

# Sharing the message

Heather Smith *reflects on*  
Isaiah 50:4-9a



**D**on't shoot the messenger," the saying goes, but it is often the reaction of those who do not like the message that they are hearing. As Jesus knew, the message that God wants us to spread often finds a hostile reception. God gives us the tongue of a teacher, with words to sustain the weary, but the weary are suspicious and angry. Being sustained may involve letting go of something that is very dear, or of a long-held, greatly valued attitude. It becomes clear that words that at first seemed soothing have an unwelcome challenge or call to change.

On the first Palm Sunday the people welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. He was their king. But soon they were swayed by the views of the chief priests, who viewed Jesus as a threat. They could not understand that God's love is not a zero sum game and that nobody loses by embracing it.

If we speak out about God's love we will in all likelihood encounter hostility or disdain. At the very least we may find a

lack of comprehension. "You're not normal. You aren't motivated by the same things as other people," a work colleague told one Christian.

However hostile people are to the message that we bring, it's not possible to kill God's love. The resurrection proves it. Jesus may have submitted to death; that was his triumph, but death didn't stick. Resurrection was inevitable. 🙏

**Loving God, may we have courage to love others, no matter how hostile they are. Inspire us by the example of Jesus, who died at the hands of angry people, but rose again when love triumphed. Amen.**

## Leap into Lent

Ricarda Witcombe concludes her Lenten series.

This is Holy Week, and if we dare to walk its path, we will ponder the absolute depths of pain and fear and hold them before the absolute love of God. Holy Week is about honesty – it gives us a place to put all our pain. Maundy Thursday reminds us of the command to love one another. Good Friday makes us gaze on

the very worst that can happen in a human life. Holy Saturday takes us into emptiness. Sunday will draw us into the knowledge that death and pain are not where the story ends. This is an exhausting week, and we will be wise to live it slowly, perhaps using this prayer, from *Common Worship*:

Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of sin and the depth of your love: in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet all that we have and all that we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 🙏

## Holy Week in Coventry Cathedral

by John Witcombe

Holy Week is one of the most important weeks of the year here. We gather in the choir stalls every evening at the beginning of the week for Compline, a beautiful simple service with a meditative address, held in the gathering dusk. Earlier in the day, we try to temper the cathedral's natural busyness, though not always successfully.

Throughout our activity we find ourselves caught up in the swelling chords of the passion narratives that frame the week through the liturgy.

By Thursday we are going more or less full throttle with large-scale services – the Chrism Mass, where clergy and others renew their vocational commitments, the washing of feet and the stripping of the altar. Then come the Good Friday penitential rites.

This liturgical busyness comes to a natural pause on Holy Saturday before we meet, just as dawn breaks over the ruins, for a service of baptism, Eucharist and confirmation early on Easter morning, to proclaim that "Christ is Risen!" 🙏

“The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.'”

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist and preacher