

**St Luke's & St John's
Palm Sunday - Easter Sunday
Worship Book**



Dear Friends,

Jesus' journey from Palm Sunday - Easter Sunday is one that is familiar to all Christians. However, I find as we journey through year after year, those familiar stories and scenes, something new speaks into my heart, something new is noticed, something new emerges in my relationship with God and I hope that this year this will be no different.

I have produced this worship book, in the hope that some of you will find it helpful at home to journey through Jesus' final human footsteps and encounters. To use it as an alternative worship at home, to allow you to feel that although we are not together at Easter, Easter can still happen and that HOPE & RESURRECTION is just as much needed today, as it was over 2000 years ago.

So please use this booklet, along side your Bible (www.biblegateway.com) as you feel will help. For Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday there is readings and Sermons, for the rest of the week you will find readings, a short reflection, an action point, including a family one, and a prayer (some prayers have been provide by Max (St Lukes).

Allow spaces for God to speak to you, and allow times for you to speak to God, sharing your thoughts, worries, concerns and hopes. You may want to do this alone, as a family or even over a phone with a buddy, by setting a set time each day to worship, maybe light a candle and / or choose a comfy chair.

My prayers are with you all, as we journey, just like the disciples did, through and into the unknown.

Rev Kirsty

PALM SUNDAY

Matthew 21: 1-11

Family Activity: If you had one last meal what would it be? Maybe if you agree eat it this week, or add it to a meal plan over the coming days. As you eat it explain why is it important to you.

Sermon

Lord, open my mouth so that I can speak. Open our ears and hearts so that we can hear your call and change. By your power, and through your grace, Amen.

Since December and the telling of Jesus' birth we have heard many stories about Jesus' life. We have heard about him showing his greatness, the calling of the disciples and others to faith, his miracles, his teaching and much, much more. And from today we begin to hear of Jesus final weeks in human form. Yet, I am not sure if you have ever noticed, but we actually hear about the encounters of his final moments in details as each Gospel writer adds more details to the story than they have previously. And in this, we are about to go on a spiritual roller coaster as we encounter the final moments and the look to the future. For this we need to be gentle on ourselves, even more so in these current circumstances.

It's unusual on Palm Sunday for us to hear and sit with Jesus return to Jerusalem, as we instead tell the passion story and let it stand alone (no sermon). So, having the time to sit with this Palm Sunday reading, let's look at the messages within.

Jesus' journey begins with his entrance into Jerusalem; however, this journey is different to the ones he has made before. Instead of walking through the gates in quiet and being un-noticed, this time, as told in the Old Testament, it is to be grand. It is to be done in a way that there is no mistaking that Jesus is the King. But if we explore details about the actual entrance there are some key things to notice. Jesus rides in on a donkey, as told in Old Testament but his final journey in Mary's womb was on a donkey too. A beginning and an end in similar circumstances, a reminder of why Jesus was sent in the first place. The second thing to note is that if you read the details, it is the crowd

on the outside of the walls of Jerusalem that lay down the palm leaves and coats, that shout and cheer for Jesus' arrival. Whereas inside the gates there is a different story whereby people are asking 'Who is this'. These people encounter feelings and questions that we will encounter in the stories as we travel through Holy week. Here we will encounter fear, denial, betrayal, and in Jesus' final hours no one around to shout up about who Jesus is. Lastly to note riding into Jerusalem on a donkey is something that only a King would do. This for Pilate is the start and evidence for his orders for arrest and death.

The start of Jesus' final week comes with a range of mixed emotions, and I am no doubt these echo feelings we feel today. Maybe as the weeks go on, we find ourselves on the different sides of the gate. Maybe as the weeks go on, we question our faith and come to deeper faith. Either way is fine but let's remember that whatever journey we are on, mixed emotions and responses are fine. But let's not forget that as we take care of our mental wellbeing, let's also take care of our spiritual wellbeing too remember that Jesus is with us and remains with us at all times. Amen.

Prayers

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

HOLY MONDAY

John 12: 1-11

Reflection

Perfume today is not like it was in Jesus time. This would have been worth about a year's salary. Just shows its expense and even more potent use on Jesus.

Judas challenges the use, and in suggesting it be sold and money given to the poor is sadly not a good will gesture, but one of greed and selfishness.

Many items that we purchase are determined by a price (£) but it's true value will depend on each person's situation, income and emotional attachment. Therefore what we do with them is much more important than it's value.

Action

As we move around our houses, let's take note of things your might have forgotten about, or things you don't often stop and look at. Give thanks for what your do have and the reasons behind them. What would you sacrifice for Jesus?

For families: Over a meal talk about how Jesus is the centre of our lives and our faith. Ask how do we feel when we make Jesus the centre?

Prayer

God made you and God made me, He made the world for us to see. God loves you and long ago, He sent his Son to tell us so. Jesus showed us many things, To love and share and dance and sing. To learn and pray, to help and care, He promised he'd always be there. He died but then came back to life, Let's celebrate for he's alive! Amen.

HOLY TUESDAY

John 12: 20-36

Reflection

“Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going” – may sound familiar or too personal at this point. However, hope shines through. Jesus forthtells his death and in this we hear God speak out. “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.”

What the glorified will look like this time, we are yet to find out, however on each occasion both have been a time of revelation, a time of encouragement, a time of blessings. God is with us in times of darkness and times of joy, however, sometimes we need to look deeper to find him and hear his call to us.

Action

In prayer offer to God your fears, worries, or concerns. Then light a candle and remind yourself of God's presence with you always. Find silence in your mind for God to speak to you.

For families: Make an Easter Theme story board / picture and display it in a window for all to see. As you do this talk about the journey that is about to happen and share your feelings.

Prayer

Almighty God, Your name is glorified even in the anguish of your Son's death. Grant us the courage to receive your anointed servant who embodies a wisdom and love that is foolishness to the world. Amen.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

John 13: 21 - 32

Reflection

There are two things here I believe. The first is Jesus predictions of Judas betrayal. Jesus names it and makes it clear to Judas and the others what is about to happen. Why? Was Jesus giving Judas the chance to change his ways or was Jesus saying it was OK for Judas to do what he was about to do. When we look at it like this, rather than through the eyes of the betrayal, is the story different?

The second is at the end. Jesus predicts Peter's Denial. Again, was this the chance to change his ways or was this what was meant to be. I wonder what is worse to be betrayed or to be denied.

Action

For families: Colour eggs: Decorated eggs are a symbol of new life that comes with the Resurrection. Make it more meaningful by writing "Christ is Risen," "Alleluia" or "Jesus loves us" on the eggs in crayon before colouring them. Display them on Sunday morning.

Prayer

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which you have given us, for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us. Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen

MAUNDY THURSDAY

John 13: 1 - 17, 31b - 35

Family Activity: If you had one last meal what would it be? Maybe if you agree eat it tonight, or add it to a meal plan over the coming days. As you eat it explain why is it important to you.

Sermon

Open our ears, O Lord, to hear your word and know your voice. Speak to our hearts and strengthen our wills that we may serve you now and always. Amen

Today we recall the Passover meal that Jesus shared on his last night with his disciples. For the disciples it would have been a regular event, sitting at the table to share in a meal would have begun as a celebration and a joyous occasion. Until that is, Jesus stands and referring to his forthcoming death, takes the bread and wine and says, the familiar words - 'Do this in remembrance of me'. At this point the disciples get uneasy and start asking questions. Jesus begins to try and reveal to them what is to happen through the washing of the feet and his farewell speeches, but the disciples need time to process in order to understand.

In John's gospel we hear in detail about the washing of the feet. Now, washing of hands and feet were custom before sharing in the Passover meal but would have been done by a servant of the house or another figure, certainly not a leader of the Jewish faith. So, for Jesus to get up, take a towel and water and start washing the disciple's feet, Jesus is teaching a dramatic and unforgettable lesson in humility. Jesus knew he had come from God and was going back to God. Whereas the disciples still didn't know what was about to happen. As a result, Peter refused to have his feet washed, and becomes quite challenging towards Jesus. But in this challenge and Jesus responses, we are reminded about the sacrament of baptism. In Jesus' time it was adults who were baptised as a symbol of them acknowledging their faith. Today, many are baptised as children and are therefore welcomed into God kingdom from a young age. The washing of feet and Peter's challenge reminds us of our commitment and welcome made at baptism. And the fact that Jesus does it, reminds us of

baptism in the Trinitarian God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But it also challenges us, whether baptised or not, to ask ourselves, would we allow Jesus to wash our feet, or are we too proud to acknowledge this commitment and / or make recommitment?

Following Jesus washing his disciple's feet, he then teaches for the final time. The word Maundy comes from a form of the word "mandate". And Jesus' final mandate to us all is - to love one another. In all that has been undertaken by Jesus whilst on earth and the messages given in this final meal, the sharing in bread and wine and the washing of feet, Jesus has been setting examples and encouraging the message to love one another. As we begin to, in a sense, mark the beginning of the end for Jesus' earthly life, we are given the final instructions to carry on loving as Jesus has done in his absence, in simpler terms – love one another, and do it like this.

Yet, it took some time for this mandate to be understood, accepted and put into place. Because following his teaching we see the encounters of sleep, betrayal and violence. Jesus moves from the house to the garden of Gethsemane with a few disciples and first asks his disciples to remain awake while he prays. However, when he returns from prayers, he finds the disciples sleeping. The disciples have begun to realise what is to happen and it could be said that the emotions have made them sleepy. When in the Garden after prayer, we then hear the soldiers arrive, the troops come prepared and ready for a scene of violence, and we hear about the betrayal of Judas. Judas has been paid to tell the authorities who Jesus is. After his betrayal, things turn violent as the disciples try to protect Jesus but again, Jesus steps forward and allows God's will to be done.

Today, the retelling of Jesus' meal with his friends, some farewell speeches, the washing of feet, sleep, betrayal, and violence are things that can be recognised today in our own faith journeys. And it is important that the connections between Jesus' time and our own faith is recognised. So, as we reflect, ask yourself, how does it feel to let all others be of service to you and think about those in your lives who set examples of being faithful in addition to Jesus. Remember, that as we remember Jesus' last supper, you are each called to faith. Therefore, listen to the words being shared and accept them as personal to you. Also, as we come, wait and watch with Jesus, allow your own grief for Jesus to emerge and don't be afraid of the questions. We can hear

Jesus teaching of Love and service to one another, but we can't actually receive openly from all and go and serve, unless we truly understand Jesus' sacrifice, the emotions of the disciples, and what it means to Love one another in the light of the resurrection. So take time to understand and allow God to speak and allow God to use you as his will. Amen.

Prayer

God our Father, you have invited us to share in the supper which your Son gave to his Church to proclaim his death until he comes: may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

GOOD FRIDAY

John Chapter 18 & 19

Reflection

As we read of Jesus' final hours on the cross, I often find it helpful to think of what different people felt. I share with you below a Homily I wrote for an assignment from what I believe would have been Pilate's Wife perspective in this generation.

I was there you know, in the background at the headquarters. Always hidden from view, not often known by name, just as the wife of Pilates. If only he had listen to me on this occasion, I did try to save him. I sent word to Pilate, I told him about the dream I had and advised him not to get involved with that innocent man. He could have saved him but NO!! He gave him away for others to deal with, with his power he can turn a blind eye. He had the power to save him.

I wish I had the power and the confidence to stand up to Pilate and the crowds, I wanted to shout from the window, that man is innocent, but something stopped me. I am a woman and people put expectations on me. It always seems that men have power to say this or to do that with no questions asked.

What happened to equal rights? You hear on the news equal rights for women, women in power but it's still not quite all true in this day and age, it still happens to some, especially to the stay at home wives like me. Why God, Why didn't I shout out and show others that a house wife has power to change things in society.

Action

Identify someone from the story and spend some time reflecting on how they might have felt either then or in todays times. Or maybe reflect on how you would have felt if you were there. If you feel like it, be creative, draw a picture, write a reflection, etc

For families: Set aside some family prayer time. Talk about things you want to offer to God, talk about something that you want to forgive, something that is causing you pain and don't forget to give thanks for Jesus.

Prayer

Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

EASTER EVE (By Rev'd Robert Whyborn)

John 19: 38 - end

Reflection

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb .. they laid Jesus there

One of the Church's prayers for today begins " in the depths of our isolation we cry to you , Lord God " and ends by asking God to " bring us out of the prison of our despair "

As we recall with grief Jesus' death and his burial in a strangers tomb, we also lament all the suffering in the world. We acknowledge with sorrow our own part in causing or contributing to it. And we wait for God to forgive us and free us.

Action

Make space today to lament the ways we have failed to treat people as made in the image of God or care for the world entrusted to us.

For families: The Easter Vigil begins with a fire. Light a candle and talk about Jesus being the light of the world.

Prayer

For each perfect gift of thine
To our race so freely given
Graces human and divine
Flowers of earth, and buds of heaven
Lord of all , to thee we raise
This our sacrifice of praise.
Amen

EASTER SUNDAY

Matthew 28: 1 - 10

Family Activity: Celebrate the risen Lord with the singing of the Gloria and alleluias. Tune into a worship and give thanks that Jesus is risen. Display your eggs and share hope with all you can.

Sermon

Lord, open my mouth so that I can speak. Open our ears and hearts so that we can hear your call and change. By your power, and through your grace, Amen.

In our Gospel reading, we hear that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to Jesus' tomb where he had been laid, but when they got there something unexpected happened - there was an earthquake, an angel appeared and removed the stone from the entrance of the tomb. As Mary and Mary entered the tomb, they saw nothing, it was empty. Now I suspect the feelings Mary and Mary felt were similar to those we are experiencing today, along with anger, questions about where Jesus is, were worried and many more too. But the angel tells them, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised. He then goes on to instruct Mary and Mary to tell the disciples the message of what's just happened. On their journey to tell the disciples about Jesus' missing body, they are met on the path by Jesus himself and it is only then that they knew what Jesus had told him pre death, had actually happened, that he would die and be raised.

Easter is a time when we exchange chocolate Easter eggs to remind us about the empty tomb and they are a reminder that today we celebrate Jesus risen from the dead. But, exchange of Chocolate Eggs has not always been tradition. In the early days, pre-chocolate eggs time, people used to swap eggs, as in this egg an ordinary cooking egg. And although it doesn't remind us about the empty tomb, it teaches us about other key messages of Easter. And it is a message that allows us to go share the good news that Jesus is risen, and what that means for us as Christians today. Now a normal egg can do two things, become chickens or become cooked in various ways. Some eggs are produced for food and others produce new life.

When an egg is laid which is going to produce a new chicken, it is laid and carefully looked after. And at some point, around 21 days the egg begins to hatch, and a new chicken is born. So, eggs were shared and passed around families to remind them about new life. And today we celebrate Jesus' new life through his resurrection, this is where our second use of the egg comes in.

We can also cook with eggs – how do people like their eggs... Boiled, scrambled, poached..... No matter how you like your egg, once the egg is cooked is cannot be returned to its original form... correct, well there's a message in this too.

Today when Jesus came and stood before Mary and Mary and said greetings, he wasn't the same as he was before his death. We hear as the Easter story continues, that his disciples see him still with his wounds and acknowledge that he is no longer human because he appears at any time and can be with everyone at the same time. It is something special but also something that's hard to imagine if we stop and think too deep. But what we need to remember and take away, is that Jesus came in a new form and life, people describe it as a spiritual form. He came to continue journey with us. And coming in this new form and life gives us the chance today to live, knowing that when we ask our sins will be forgiven, knowing that when we ask for help Jesus is there with us. We know this through our own journey with God today, through reading the Bible, saying and listening in prayer and our own personal encounters. Mary and Mary also knew this once they had recognised Jesus on their journey back from the empty tomb. Today is a reminder that, we too, like Mary and Mary, from the darkness, worries, concerns and hopes need to celebrate in Jesus' resurrection, in whatever way we can (Service online or TV, message in the window, etc) but like them we also spread the word and keep alive that **Jesus is risen, Jesus is alive, and that Jesus comes afresh to stay with us and be with us.**

Prayer

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.

Amen

Prayer for Thanksgiving

Lord, thank you for the gift of new life, the greatest gift of all! Let your light surround those I love today and forevermore! O Lord, we thank you for being our Father and always keeping your promises!

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for the sake of me and you and other sinners too God so loved the world. Blest are you Lord Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer' This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad.

Halleluiah!

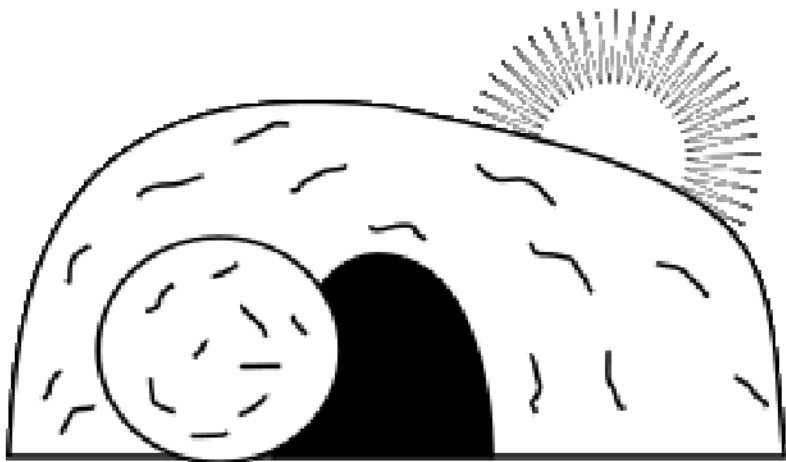
Jesus is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Easter Blessings

May Christ, who out of defeat
brings new hope and a new future,
fill you with his new life;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit remain with you and those that you
love, now and forever more. Amen

Happy Easter



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