

Worship At Home

24th March 2024

Today is the last Sunday of Lent. It is also known as Palm Sunday and it is the beginning of Holy Week. Over the next few days, Christians all around the world will be following the story of Jesus' final days - listening again for what this story has to say to us today.

Philippians 2:5-11

"Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human!

Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honoured him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honour of God the Father."



Let's pray

Lord of all, Thank you that you invite me to rest. Thank you for weaving sabbath into the very fabric of creation, and for making each of us to lie down in green pastures. Thank you that I do not have to do everything to earn your love.

Save me, Lord, from thinking that everything relies on me and my efforts. Help me to trust in your Spirit's guidance, not only my own experience or analysis. Spur me to action where it is needed, and lead me to rest when it is not. Be with me as I worship this day. Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 279 Make way, make way.

Make way, make way, for Christ the King In splendour arrives
Fling wide the gates and welcome Him Into your lives

CCLI5044394

*Make way! (Make way!) Make way! (Make way!)
For the King of kings (For the King of kings)
Make way! (Make way!) Make way! (Make way!)
And let His kingdom in*

He comes the broken hearts to heal The prisoners to free
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance The blind shall see.

And those who mourn with heavy hearts Who weep and sigh
With laughter, joy and royal crown He'll beautify
We call you now to worship Him As Lord of all
To have no gods before Him Their thrones must fall!

Let us pray,

As we come together for worship today, may it be with a sense that Jesus is here, too:

may our eyes be open to see Him, may our hearts be ready to be seen by Him, may our worship be worthy of His presence, may our ears be open to hear the Word: may we see the world through His eyes, responding in service and love.

There are times when we have all failed to love others, failed to love God, and we have even failed to love ourselves. We bring these now to God. Jesus says in Matthew (11:28-30) "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Lord, you know us well. We are quick to speak of faith, but slow to live it fully. We shout "hosanna" as Jesus approaches, as did the people of Jerusalem many years ago; but we do not want him to come too close - not close enough to really see...

We are quick to claim faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour; but, like the throng who greeted his entry into Jerusalem, we are fickle, slow to live fully and everywhere as faithful disciples.

We are quick to want the blessings of faithfulness; but, like the Twelve who spent the last week with him, we are slow to accept the pain and suffering of authentic Christ-like living. Forgive our weakness and fear...

Jesus says: "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus also says, "Come, follow Me." Thanks be to God. Amen.

Reading: The Passion of Jesus: Mark 14: 1 to 72, 15: 1- 47

REFLECTION

We know what lies ahead for Jesus - the darkness of evil, suffering and death - we have heard the story before, but that doesn't make it any less significant - we know that he was prepared to challenge the power structures of his day with a different and totally unexpected kind of power - servanthood and humility.

Sometimes we feel dwarfed, overshadowed by the immensity of the happenings taking place around us - close to home and more distantly throughout the world. We find it difficult to recognise the presence of God in the different events which happen to us and which so often seem to have control over our lives. The road ahead may seem cloudy and dark. But the events of this next week proclaim that no matter how dark the way ahead seems, God is in that darkness with us.

I remember when driving to a meeting down an unlit country road how dark it was! Without any lights around to light up the sky - the darkness seemed to take on a life of its own. I didn't like it at all. When one is accustomed to light, it is easy to become disoriented by darkness. Even when one becomes adjusted to it, what we see can be frightening. The shapes of the night can seem odd and out of proportion to our eyes. What was once an innocent tree looms up like something fearful somehow to be got passed.

In a sense, this coming week is like that. We cannot go from Palm Sunday to Easter morning unless we pass through the darkness of Holy Week. On Maundy Thursday we remember the last supper of Christ with his disciples, the despair of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and to remember the horror of his betrayal by Judas, and his denial by Peter.

Our remembering is our way of seeing in the dark.

Just as we cannot experience the dawn unless we have known the darkness, so we must claim the darkness and move through to the other side. We cannot come to Easter unless we enter into the passion of Christ as well.

In the darkness of Christ's passion we see the powerless Christ, the victim Christ, the Christ who was betrayed, beaten, accused, mocked, condemned to death on the cross. And, when we allow ourselves to see in the darkness, to experience the darkness of our faith, then our faith is richer, deeper, more alive. Because darkness calls us to see in a new way, for within darkness there is creation - darkness is a place of growth, of change, of transformation. I think about how a seed, planted in the dark soil, springs forth into life; or that a baby is born into the world after nine months in the darkness of the mother's womb. For the seed and the child, the darkness is a place of nurture, of growth.

Darkness is a place of creation.

God chooses to work in and through the darkness to bring forth life.

This is the importance of the passion story - it is the central point on which our faith hangs - God took the darkness of death and brought new life. God chooses to take the events of this coming week - the betrayal, the despair of the Garden, the arrest, the cross - to bring forth new life.

Pray then, as we enter the darkness of this week, that we may recognise and bear witness to the creative power of God...who moves with us, through the darkness. Bear witness to the fact that because of the events of this coming week, we are gifted with a power that sustains our lives in ways more significant than any promise any politician or anyone else can ever make.

Bear witness to the fact 'My song is love unknown, My Saviour's love to me, love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be. O who am I that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die?'

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 2399 My song is love .

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| <p>1 My song is love unknown, my Saviour's love to me,
love for the loveless shown, that they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh, and die?</p> <p>2 He came from his blest throne, salvation to bestow:
but people scorned, and none the longed-for Christ would know.
But O my Friend, my Friend indeed, who at my need his life did spend!</p> <p>3 Sometimes they strew his way, and his strong praises sing;
resounding all the day, hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!' is all their breath, and for his death they thirst and cry.</p> <p>4 Why, what hath my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run, he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these themselves displease, and 'gainst him rise.</p> <p>5 They rise, and needs will have, my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save, the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes, that he his foes from thence might free.</p> <p>6 In life, no house, no home my Lord on earth might have;
in death, no friendly tomb but what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heaven was his home: but mine the tomb wherein he lay.</p> <p>7 Here might I stay and sing: no story so divine; ever was love, dear King, never was
grief like thine! This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.</p> | <p>CCLI5044394</p> <p>https://youtu.be/bwRCAa-nFIAs?si=DgLCUjFaE8ebnuG4</p> |
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Loving and Holy Spirit of God, hear our prayers.
We believe that You want us not just to serve
but to pray for the world to whose service You have called us,
in all its longing for peace, for justice, for reconciliation.

Hear our prayers today for those who struggle against tyrannies,
those damaged by natural disasters or blight caused by others' greed,
those forced out from their communities to seek refuge elsewhere;
for aid agencies, peace-keeping forces, rescue services at sea,
world organisations and alliances, national governments,
and those offering a welcome to asylum seekers in our towns.
If statistics are tears, the world weeps for release for so many:
the dispossessed, the falsely imprisoned, the undervalued,
the cruelly undernourished, the exploited, and the sick;
the deeply anxious who have everything and yet nothing,
miserable in their comfort, longing for love, to feel of value.
May they and we travel with You to Easter.

With these petitions, we give thanks
for saints and martyrs through the centuries,
and the many people forgotten by us but known to You,
who have challenged injustice and discrimination,
given voice to those unnoticed and unheard,
and helped to create communities where all are valued.
Through Jesus Christ we pray; Amen.

Prayer
taken
from
Starters
for
Sunday,
Church of
Scotland,
for
Sunday
24th
March
2024

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 365 Ride on! Ride on in majesty

- 1 Ride on! ride on in majesty! Hark! all the tribes 'Hosanna!' cry;
O Saviour meek, pursue thy road with palms and scattered garments strowed.
- 2 Ride on! ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin o'er captive death and conquered sin.
- 3 Ride on! ride on in majesty! The winged squadrons of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes to see the approaching sacrifice.
- 4 Ride on! ride on in majesty! Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
the Father on his sapphire throne awaits his own anointed Son.
- 5 Ride on! ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow thy meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

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May the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, guard your thoughts and your hearts in Jesus Christ. And the blessing of God Almighty, Our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, be with you and those you love, this day and always. (*Philippians 4:7*). May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.**

*Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week.
May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.
Rev. Susan Thorburn, sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk
If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you.*

<https://youtube.com/Kio3aRZ845M?si=RjpYgbdM1QYN8ZDZ>

THE PLOT AGAINST JESUS

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people." JESUS IS ANOINTED AT BETHANY

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial.

JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

JESUS EATS THE PASSOVER MEAL WITH HIS DISCIPLES

The disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me.

THE SUPPER

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL

And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; Peter said to him, , I will not." Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

THE ARREST OF JESUS

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, ⁵ "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

JESUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. . Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am, and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'" Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

PETER DENIES JESUS

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so."

JESUS IS SENTENCED TO DEATH

Now at the festival Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison - so the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.

Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

THE SOLDIERS MAKE FUN OF JESUS

Then the soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard of the palace. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene - Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down

from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.