

Worship at Home – 6th April 2025 (5th Sunday in Lent)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Rachel Borgars.

Call to worship

Wherever we are worshipping today,
We are in God's presence,
May we grow in wisdom and in favour with God.

Hymn – STF 81 – Now thank we all our God Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

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| 1 | Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today. | 2 | O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next. |
| 3 | | | |
| All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore. | | | |

Opening prayer

Our opening prayer is based on Psalm 126.

Loving God, you have brought us this far,
Restoring us when we have been broken, holding us when we have wept, healing us when
we have been wounded.
Today we give you thanks and praise for your steadfast love.
Today we see the great things you have done,
The great love you have shared,
And we are filled with joy.

As we begin our worship today,
We know many in our world, in our congregation gathered here and in our friendship and family
circles are weeping, and in pain.
As we sing your praises today, we ask that you restore them,
That you restore us.
May your grace, your love, flow like a healing stream this day, O God,
And may we who are weeping find the courage to sing songs of joy.

Heal us, forgive us, accept us, and set us free we pray,

In Jesus' name. **Amen**

Bible reading – John 12:20-36

Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

²⁰ There were some Greeks among the people who went up to worship during the feast. ²¹ They came to ask Philip for a favour. Philip was from Bethsaida in Galilee. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew. Then Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The time has come for the Son of Man to receive glory. ²⁴ What I’m about to tell you is true. Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only one seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it. But anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it and have eternal life. ²⁶ Anyone who serves me must follow me. And where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

Jesus Tells About His Coming Death

²⁷ “My soul is troubled. What should I say? ‘Father, keep me from having to go through with this’? No. This is the very reason I have come to this point in my life. ²⁸ Father, bring glory to your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven. It said, “I have brought glory to my name. I will bring glory to it again.” ²⁹ The crowd there heard the voice. Some said it was thunder. Others said an angel had spoken to Jesus.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now it is time for the world to be judged. Now the prince of this world will be thrown out. ³² And I am going to be lifted up from the earth. When I am, I will bring all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show them how he was going to die.

³⁴ The crowd spoke up. “The Law tells us that the Messiah will remain forever,” they said. “So how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light. Do this before darkness catches up with you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in it. Then you can become children of light.” When Jesus had finished speaking, he left and hid from them.

Hymn – STF 272 – From heaven you came, helpless babe Graham Kendrick (born 1950)

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| <p>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.
<i>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.</i></p> | <p>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.
<i>Refrain</i></p> |
| <p>3 Come see His hands and His feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice;
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.
<i>Refrain</i></p> | <p>4 So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone Him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.
<i>Refrain</i></p> |

Reflection on the reading

I suspect that a fair few of the stories you have read have finished with the words “and they all lived happily ever after” – the best stories always do, don’t they?

As many of you will know, this Sunday is when the Church traditionally thinks about Jesus’ suffering for the world. The title “Passion Sunday” has come from the Latin and Greek verbs, meaning “I suffer”. We consider the significance of the cross to us as Christians and how it can help us in our understanding of God’s work in our lives, particularly as, in the eyes of the world, they didn’t all “live happily ever after”.

I’ve always enjoyed riddles more than jokes because they can actually make you think: for example, what increases the more you share it with others? Joy. What is it that you must keep after giving it to someone else? Your word.

The reading set for today has an element of the riddle within it. It takes us to the saying of Jesus about the ear of wheat needing to fall to the ground and die in order to carry on living.

There is nothing ambiguous here about the description of God’s work on the cross, nothing cosy and cuddly, no trendy “feel good factor”. We are able to know that our sins are forgiven because Jesus was crucified on our behalf. It was the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus paid for us, the moment when his humanity and his divinity were seen together. Here was the human agony of a barbaric death forming part of the divine plan that would offer all humanity the gift of eternal life and hope.

Yet for many of us, rather than being the “good news”, that’s where the difficulties begin.

In leading a number of house groups and other small groups over the last twenty-five years, one of the comments which people have made most often about forgiveness is that they find it so difficult to accept that God is prepared to do that “for me”. What have I done to deserve that? The simple answer is because you and I have sinned, to quote the prayer of confession from one of the Communion services, “against God and against our neighbours in thought and word and deed” and we therefore need God’s help to start again.

The problems seem to stem from a difficulty in accepting (not understanding) that God wants to forgive us. For that forgiveness to be effective, we need to be able to receive it. This means we need to allow ourselves to be loved by God, as God wants to love us.

For some people this means struggling with the human involvement of God in our lives. It personalises the whole business of forgiveness. It means that we, as individuals, come to ask our Divine Parent to forgive our sins. God tells us that we are loved so much that all our sins have been forgiven by sending his only Son to die on the cross. There is nothing remote about that – in theory it is possible to link into the Internet and confess your sins by computer! In my opinion that removes one of the central characteristics of my faith - that my sins are forgiven by God who came to earth in human form and “was tempted in every way as we are” - I don’t think that artificial intelligence has got quite that far yet.

For many people it will mean a radical re-think about how they view death of Jesus and how it relates to them. The church has traditionally made much of the suffering undergone by Jesus on our behalf. If we believe in the doctrine of the church which speaks of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then we can be assured that Jesus knew what would happen as a result of his death, and that without his obedience, God’s plans would be thwarted. That is not the same as saying it was easy for him to obey...

In the gospel reading, Jesus asked the following question:

“Now my heart is troubled - and what shall I say? Shall I say, ‘Father, do not let this hour come upon me’? But this is why I came - so that I might go through this hour of suffering. Father, bring glory to your name!”

It is only by remembering why Jesus died and by looking through the suffering of Jesus on the cross to the good news of the resurrection that we can fully come to experience that forgiveness which God is longing to share with each one of us. Jesus told his disciples:

“The hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory. I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain, unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die then it produces many grains.”

We often seem to take great delight in recognising our sins (in being burnt martyrs), yet we are reluctant to accept the greatest gift that will EVER be offered to us. If we cannot receive the forgiveness, which God wants to give each one of us, not Tippex, but forgiveness, the cancelling of all our sins by nailing them on a cross, then the season of Easter will be a muted celebration for us. If we cannot accept that Jesus died for our sins, then how we will be able to accept that he rose from the dead so that we should have a share in the freedom of eternal life as we have been promised.

In the ‘communion’ section of our hymnbooks is one of my favourite hymns which begins with these words,

*“I come with joy, a child of God
Forgiven, loved and free,
The life of Jesus to recall,
In love laid down for me.”*

That is the truth that is available to each of us because, the human suffering of Christ was part of God’s divine plan to offer us a better world, both now and in the future. As we stand in the midst of a world in conflict, it is sometimes difficult to envisage that God’s rescue plan for the world depends on humanity’s acceptance of the way of suffering love as a way of living: on humanity’s acceptance of a king riding a donkey rather than a warhorse. So, may we come to these final days of preparation before Easter with open hands and hearts to receive the forgiveness and thus the freedom that God is offering each of us today. **Amen**

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves. Amen

Let us with one heart and one mind offer our prayers for God’s world, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit as we do so.

Let us pray for a world which has forgotten how to forgive
Let us pray for a church which can show God’s forgiveness to all
Let us pray for those whom we find difficult to forgive
Let us pray for those who find us difficult to forgive
Let us pray for those in need of our prayers today for whatever reason
Let us pray for ourselves in our particular circumstances. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord’s Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymn – STF 287 – When I survey the wondrous cross Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

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| 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 cross of Christ my God;
the very 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 | | Were 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. |

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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