailty. It is easier for us. We will stand with Jesus if they cannot.

And we will stand with Mary, who must watch the son she bore suffer. She will need us.

Mattea:

I hate crucifixions. I hate the Romans and their cruel punishments:

Sharlene:

Hush. They may hear you.

Mattea:

Let them hear me! Jesus was never afraid of them! Why must we act afraid?

We should act as he did - bold! Certain!

Sharlene:

Not today, daughter. We are Jews. And we're women. We will stand from a distance and we will watch.

Mattea:

And when he dies, mother, what then?

Sharlene:

Then we will clean the body, as women do. We will do the work we do as women, that work which the

Romans will not take from us. Come, we are close

(Both pause - looking up - as if to the cross - they grip each other, seeing Jesus on the cross.)

Mattea:

Oh mother.

Sharlene:

Yes. I know

Mattea:

Oh mother it is awful

Sharlene:

It is.

Mattea:

Do you think - it hurts?

Sharlene:

Yes, I am certain that it hurts

Mattea (frantic):

But maybe...maybe he can make the pain less. Maybe the one who does miracles can do a miracle for himself.

Sharlene:

Somehow, I think the pain is part of the point.

(A moment of quiet)

Mattea:

Mother, what's that, above his head?

(They both look)

Sharlene:

It looks like some sign, some words.

Mattea:

What new shame have they brought on him now?

Sharlene:

There are none among us women who can read what it says.

Mattea:

Perhaps someone has heard - what does the sign say? Do you know

(A pause as if someone is speaking to her)

Sharlene:

King of the Jews?

Mattea:

So they mock him.

Sharlene:

They do indeed.

Mattea: King of the Jews? Why would they say that? No one else has a sign! No one else is made to

hang beneath the trumped up charges. There is no other sign. They must take it down! He does not

deserve this! Mother, they must do something.

Mother...mother why do you smile? This sign is another insult!

Sharlene: Perhaps to them, indeed, an insult, yes.

Mattea: Then why mother, why do you smile? He is suffering! Look at how he struggles to breathe! Look

mother - look at the nails....look at the dried blood...look at how he hangs there, for all to see. And then a

sign! Why aren't you more upset? What is wrong with you?

Sharlene: I smile, my child, because they have gotten one thing right today,

Mattea: I don't understand.

Sharlene:

King of the Jews, my daughter. He is King of the Jews. They don't know that they speak truth, but we do.

(Moment of silence)

Mattea: So what do we do now?

Sharlene: Now, dear one. We watch. And wait.

As we look back to Palm Sunday we read in Luke 19:37–40 “As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.””

On Palm Sunday, we waved our branches and shouted *Hosanna!* We held these stones as symbols of praise —

reminders that if we were silent, *even the stones would cry out*.

But today... the songs have stopped.  
The crowd that once cheered has turned away.  
The same voices that cried “Hosanna” now whisper,  
“Crucify Him.”

These stones — once lifted in joy — now fall silent.  
They remind us how quickly our praise can fade, how easily  
our hearts can harden.  
And yet, even in silence, they still *bear witness* — to the  
One who loved us to the end.

As we sing, you are invited to come forward.  
Take one of the stones from Palm Sunday — the stones that  
lined the path of praise —  
and place it upside down at the foot of the cross.

For this is where praise meets sacrifice.  
This is where our shouts fall silent  
and our burdens are carried.

At the cross,  
joy and grief stand together.  
Hope is wounded.  
Love is poured out.

Here, Christ takes what we lay down—  
our praise, our failure, our stone-heavy hearts—

and bears them in His own body.

So we place the stones here.

Not because the story is over,  
but because this is where love holds the weight...

Come as you are, and lay your stone at the cross.

(Have people come forward to place their stones - Allow attendees to pick up a stone from the walk to the cross and place it at the foot of the cross)

- Song (Love Ran Red)

Then read Matthew 27:57-60

Matthew 27:57-60 NRSV

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.

(Once the last person has laid their stone and the scripture is read, two silent GUARDS enter. They approach the large stone and dramatically roll it into place, blocking the entrance of the tomb. Let the sound of it be audible. THUD. Then: silence.)

Let this be your prayer today:  
that your praise, your pain, your doubts, and your burdens  
would rest with Christ in the tomb,  
awaiting the dawn of resurrection.

The stones have spoken.

Their cries of *Hosanna* have turned to silence.

The King had a crown of thorns. (point to the crown on the  
cross)

The King had a wooden throne. (point to the cross)

The King had a sign. (point to the sign)

But now the King has a tomb.

Joy now lies in the darkness of the tomb —  
alongside all our grief, all our sin, all our unfinished  
prayers.

Today, we remember that love did not turn away.  
Christ took our pain, our praise, our stone-heavy hearts,  
and carried them to the cross.

Now, the stone is rolled before the tomb.

The light is gone. The earth is still.

But even here, even in silence,  
God is not finished.

*(Pause — allow 15–20 seconds of silence.)*

For praise is not lost in the tomb—it is transformed.

*Let us pray*

Lord Jesus,  
The sign above You spoke truth,  
Though no one saw it.  
The stone before You speaks silence,  
Though no one can keep You in.

We believe, Lord — You are the King.  
Even when You hang.  
Even when You die.  
Even when You are sealed away.

We watch.  
And we wait.

So, we go now in the quiet of this day.  
Waiting. Watching.  
This stone is not the end, the story is not over.

AMEN

As you leave today, looking to the tomb,  
you are invited to take back one stone,  
which will be given out at the door as you leave.

Not as a shout of praise,  
not yet, but as a stone of hope.  
A reminder that what is placed in the tomb  
is not lost to God.

Carry it in silence.  
Carry it as a promise.  
The stone remains...  
but death will not have the final word.

Go now in the quiet of this day.

Watching.

Waiting.

Hoping.