

**Worship for Sixth Sunday in Lent
Second Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday
(complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.**

Welcome to worship with the South Warwickshire Circuit as we journey through Holy Week. We are grateful to our preacher, Jeongsook Kim, and our readers David Greenwood and Margaret Weir. I am Trevor Pethick and I will lead you in worship.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

The gates of Holy Week are open
And we celebrate our King who rides a donkey.
Lord Jesus, we approach you as we are
And lay down our lives in service
As you laid down your life for us.
Amen.

Hymn: StF 264 – Make way make way

- 1. Make way, make way, for Christ the King
in splendour arrives;
fling wide your gates and welcome him
into your lives.**

*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 .*

- 2. He come the broken hearts to heal,
the prisoners to free;
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,
the blind shall see.**

*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 .*

- 3. And those who mourn with heavy hearts,
who weep and sigh,
with laughter, joy and royal crown
he'll beautify.**

*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 .*

- 4. We call you now to worship him
as Lord of all,
to have no gods before him,
their thrones must fall!**

*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 .*

Graham Kendrick

Prayers of praise, confession & Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Praise

Heavenly Father we praise and adore you
Closing our eyes we seek you within
And praise you for meeting us there.
We thank you for the one who had nothing
Who rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey

We praise you Lord Jesus for giving of yourself so richly
As we enter the gates of Holy Week.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, eager to emulate that first Palm Sunday crowd

We picture ourselves casting our cloaks before Jesus and joining the celebration.

Would we, though? An impoverished preacher on the humblest of beasts.

Would we cast our finest before him? Our woollen coats and fine jackets?

Lord we confess that we would probably be loath to leave our homes.

We confess for holding back so much when need and injustice surround us.

Lord, thank you for forgiving us when we have chosen selfishness over generosity.

Thank you for forgiving us when we have been mean-spirited.

Open our minds and hearts to your limitless grace
So we may become true instruments for your kingdom.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We say the Lord's prayer:

**Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever
Amen.**

Hymn: StF 272 – From heaven you came helpless babe

- 1. From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.**

***This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.***

- 2. There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.**

***This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.***

- 3. Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.**

***This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.***

- 4. So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's need to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.**

***This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,***

***to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.***

Graham Kendrick

Gethsemane – Susan Anderson

A stone's throw beyond them,
Drops of sweat did fall and
Prayers of utmost intimacy
Spoken alone, far from them
Far from us, far from everything.
And we sit today, front seat view of
Father and Son leading all toward
The Holy Trinity.
We feel the breath, we feel the words,
We hear the sorrow, we kneel.

The pain seemed too much to bear
Peter's denials echoing in our ears,
A love so infinite and so deep.
And just as the Son of God fell to the ground
So do we, asking the same with cries from the
heart
Asking for answers, perhaps three times
And the cock crowed.
We feel the breath, we feel the words,
We hear the sorrow, we kneel.

And so we sit today,
And see ancient olives, grafts
From antique trees.
A remembrance of that night
The stories they could tell.
The Rock of Agony, an abstract piece,
Could be any stone but it's not
And speaks His words to people of The Way.
We feel the breath, we feel the words,
We hear the sorrow, we kneel.

We all sit in Gethsemane alongside
Our Saviour and travel with Him
On the path to Good Friday
And The Cross, such a silhouette
Against his Father's skies.

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Hymn: StF 270 – Come and see, come and see

**1. Come and see, come and see,
come and see the King of love;
see the purple robe and crown of thorns he
wears.**

**Soldiers mock, rulers sneer
as he lifts the cruel cross;
lone and friendless now, he climbs towards
the hill.**

***We worship at your feet,
where wrath and mercy meet,
and a guilty world is washed
by loves pure stream.***

***For us he was made sin –
oh, help me take it in.***

***Deep wounds of love cry out
'Father, forgive'.***

***I worship, I worship
the Lamb who was slain.***

**2. Come and weep, come and mourn
for your sin that pierced him there;
so much deeper than the wounds of thorn
and nail.**

**All our pride, all our greed,
all our fallenness and shame;
and the Lord has laid the punishment on
him.**

***We worship at your feet,
where wrath and mercy meet,
and a guilty world is washed
by loves pure stream.***

***For us he was made sin –
oh, help me take it in.***

***Deep wounds of love cry out
'Father, forgive'.***

***I worship, I worship
the Lamb who was slain.***

**3. Man of heaven, born to earth
to restore us to your heaven.
Here we bow in awe beneath your searching
eyes.**

**From your tears comes our joy,
from your death our life shall spring;
by your resurrection power we shall rise.**

***We worship at your feet,
where wrath and mercy meet,
and a guilty world is washed
by loves pure stream.
For us he was made sin –
oh, help me take it in.
Deep wounds of love cry out
'Father, forgive'.
I worship, I worship
the Lamb who was slain.***

Graham Kendrick

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Gospel *Mark 15 (NRSVA)*

Jesus before Pilate

¹As 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. ²Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so.' ³Then the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.' ⁵But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified

⁶Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. ⁷Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. ⁸So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. ⁹Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' ¹⁰For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹But the

chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹²Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' ¹³They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' ¹⁴Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' ¹⁵So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

¹⁶Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. ¹⁷And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. ¹⁸And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' ¹⁹They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. ²⁰After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²¹They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²²Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). ²³And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. ²⁴And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

²⁵It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' ²⁷And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and

build it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!' ³¹In 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. ³²Let 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

³³When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ³⁵When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' ³⁶And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' ³⁷Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹Now 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!'

⁴⁰There 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. ⁴¹These 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

⁴²When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, ⁴³Joseph 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. ⁴⁴Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶Then 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. ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid.

Sermon

It is often questioned why Palm Sunday is also the Sunday of the Passion. What starts off as the Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem at the beginning of the Liturgy seems to race all the way forward to Good Friday by the end.

The stock answer, of course, is that it's because so few people make it their business to go to church on Good Friday to hear the Passion of Jesus. This way, at least, a Passion narrative is read and heard by those who only come on Sundays.

It has also been observed that Mark, which is our gospel for this year, can be viewed primarily as a Passion narrative with an extended introduction. That is, to understand Mark at all, one must look at the cross. The whole narrative in Mark moves us toward the cross. As one reads the full version of the Passion in chapters 14-15, we immediately sense how the Passion events seem to play themselves out in horrifying slow motion.

As much as we would like to have Jesus not go to Gethsemane, as much as we might wish to stop Judas, as much as we would like to go after Peter for his three denials of Jesus, in Mark, the cross is not to be avoided. As we will see and hear on Easter Sunday, even the young man sitting in the

empty tomb will say, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who has been crucified. He was raised. For Mark, Jesus is the Crucified One, more than the Risen One.

With so much going on in the world, it may seem almost silly to insist on giving so much time and energy to the religious observance of Holy Week. This is especially true when one considers that so many people around us may only pay attention on Easter Sunday at best, and even that, for some, is at least partially out of obligation.

Add the difficulties of the pandemic on top of that, and the fact that most church members still cannot meet in person, and Holy Week itself may begin to feel a bit out of touch with the world around us.

We alone do not have precise answers for the human suffering that we see around us, for violence or death or disease – or where to find hope. What we do know, however, is that the narratives that form us — the stories of our families, our country, our faith — are the eyeglasses through which we see the stories on the news and the things around us. It's through those stories that we come to conclusions about ourselves and our world and what is hopeless and what is redeemable. It's through those stories that we see ourselves and our place in the world.

Religious stories are even bigger than that. They tell us not only how we should live, but how we got here and where we're going. During Holy Week and Easter, here in the northern hemisphere, we tell the story of the Resurrection just as we watch creation come back to life in the springtime.

This week, we religiously observant Christians have the opportunity to live through the story we proclaim, day by day: the story of the last

days of Jesus Christ, his last meal with his friends, his death by execution, and an unexpected and joyous ending. We do so with our ancestors in faith, and we do so with those yet to be born, who will follow us in Holy Weeks to come.

Right when things seem at a tipping point in our nation and our world, this story is calling to us again, if we dare to see the world through it. We are invited to forget that we know how this Holy Week story ends and place ourselves into the story itself: to feel the palm branches, to taste wine and bread, to feel cool water on our feet as they are washed, and to come and mourn at the foot of a wooden cross. Though most of us cannot experience many, if any, of these things in person this year, we remember how they felt, and we dare never take them for granted again.

In a world surrounded by disease, death, and suffering, we are being called to stare both love and suffering — God's own love and suffering — in the face.

Our Holy Week story begins today, whether we grip actual palm branches this year or not. The palms we typically wave on Palm Sunday are burned the following year, as the story begins again.

We are called today into the story of Jesus – and called to pay attention to it anew. We have come to the holy city, Jerusalem, where Christ is entering, riding on a colt, or a donkey, depending on which Gospel you read.

As Jesus rides along, a crowd begins to gather. Of course, this is before social media could gather people from all over the place in minutes, way back when members of a crowd had to hear and see and decide to gather on the spot. And the odd thing about the way the Gospels tell this story is that the city and the crowds become speaking characters.

As Matthew puts it: "When [Jesus] entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'"

The crowds gathered around God in the flesh, celebrating his arrival, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" He was, they believed, the one to save them from oppression.

Jesus knows how this story will end. He knows it will be painful. But Jesus still shows up.

And Jesus will show up on Sunday whether or not any of us shows up, in whatever ways we safely can, to form our community around the story. Jesus will show up whether or not we choose to see our world through this story.

You may not be able to attend to this story as much as you would like. None of us can, really, for the second year in a row, because of the pandemic. You may also have work or family or school obligations or you may just be exhausted from all you have to do. That's okay.

The Resurrection will happen anyway. It is an eternal truth. It happened once, and Christians around the world sing it and tell it again, every year, with or without our personal involvement.

We are each invited, however, to be part of it. To let this story form us. To see the world through it and maybe, just maybe, begin to answer some hard questions about justice and peace and disease and suffering and death and resurrection and hope. So even if you can't attend to it the way you're used to, or the way you might like — take some time to observe and ponder: Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper. Good Friday and the Crucifixion. Holy Saturday and the Great Vigil of Easter, as the Church retells the whole salvation story again.

We are in this story, now.

From now on, you are the crowds, even if we are physically apart. You are the disciples. You are the witnesses.

Learn again to see your world through new eyes, through the disciples' eyes, so that maybe we can find hope for justice and healing in the midst of the chaos and pain in the world around us. Because the disciples, in their world, also knew chaos and pain and fear and death.

From the start of his ministry, Jesus' central message has been, "The Kingdom of God is at hand!" And that is a dangerous message, for it challenges both the secular and the religious authorities. If God is King over all, then Caesar is not. And in Jesus' vision of God's Kingdom, God's love is not mediated by priests at the temple but is free and available to all. Is it any wonder that both the Jewish and the Roman leaders wanted Jesus dead?

Nailing him to a cross was supposed to be the final solution. Get rid of the rabble-rouser, silence him, and his message would die with him. Crucifixion was the world's way of saying no to everything Jesus stood for—but God says yes.

This is the good news that Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost: "God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." It's the first attempt at explaining what happened on Good Friday. The world rejects Jesus' message and tries to silence him in death — but God vindicates Jesus and raises him to life. The horror and violence we inflict on an innocent man shows the depth of human evil and the ultimate defeat of human power, by revealing the moral bankruptcy of human beings. But God's love as revealed in Jesus is life itself: Love that can never be silenced, never be killed. Love that will restore our lost humanity.

Affirmation of Faith

Lord Jesus Christ,
we listen to the story of your last week on earth,
the story we call the passion story.
And we ponder all that you did and said
and all that you chose not to do and not to say.
Help us to understand more of this great mystery
—
that God incarnate should lay down his life for us
and for all people.
Give us also a care for all those who suffer in
today's world
from cruelty, from vicious political regimes and
from neglect.
Help us to understand how we should respond to
the challenge of this story
as we seek to be faithful to you this Holy Week
and every week. **Amen.**

Hymn: CMP 988 – How deep the Father's love for us

- 1. How deep the Father's love for us?
How vast beyond all measure?
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure**
- 2. How great the pain of searing loss?
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory**
- 3. Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers**
- 4. It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished**

- 5. I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection**
- 6. Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom**
- 7. Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom**

Stuart Townend

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

Lord, open the gates of righteousness,
so that through our prayer we might enter
and give thanks to the Lord.

We pray for the nations of the world,
praying for justice and freedom.

We pray for our own nation,
praying for unity and generosity.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

We pray for our community,
praying for perception and openness.

We pray for our church,
praying for kindness and truth.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

We pray for ourselves,
praying for grace and humility.

*[Please add your own prayers for those
uppermost in your heart]*

Lord, we offer you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken.

Amen.

The Offering & prayer

Gracious God, help us to realise that all we have is yours

To be sharing with our money and possessions

To be generous with our time and attention

To be limitless in showing love and forgiveness.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 287 – When I survey the wondrous cross

- 1. When I survey the wondrous cross,
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.**
- 2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.**
- 3. See from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?**
- 4. His dying crimson, like a robe,
spreads o'er his body on the tree;
then am I dead to all the globe,
and all the globe is dead to me.**
- 5. Where the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Isaac Watts

Prayer & blessing

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Remain with us always.

Amen.

Go in peace in the power of the Spirit

To live and work to God's praise and glory.

Thanks be to God.

Amen

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Graham Kendrick (b 1950)

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StF 272 – From heaven you came helpless babe

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StF 270 – Come and see, come and see

Graham Kendrick (b 1950)

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CMP 988 – How deep the Father's love for us

Stuart Townend (b1963)

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StF 287 – When I survey the wondrous cross

Isaac Watts (1674 – 1748)

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If you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on
swc.katetennyson@gmail.com