

Worship for Passion Sunday (complete text. A video version is also online)

Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Call to worship

Come, on this fifth Sunday in Lent and worship
the resurrection God,
the Lord of all creation,
who is always present, no matter what.
Worship him today in spirit and in truth.

Hymn: Come all you people (STF 22)

*Come all you people,
Come and praise your Maker,
Come all you people,
Come and praise your Maker,
Come all you people,
Come and praise your Maker,
Come now and worship the Lord.*

A prayer of approach

Living Lord Jesus,
let us draw near to worship you.
Let the same spirit that brought Lazarus out of
the grave,
and raised you to new life,
dwell in us today.

Amen.

Prayer of Adoration

As our prayer of adoration, I am going to read
two verses and the chorus of the Hymn
Everlasting God by Vicky Beeching STF 46

Everlasting God,
the years go by but you're unchanging.
In this fragile world,
you are the only firm foundation.
Always loving, always true,
always merciful and good, so good.

*Yesterday, today and forever,
you are the same, you never change.*

*Yesterday, today and forever,
you are faithful and we will trust in you.*

Uncreated One,
you have no end and no beginning.
Earthly powers fade,
but there is no end to your kingdom.
Always loving, always true,
always merciful and good, so good.

Yesterday, today and forever,
you are the same, you never change.
Yesterday, today and forever,
you are faithful and we will trust in you.

Confession

We are in Your presence, Loving God, knowing
that without You we can do nothing; without
the breath of God, we are dry bones; without
the word of God, we have stumbled and fallen;
without being part of God's people, we have put
ourselves above contradiction, and lived as
though we only had ourselves to answer to. We
see that the world is not as it could be, and we
confess the part we have played; things we have
done which have been hurtful; things left
undone, and choices which have been unwise or
worse. We have failed to see You in our
neighbour; we have misunderstood, and we
have not recognised Your signs, Your work in
the world through so many surprising partners;
Forgive us God; and hear us now in the silence
as we make our own private prayers of
confession, speaking those things which can
only be offered in quietness.

SILENCE

By Your love, shown in Christ, present with us
through Your Spirit, take away from us what we
need carry no longer, and in the days which lie
ahead, give us what we need to know You more

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clearly, to love You more dearly and to follow
You more closely; **AMEN**

Friends, hear and accept the words of grace. In
the name of Christ your sins are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God Amen.

Hymn: I will offer up my life (STF 446)

*I will offer up my life in spirit and truth
Pouring out the oil of love as my worship to You
In surrender I must give my ev'ry part
Lord, receive the sacrifice of a broken heart*

Chorus

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a Friend to so loving a King
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name for the things You have
done
Oh, my words could not tell not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful
heart*

*You deserve my ev'ry breath
For You've paid the great cost
Giving up Your life to death
Even death on a cross
You took all my shame away
There defeated my sin
Opened up the gates of heav'n
And have beckoned me in*

Refrain

*What can I give, what can I bring
What can I sing as an offering, Lord
I want to please Your heart*

Romans 8:6-11 To set the mind on the flesh is
death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life
and peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set
on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit
to God's law-- indeed it cannot, ⁸ and those
who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But

you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit,
since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone
who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not
belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though
the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life
because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him
who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
he who raised Christ from the dead will give life
to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit
that dwells in you.

In addition to this reading from Paul's letter to
the Romans, the lectionary today offers us John
11:1-45, the story of the raising of Lazarus. I
haven't included it here because it's quite long,
so I'll just give you a quick summary. But if you
want to pause the video here and read it for
yourself, you could do that now.

Still with me? OK – Lazarus was a friend of
Jesus, and he became ill. His sisters, Martha and
Mary, sent word to Jesus to tell him Lazarus was
ill, and this message took some time to reach
him. When he received the message, Jesus
stayed where he was for two more days, before
setting off for Lazarus' home in Bethany. By the
time he got there, Lazarus had been dead and
buried for four days. Both Martha and Mary
remonstrated with Jesus "Lord, if you had been
here, my brother would not have died." Jesus
responds to Martha with those powerful words,
which we use at the beginning of a funeral
service. "I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me, even though they die,
will live, and everyone who lives and believes in
me will never die."

It is perfectly natural, at the moment, if you're
feeling scared. This is coming close – people we
know are starting to fall ill. Sooner or later, one
of them, perhaps many of them, are going to
die. When that happens, we may very well be
like Martha or Mary – where were you Jesus? If

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you had been here, this would not have happened.

It's the age-old question - Where is God in the midst of suffering and fear and death? How can God let this happen? Did God cause this to happen?

Paul writes to the Romans that "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." The flesh means everything that is physical and material – our bodies, our food, our money, our human ways of doing things. And the Spirit is all that is of God – all that recognises God as creator, Saviour, Lord and giver of life. Of course, the material things are also of God, who made everything, but if we make them our focus, we risk losing sight of the God who made them. Paul describes this as hostility towards God.

Of course, we are worried about becoming ill, or the people we love becoming ill, and we may also be worried about those in our families who are losing income because of the current situation. But if we keep our minds there, on the material things, we will suffer, more than we need to suffer. Whereas if we keep our minds on the things of God, the things of the Spirit, we will find peace.

Where is God, when we suffer? He is there, right in the middle of it. It's natural to want to avoid suffering, of course we do. Sometimes we can but sometimes, we can't. Sometimes, the only way is through, trusting that God is by our side, holding our hand – no social distancing needed there! Jesus gave himself – he went through suffering, so that we could live according to the Spirit, rather than the flesh.

If we follow Paul's advice to the Romans and set our mind on the Spirit, then the Spirit will bring new life, in and through our pain. The exact

shape and nature of that, we can't know. The key thing is to trust God.

Some years ago, David and I spent a week with the Iona Community, joining in the worship in the Abbey every morning and evening. The version of the Lord's Prayer that they use there contains one slight change, which has stayed with me. Where the traditional version says, "Lead us not into temptation" and the modern version in our Methodist Worship Book has "Save us from the time of trial", the Iona version runs: "Save us **in** the time of trial." There is a recognition that testing and tempting and suffering cannot be completely avoided. When we have no choice but to go through them, God is with us.

We should still, of course, do everything we can to avoid unnecessary suffering, both to ourselves and to others. Follow the rules, wash your hands and keep your distance, from all except God. Amen.

Hymn: I, the Lord of sea and sky (STF 663)

*I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

Chorus

*Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.*

*I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.*

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*I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?*

Chorus

*I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?*

Chorus

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Thank you, Lord, for your constant presence.
Thank you for holding us and comforting us.
Thank you for crying with us when we are hurting.
Thank you for weeping with us when we are broken-hearted.
Thank you, Lord, that you never let us down,
that you always give us hope.
God of new life, we give you thanks and praise today.
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well.
Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus.
May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus.
May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process.

May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations.
Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve.

Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks.

May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare.

In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, we pray. Amen.

The Lord’s prayer

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us.

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**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 us 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.**

The offering and prayer

Holy God,

We hold up our smallness to your greatness,
Our fear to your love, our tiny act of giving to
your great generosity.

And also we hold up ourselves to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, your precious Son
and our Saviour. **Amen.**

Hymn: The splendour of the King (STF 15)

The splendour of a King, clothed in majesty

Let all the Earth rejoice

All the Earth rejoice

He wraps himself in light

And darkness tries to hide

And trembles at His voice

Trembles at His voice.

How great is our God, sing with me

How great is our God, and all will see

How great, how great is our God.

Age to age He stands

And time is in His hands

Beginning and the end

The Godhead Three in One

Father Spirit Son

The Lion and the Lamb

The Lion and the Lamb.

How great is our God, sing with me

How great is our God, and all will see

How great, how great is our God.

Name above all names

Worthy of our praise

My heart will sing

How great is our God

You're the name above all names

You are worthy of our praise

And my heart will sing

How great is our God.

Blessing

Go now into this new week in the company of
Resurrection God, the Lord of all creation, who
is always present, no matter what.

The blessing of God the Father, God the Son and
God the Holy Spirit by with us all now and for
ever more.

Amen.