

Palm Sunday to Easter Day

Readings and Reflections from the Edgemoor Group

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## A prayer in lockdown

The doors of the house where the disciples  
had met were locked. (John 20.19)

Ever present God,  
be with us in our isolation,  
be close to us in our distancing,  
be healing in our sickness,  
be joy in our sadness,  
be light in our darkness,  
be wisdom in our confusion,  
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,  
that when the doors reopen  
we may with the zeal of Pentecost  
inhabit our communities  
and speak of your goodness  
to an emerging world.  
For Jesus' sake.  
Amen.



Photo:  
Andrew Sha  
[Ely](#)  
[Cathedral](#)

*When fishes flew and forests walked  
And figs grew upon thorn,  
Some moment when the moon was blood  
Then surely I was born.  
With monstrous head and sickening cry  
And ears like errant wings,  
The devil's walking parody  
On all four-footed things.  
The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
Of ancient crooked will;  
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still.  
Fools! For I also had my hour;  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet.* GK Chesterton.

*"He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of him. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him. We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at him - we ignored him as if he were nothing". Isaiah 53:2b-3*

In many ways the experience of the donkey mirrors that of Jesus' as he suffered and died on the cross, bearing the tragic consequences of humankind's folly. But that was not the end. On the first Easter morning Christ gloriously rose from death, defeating 'the last enemy' and bringing the promise of eternal life to us all. He is the "first fruits" of a new creation: we who believe are the main crop.

Alastair Forman

## **PALM SUNDAY**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

Many people spread clothes in the road, while others put down branches which they had cut from trees. Some people walked ahead of Jesus and others followed behind. They were all shouting,

“Hooray for the Son of David!  
God bless the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord.  
Hooray for God  
in heaven above!”

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, everyone in the city was excited and asked, “Who can this be?”

The crowd answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Matthew 21.9-11

## **Palm Sunday: Jesus carried the hopes of a nation**

What excitement! What fervour! The joy of the crowd, singing psalms, throwing palms, dancing with joy. It's the end of their enslavement. Hosanna to the Son of David. *"Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," says the Lord... "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout Daughter Jerusalem! See your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

His followers lead him through the city. There is more to teach them, but not today. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Here comes the Messiah.

But is he, can he, be what they want? Not even his followers understand God's plan. The nation's enslavement is not just a physical one; it is a spiritual one. This is what he is here to free them from.

*My kingdom is not of this world...*

He looks at the crowd with eyes of love. Poor lost sheep. Tears prick. He continues to serve them.

But why this procession, if he knows what is coming? *Father if it be possible, take this cup from me. Yet not my will...* But not all celebrate. Those with power are scared. What will this mean – for the religious leaders – the civil powers, Jews, Romans?

He sees fear and hate. He sees ...the future.

What will this mean?

**Seeing the gardener amongst the broken trees,**

she ripped the shawl

from her head, strode in seething anger.

" You know don't you. Where have they put him?"

And the man smiled,

a smile of such life and strength and hope

and unbearable loving,

and her heart turned within her.

"Mary!"

And the sun tipped over the horizon and flooded that

desolate dawn,

setting the stones on fire,

touching the broken,

the jagged, the twisted

with translucent beauty,

as God burst free on earth.

And her arms reached out

"Jesus!"

From a poem by Hilary Faith Jones

Frances Gunn

## **MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

Lord, your constant love reaches the heavens;

your faithfulness extends to the skies.

Your righteousness is towering like the mountains;

your justice is like the depths of the sea.

People and animals are in your care.

How precious, O God, is your constant love!

We find protection under the shadow of your wings.

We feast on the abundant food you provide;

you let us drink from the river of your goodness.

You are the source of all life,

and because of your light we see the light.

Psalm 36:5-11

## **Psalm 121**

*In times like this, our help does indeed come from above, from "the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth". He is watching over us both day and night. vs 7 & 8 complete the picture of His wonderful protection: "The Lord will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore." We really are in God's hands and Satan has no power to harm us. He is our Rock and our fortress. We can be at peace because God is FOR us. This is echoed in Romans 8.31: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? "*

*Be at peace.*

## **A reflection for Holy Week during these troubled times.**

“OK, I wash my hands of the whole affair”  
...I’m not sure that I have ever said such a thing  
but my actions may often have conveyed the same  
meaning. The saying harks back to when Pontius  
Pilot , as St Matthew puts it, took water, and  
washed his hands before the multitude, saying  
“ I am innocent of the blood of this just person”.  
We all know, well at least half the world knows,  
what happened as a result !

The UK government, quite rightly, reminds us to  
wash our hands more often than usual, for at least  
20 seconds, the time, as they say ,it takes us to sing  
“Happy Birthday” twice. Nor does it have to be  
“Happy Birthday”. We might choose a favourite  
hymn, and sing a snatch of that of suitable length.  
Of course, we should also heed the advice to  
maintain proper distancing between us, but most  
important is that we should wash our hands, properly  
with soap and hot water. By doing this we help to  
lower the spread of infection caused by the Covid-19  
virus...we will help to save lives.

Pontius Pilate was even canonised by the Ethiopian  
Orthodox Church. It believes that he became a  
Christian ...food for thought! We help to save lives  
by washing our hands...after Pilate washed his hands  
Jesus died to save all our lives.

Bryant Sanders



## **TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

Lord, I have come to you for protection;

never let me be defeated!

Because you are righteous, help me and rescue me.

Listen to me and save me!

Be my secure shelter

and a strong fortress to protect me;

you are my refuge and defence.

Psalm 71:1-14

**From 'Book of Blessings' by John O'Donohue:**

"This is the time to be slow,  
Lie low to the wall  
Until the bitter weather passes.  
Try, as best you can, not to let  
The wire brush of doubt  
Scrape from your heart  
All sense of yourself  
And your hesitant light.  
If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will  
be kind  
And blushed with beginning."

## **WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

May all who come to you

be glad and joyful.

May all who are thankful for your salvation

always say, "How great is God!"

Psalm 70: 4

*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?*

Lord teach me your ways that I may love this world as  
much as you;  
Teach me to love each bursting flower shining forth  
its beauty to fill our lives;  
Teach me to love each bird with tuneful song filling  
our lives with music;  
Teach me to love every beast of the earth, and to  
honour its life that gives majesty to our  
world;  
Teach me to love the beasts of the sea, the rivers and  
the lakes, as their lives give life to us;  
Teach us to love one another and to know that in  
doing so we are loving ourselves;  
And, dear Lord, teach us to fully come to understand  
divine love, that we may know your peace.

Mac & Fran Bridger

**THE** Penultimate verse of the hymn 'There is a green hill far away' sums up redemption theology and the true gift of the message that is Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

**'There was no other good enough To pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate Of heaven, and let us in.'**

In stark contrast to Holman Hunt's picture 'The Light of the World' which depicts the resurrected Jesus Christ standing shut out of your life, or mine, as depicted by a locked door that only you or I can open to admit Jesus. Alexander's hymn and the penultimate verse tells the whole truth and complete message of Easter. Unlike Hunt's depiction of our life excluding Jesus from entry, Alexander's hymn reveals that the Gates of Heaven stand open, for all time through Jesus' victory over sin, death and the grave, to admit you, me or anyone who will accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and his Work of Salvation; that we can freely receive eternal life saved and safe in the presence of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Jonathan Richards

**Everybody needs a little help sometime**

No one stands alone

Makes no difference if you're just a child like me

Or a king upon a throne

For there are no exceptions

We all stand in the line

Everybody needs a friend

Let me tell you of mine  
He's my forever friend  
My leave-me-never friend  
From darkest night to rainbow's end  
He's my forever friend

*My Forever Friend Charlie Landsborough*

**You say 'I'm exhausted'.** God says 'Wait on me. I will renew your strength' Isaiah 40; v.31

**You say 'I can't go on'.** God says 'My grace is sufficient for you'. Cor. 12; v. 9

**You say 'I don't know what to do'.** God says 'I will direct you'. Proverbs 3; v.6

**You say 'I'm afraid'.** God says 'I didn't give you a spirit of fear but of power'. 2 Tim. 1; v. 7

**You say 'I'm not sure that God means me'.** God says 'I have loved you with an everlasting love'. Jeremiah; 31; v. 3  
**Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden and you will find rest for your soul.** Matthew 11; 28, 29

Chris Whinney

## **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

**Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet** It was now the day before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end. John 13:13

**Gethsemane** They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.' Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me.

Yet not what I will, but what you will.' Mark 14: 32-36

*'There are times when words are essential but also times when words will simply draw us into a spiralling dynamic of fear and bewilderment. By not speaking much during his trial, Jesus managed to remain outside the escalation of emotion that swirled around him. In contrast Peter did not and was sucked into a response that he deeply regretted. Jesus' trials do seem to have been a time for him to keep silence and to remain a still centre in the midst of chaos and fear....'*

From Journey To the Empty Tomb by Paula Gooder:

## On Trials

'Do not bring us to the time of trial...'

But if being tested is unavoidable,

Give us the courage to face it full on  
And not to shy away from what we fear might  
happen.

Give us the integrity to stay true to  
who you are  
and who we are

Give us the wisdom to know when to speak  
and when to stay silent

Give us the stillness to avoid  
being drawn into the maelstrom of other  
people's emotions

'Do not bring us to the time of trial...'

But if being tested is unavoidable,

Be with us and help us to face our trials  
With your courage, integrity, wisdom and  
stillness.

Penny Lawson



## **O love that wilt not let me go**

How do we hear God? I've learned over the years, among other things, to pay attention to the hymns and songs which I find myself singing in my head. I'm not saying that's how God will speak to you, but sometimes that's how it is for me. Once the first verse of an old hymn came to mind:

*O love that wilt not let me go* I looked up the whole hymn, but my sense was that my attention was being drawn to the first verse particularly.

*O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.*

The first line is telling. God's love won't let me go. It's a persistent love. Somehow he's always there, longing for a closer relationship with me.

Michael Rogers

## **GOOD FRIDAY**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

### The Betrayal, Arrest and Crucifixion of Jesus

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

‘For whom are you looking?’ They answered, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus replied, ‘I am he.’

### Peter Denies Jesus

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus.

The woman said to Peter, ‘You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?’ He said, ‘I am not.’

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’

Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’

They shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'

Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said,

**'It is finished.'**

Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**“And all that I have,  
I lay at the feet,  
of the wonderful saviour who loves me”**

Chorus from Lou Fellingham and Stuart Townend “Wonderful Grace”

“and when our hearts are broken, and when the burdens of this life feel too great to bear, take us to the cross, and enable us to see there the great weight that Jesus carried; for here we receive the affirmation of your love, the assurance of your promise, and the strength to persevere.”

“The things he carried” Stephen Cottrell pg77

Rachel Holland

## **EASTER EVE**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there,  
sitting opposite the tomb.

Matthew 27:61

## **EASTER DAY**

*Pause, be settled, light a candle or play some gentle music.*

*Take time to read the bible passage,*

*take time to read the reflection.*

***The Lord be with you.***

### The Resurrection of Jesus

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'

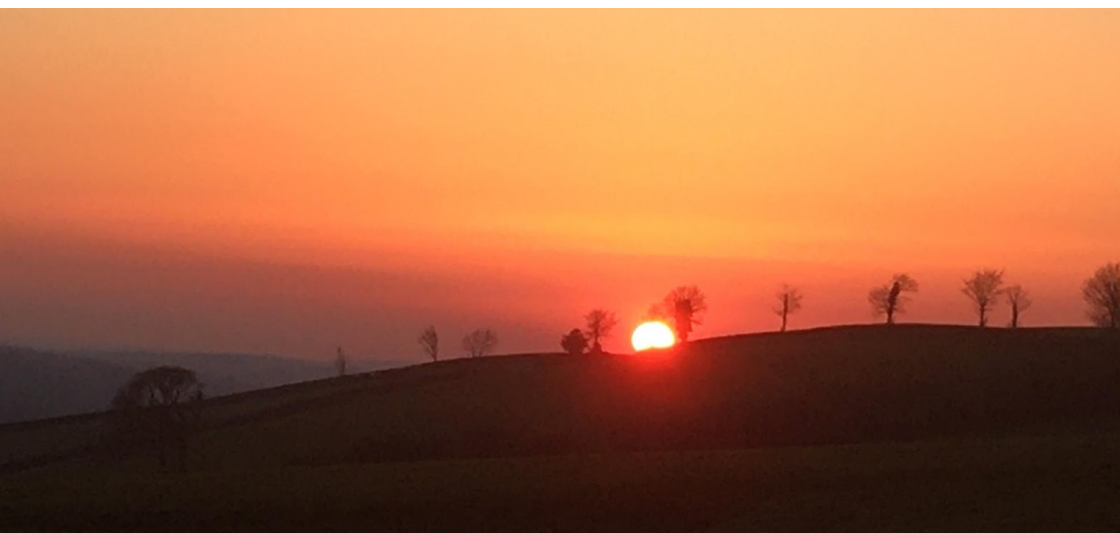
When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher).

John 20:1-18

**From Henry Nouwen...Daily Reflections:**

The resurrection does not solve our problems about dying and death. It is not the happy ending to our life's struggle, nor is it the big surprise that God has kept in store for us. No, the resurrection is the expression of God's faithfulness to Jesus and to all God's children. Through the resurrection, God has said to Jesus, "You are indeed my beloved Son, and my love is everlasting," and to us God has said, "You indeed are my beloved children, and my love is everlasting." The resurrection is God's way of revealing to us that nothing that belongs to God will ever go to waste. What belongs to God will never get lost — not even our mortal bodies. The resurrection doesn't answer any of our curious questions about life after death, such as: How will it be? How will it look? But it does reveal to us that, indeed, love is stronger than death. After that revelation, we must remain silent, leave the whys, wheres, hows, and whens behind, and simply trust.



Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**He has given us new life and hope.**

**He has raised Jesus from the dead.**

God has claimed us as his own.

**He has brought us out of darkness.**

**He has made us light to the world.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

*Additional reflections  
from Clare Campbell  
and Richard Holloway  
have been printed  
separately and can be  
found on the  
Edgemoor website*



Susan Bew