



The Church of Scotland
Holy Week Worship
Journeying with John to the Cross

Palm Sunday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 12:12-19

The next day the large crowd that had come to the Passover Festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the King of Israel!"

Jesus found a donkey and rode on it, just as the scripture says, "Do not be afraid, city of Zion! Here comes your king, riding on a young donkey."

His disciples did not understand this at the time; but when Jesus had been raised to glory, they remembered that the scripture said this about him and that they had done this for him.

The people who had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from death had reported what had happened. That was why the crowd met him — because they heard that he had performed this miracle.

The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, we are not succeeding at all! Look, the whole world is following him!"

Moderator's Reflection

This week, we're going to journey in the company of John to retrace the steps of Jesus from Palm Sunday to Easter Day - might we say the most important week in all of history?

You know there are times for pausing - times to be still - but mostly following in Jesus' footsteps means, well, putting one foot in front of the other and going where he goes.

So I'm going walking. Fancy coming with me?

Let's begin.

We start with this:

'The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city.'



When I was about 18 and a student in Glasgow, there was an occasion when walking down Queen Street, someone shouted to my friend and I, 'Clare Grogan's in the Rock Garden!!'

Now Clare Grogan had starred in Gregory's Girl which had come out the previous year and she was the singer in the brilliant Glasgow band, Altered Images, so we RAN down the road and into the pub - which was a cool place to hang out back in the day - and sure enough, there was Clare Grogan chatting with friends, sipping on a drink. Well we were way too timid to go up to her; but it was enough just to be in the same room.

And we talked about it for years afterwards!

In 2005, Hollywood A-lister, George Clooney, visited the Social Bite cafe on Rose Street in Edinburgh. It took about no time at all for word to go round and within minutes media teams and adoring fans had flocked to the area to catch a glimpse of the star man. I don't imagine they strewed the way with palm branches; more likely the priority was snap shots and selfies. But it was a classic example of word spreading and a crowd gathering.

John's version of what happened that day in Jerusalem suggests a similar phenomenon - that the news spread like wildfire that Jesus was on the way - and that people dropped what they were doing to go and catch a glimpse of him.

And more than that; to welcome him, to laud his name, and to acknowledge him as they saw fit. They shouted,

"Praise God Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Reading these words, even now, sends a shiver of excitement through me! I'm lucky. I've been to Jerusalem; I've been to the Mount of Olives. I've walked down those steep slopes.

I can picture that day in my mind's eye. Wow! Imagine having been there!

Call me crazy but I long for the day when there would be again such interest in Jesus - and yes even in this country. I get excited imagining what that day would have been like but it gets me even more excited to imagine such an occasion in OUR day!

Can you imagine that? People wanting to know about Jesus? People wanting to see Jesus for themselves? People welcoming Jesus into their lives? People gathering in large crowds to worship Jesus?

Maybe Jesus is on the way. Might we be ready for him? Might we receive him still? And might we sing, by way of invitation, 'Make way, make for Christ the King... and welcome him into your lives'?

Might the wildfire spread through us...?

Might 'come and see' be on our lips...?

Might we let others know... Jesus is here... as Clare Grogan and George Clooney were...?

Might there come again a day when it will be said that 'Praise is rising, eyes are turning to you, Lord Jesus?'

Yes, here. Now. Hosanna.

Join me tomorrow for the next steps.



Reflective Taize Music

Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God,

Glory to God in the highest!

Cantor: Lord God, heavenly king

The mighty God and Father

We worship you, we give you thanks

We praise for your glory

Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God,

Glory to God in the highest!

Cantor: Lamb of God,

you take away our sin of the world.

Have mercy on us

You are seated at the right hand of the Father

Receive our prayer

Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God,

Glory to God in the highest!

Cantor: For you, O Lord are the Holy One

You the Lord, the Lord, the most High

Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

and the glory of God the Father.

Glory to God in the highest!

Glory to God,

Glory to God in the highest!

Prayer

A prayer of Thanksgiving on Palm Sunday!

Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Loving and living God,

Today we say thank you for sending your Son

and paving the way for our lives to be set free through Jesus' death on a cross.

We say thank you for what this Palm Sunday stands for

- the beginning of Holy Week,

- the start of the journey towards the power of the cross,

- the victory of the Resurrection,

and the rich truth that Jesus truly is our King of Kings.



"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord..."

Today we want to praise you and to honour you
for your ways are good and true.

We bring our worship, for you are holy and just.

Today we will proclaim that your love stands firm forever,
For we know your loving kindness endures through all eternity.

Today we say thank you that your ways are so much greater than our ways,
your thoughts far deeper than our thoughts.

We give thanks that you had a plan to redeem.

We give thanks that you make all things new.

We are especially thankful today and all days that you hear our prayers, and know our hearts.

Now, help us to stay strong and true to you.

Help us not to pursue the voice of the crowds,

but rather to keep close to you,

to hear your whispers, and seek you alone.

We praise you, we bless you Lord!

Ever thankful that you reign supreme and we are more than conquerors through the gift of Christ!

Once again, we say Hosanna in Jesus Name.

Amen.

Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,

and may the blessing of God Almighty,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

be with you all,

and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul

and bless God's Holy name.

Bless the Lord, my Soul

Who leads me into life.



Monday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Moderator's Reflection

It's good to be on our way again. Being a disciple isn't about watching Jesus; it's about following him. And Jesus is always calling us on that we might learn to walk more closely in his footsteps.

But there are scenes along the way that we should pause to ponder.

And Isn't what we've just read of, the loveliest of scenes?

I'm struck first of all that Martha and Mary appear to be conforming to the types popularly assigned to them based on the passage in the tenth chapter of Luke's Gospel in which Mary sits at Jesus' feet to listen to him while Martha busies herself with getting the meal ready. Here again, Martha is serving. It's a dinner prepared in Jesus' honour and so no doubt she would have wanted everything to be just right. Though naturally it was in Jesus' honour, I bet Lazarus was getting lots of attention too! It's not everyday that you would sit at the table with someone who was literally back from the dead!

And then there's Mary. Here's what John tells us of her: 'Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair.'

If the meal was given in Jesus' honour then so too was this act of sheer extravagance.



My Elaine loves perfume so it's never a problem coming up with ideas for Christmas and birthday presents - or for a gift from the duty free department. One of her recent favourites has been Narciso Rodriguez. A quick calculation tells me that the particular fragrance she likes - 12 ounces of it - would cost £240. And that's just Eau de Toilette, never mind parfum!

Much as I love Elaine, I'd have to think twice about that expense. But in this moment, Mary gave no thought to the cost. There was no plan - tho what she did was certainly radical. When love for Jesus bubbles up and overflows, you've got to pour the whole bottle out. And if you had another ten bottles, you'd empty them, too.

Love and devotion and adoration know no bounds.

Others were in the business of calculating the cost. Others frowned upon her, as if to say, 'Mary, you've taken that too far!'

But how far is 'too far' when it comes to pouring out the perfume of our love for Jesus? Can there be any consideration of 'holding back' when it comes to our response to the one who gave his all?

'Where every realm of nature mine
That were a present far too small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all '

Or from a more contemporary song:

'So what could I say
And what could I do
But offer this heart, oh God,
Completely to you?'

Might there be a way when at some time today or in the coming days, you - by your love for Jesus - will be as a sweet smelling fragrance?

See you tomorrow and we'll get back on the road.

Reflective Taize Music

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: Jesus, Song of the living God

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: Jesus, eternal light

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: Jesus, gentle and humble of heart

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: Jesus, brother of the poor



O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With the angels and archangels

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With the patriarchs and prophets

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With the Virgin Mary, Mother of God

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With the Apostles and evangelists

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With all the martyrs of Christ

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With all who witness to the Gospel

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Cantor: With all your people of the Church throughout the World

We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

O, we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ

Prayer

Lord God,
we come on this Monday of holy week
to follow in the footsteps of your son our lord Jesus

Once again your gospel tells us of Martha who served
And of Mary who knelt pouring out her treasure in that act of love
pouring out the most expensive perfume over Jesus feet
Feet that had walked in the dirt and dust to the hurt and broken
Feet that took healing and hope to the lonely and outcast
Feet that miraculously walked on water and brought your kingdom joy
Lord Jesus you are Gods most precious treasure.

Loving Lord
Often we cannot decide what is best:
When to pour out costly perfume for your sake,
Even if the world thinks it a waste.

When to be busy serving,
Or when to rest at your Son's feet and listen
Give us ears to hear you and eyes to see.
In the mighty name Jesus.



Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.



Tuesday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 12:20-36

Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. They went to Philip (he was from Bethsaida in Galilee) and said, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "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. Those who love their own life will lose it; those who hate their own life in this world will keep it for life eternal.

"Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honour anyone who serves me

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

Then a voice spoke from heaven, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again."

The crowd standing there heard the voice, and some of them said it was thunder, while others said, "An angel spoke to him!"

But Jesus said to them, "It was not for my sake that this voice spoke, but for yours. Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me."

(In saying this he indicated the kind of death he was going to suffer.)

The crowd answered, "Our Law tells us that the Messiah will live forever. How, then, can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

Jesus answered, "The light will be among you a little longer. Continue on your way while you have the light, so that the darkness will not come upon you; for the one who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Believe in the light, then, while you have it, so that you will be the people of the light."

Moderator's Reflection

'Whoever serves me must follow me.'



'Will You Come And Follow Me
If I But Call Your Name?

Will You Go Where You Don't Know
And Never Be The Same?

Will You Let My Love Be Shown,
Will You Let My Name Be Known,
Will You Let My Life Be Grown
In You And You In Me?

Will You Leave Yourself Behind
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Care For Cruel And Kind
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Risk The Hostile Stare
Should Your Life Attract Or Scare?

Will You Let Me Answer Prayer
In You And You In Me?

Will You Let The Blinded See
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Set The Prisoners Free
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Kiss The Leper Clean,
And Do Such As This Unseen,
And Admit To What I Mean
In You And You In Me?

Will You Love The 'You' You Hide
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Quell The Fear Inside
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Use The Faith You've Found
To Reshape The World Around,
Through My Sight And Touch And Sound
In You And You In Me?

The song makes clear that following Jesus is a wonderful opportunity but that it is nothing if not challenging and demanding and that it will take us well out of our comfort zones.

Today's reading speaks of the need for the grain of wheat to die in order for life to come.

It speaks of it being necessary for us to lose our lives if we are to gain them. What will it mean for me to lose my life?

It tells us of Jesus' soul being troubled - and of him pleading with the Father, 'Save me from this hour.' What kind of trouble is this?



It speaks of the time for judgement being upon us and that darkness is coming and that we'll only have the light with us for a little longer.

And it speaks of Jesus hiding himself from them - his listeners and even his friends?

Such troubling images. What might they mean in the here and now? For me?

And yet there is the promise that those who follow Jesus will become children of light. And there's talk of those who serve and follow Jesus being honoured by God.

You know, some fall away. Some find it too demanding - this business of following Jesus. Who can say what any of us will face in days ahead?

But for today, I'm going to follow.

Lord, Your Summons Echoes True

When You But Call My Name.

Let Me Turn And Follow You

And Never Be The Same.

In Your Company I'll Go

Where Your Love And Footsteps Show.

Thus I'll Move And Live And Grow

In You And You In Me.

Reflective Taize Music

Jésus le Christ, lumière intérieure

Lord Jesus Christ, your light shines within us.

Ne laisse pas mes ténèbres me parler

Let not my doubts nor my darkness speak to me.

Jésus le Christ, lumière intérieure

Lord Jesus Christ, your light shines within us.

Donne-moi d'accueillir ton amour.

Let my heart always welcome your love.

Prayer

God we wish to see Jesus.

Open our eyes to the people where he clearly is present waiting for us to see, believe and act: the lonely, the broken, the ill, the dying, the confused.

God we wish to see Jesus.

Open our eyes to the places where he clearly is present waiting for us to see, believe and act: Creation groaning with pollution, hospital wards in need of resources, fields of war where violence prevails, places where people are frightened.



God open our eyes that we might see Jesus.

In this Holy Week our souls are troubled and some despair for this time of the pandemic has been a time of trouble and challenge. Christ as you struggled with the path you were moved to follow, we too struggle with the demands God places upon us.

Remind us that the road you walked led to resurrection and light.

You trusted in God may we trust too.

You obeyed God may we obey too.

You recognised that there was a future ahead beyond our limited imagining, may we have that recognition too. Empower us not to be limited by our partial vision of life and of faiths possibilities.

Jesus Christ light of the world you told us and revealed to us that the darkness would not overcome us. Walk with us enable us to lift our eyes and our hearts focusing them on you. As we focus and serve may our faith communities be beacons of love inspiring and comforting the people we are called to serve.

May your church, may we be light so that others may see the light and may come to know you and the hope which you bring. God may we see, believe and act. May the world see Jesus.

Amen

Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.



Wednesday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 13:21-30

After he said these things, Jesus became visibly upset, and then he told them why. "One of you is going to betray me."

The disciples looked around at one another, wondering who on earth he was talking about. One of the disciples, the one Jesus loved dearly, was reclining against him, his head on his shoulder. Peter motioned to him to ask who Jesus might be talking about. So, being the closest, he said, "Master, who?"

Jesus said, "The one to whom I give this crust of bread after I've dipped it." Then he dipped the crust and gave it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot. As soon as the bread was in his hand, Satan entered him.

"What you must do," said Jesus, "do. Do it and get it over with."

No one around the supper table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that since Judas was their treasurer, Jesus was telling him to buy what they needed for the Feast, or that he should give something to the poor.

Judas, with the piece of bread, left. It was night.

Moderator's Reflection

John doesn't go into the business of the breaking of bread and pouring of wine but there's no doubt that he's describing the same occasion when he tells of the washing of feet and of Jesus handing the piece of bread to Judas.

I sometimes wonder how church would be different if we'd focussed as much on washing one another's feet as we have on celebrating the sacrament? Anyway, more of that tomorrow.

For now, it's to Judas that we turn. And to Peter.

The church has traditionally viewed these two as being of an altogether different order. Judas, the scheming weasel who betrayed his friend and master - Peter, the rock, the hero - flawed, of course - but worthy of much respect.

But were they as different as all that?

Not at least in terms of how they let Jesus down.



Judas's betrayal was of course the clincher in terms of Jesus being arrested but was Peter's outright, and threefold, denial of Jesus any less damning? Not to speak of all the other disciples who were nowhere to be seen in that moment of truth?

There's not much to be gained by speculating about everything that Judas went through following his betrayal - other than that his sense of shame would appear to have been unbearable.

But here's the thing; Peter knew that shame too. In the deepest place.

And wouldn't you have? Luke puts it this way. 'The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.'

Look long and hard and you'll struggle to find a more poignant, agonising moment in the whole of scripture. I can feel myself right into that place where Peter was - that awful sense of having let my Lord down. Surely those bitter tears are ours too?

And yet Peter found forgiveness and out of that, peace.

I hope that you are able to know yourself forgiven. Of course, first that would require an acknowledgement that you stand in need of forgiveness! P.T. Forsyth said, "Only those who know the despair of guilt can appreciate the breathless wonder of forgiveness.'

Psalms 32 is good in this matter. There we find the psalmist saying, 'When I kept silent, my bones wasted away... then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.'

In knowing our brokenness may we find our forgiveness.

Do you know that when God forgives it really is a clean slate?

Recently I was having trouble with my laptop - it was telling me that I was out of storage and yet I had deleted a huge amount of files and moved others to an external drive. Then someone asked me if I'd emptied the bin? Well, I hadn't. I'd been under the impression that once items were sent to the bin, that was three gone. Not so. They're still there. So I had to permanently delete them - empty the bin.

And what a difference that made. Laptop working perfectly again.

When God forgives us, he consigns our sins to the bin - and empties the bin. They're gone, completely.

Why then would we not live free from guilt when the Lord has made it so?

Peter found a way to receive that forgiveness. Judas, not so much. I pray that YOU will know yourself forgiven and loved by Jesus. And that nothing shall ever rob you of the peace that comes from that.

Reflective Taize Music

Cantor: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world

Lord, have mercy upon us



Cantor: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world
Lord, have mercy upon us

Cantor: Lamb of God you take away the sins of the World
Grant us peace, O grant us peace.

Prayer

Can we imagine your distress, Jesus? Help us to try.

What was it like to be betrayed in that way? How did it feel? How much did it hurt to have someone so close do that to you? As you sat there and looked at them all, this group you'd gathered over the years, with Judas quietly taking his leave, how did it feel?

'Do it quickly,' you said. That you knew what was to come, even though the others didn't have a clue....that you would still go there, knowingly, willingly.

Open us, Lord Jesus, to the pain we inflict. Help us to see the wee betrayals that we do every day. Help us to notice the dark shadows that lurk in our own hearts.

Open us, Lord Jesus, to the pains we've buried. The scars we carry from the betrayals we have felt and the slights we still nurse. Open us, and help the wounds to heal.

Open us, Lord Jesus, to the price of your love. The money that Judas was paid doesn't come close, does it? The price of your love. The price you paid. The lengths you would go to.

Open us, Lord Jesus, as we spend time in the story of those final days and all that they meant, and still mean. Open us, and fill us with love. Priceless love. Amen.

Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.



Maundy Thursday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 13:1-17; 31-35

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."



Moderator's Reflection

A good few years ago now, I was privileged to spend the weekend with members of the royal family and to preach in Crathie Kirk with the Queen and others among the worshippers.

But I'll never forget the Saturday night, when dinner took the form of a BBQ in an estate lodge. It was a drive to get there and upon arrival - there were about 18 of us in all - the Queen immediately started preparing the table for dinner, setting cutlery at each place and arranging glasses and so on.

It was a lovely scene and yet one couldn't help thinking, 'Do you not have people to do this kind of thing for you? I guess it seemed the wrong way round.

And that's exactly what Peter was thinking that night when Jesus got up from the Passover table and, taking a towel and bowl of water, began to wash the feet of those assembled. 'That's not your job, Jesus!' he protested! 'You're in charge around here! You're the boss! We can't have you on your knees doing the work that belongs to servants.'

But of course that's exactly why Jesus was doing it - to show them in a 'once and for all' kind of way before his death, that he was a servant - that he had come to serve, not to be served.

And the final act of serving was awaiting - the giving of his life.

Jesus must often have despaired of Peter! He got it wrong time after time. And yet Jesus loved him and trusted him and turned to him time after time. If there were occasions when he wanted just two or three of the group with him, Peter was always among that group.

And yes, in the end Peter learned. He got it.

Do you? How are you embodying Jesus? How are you serving? Metaphorically, or literally, whose feet are you washing? In what ways are you on your knees? Are you going out of your way to serve others - and not least the most vulnerable?

In normal circumstances, Maundy Thursday is an occasion when Christians have traditionally gathered to share the Lord's Supper together. Not easy right now. But important as such celebrations are, they lose their meaning if not accompanied by service.

We're grateful to John for including the washing of feet in his gospel account that we might have the full picture.

And Jesus said, 'Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'

Reflective Taize Music

Stay with me, remain here with me, Watch and pray, watch and pray

Stay with me, remain here with me, Watch and pray, watch and pray

Cantor: Stay here and keep watch with me

Watch and pray

Watch and pray



Stay with me, remain here with me, Watch and pray, watch and pray

Cantor: Watch and pray not to give way to temptation
The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak

Stay with me, remain here with me, Watch and pray, watch and pray

Cantor: My heart is nearly broken with sorrow
Remain here with me Stay awake and pray

Stay with me, remain here with me, Watch and pray, watch and pray

Cantor: Father, if it possible
let this cup pass me by:
Father, if this can not pass me by
without my drinking it
Your will be done

Stay with me, remain here with me, Watch and pray, watch and pray

Prayer

Lord God,
here at the heart of John's telling of your story
we see the heart of the Father
revealed in the Son.

Your signs have spoken;
your words consoled and confused;
your presence has encouraged some and enraged others;
and all the while, in Temple courts and Galilean fields,
in intimate conversations and public debates
the mystery of who you are has been disclosed to all,
even as it remained veiled to their minds.

But now your hour is finally here –
and in this selfless act of foot-washing
we see the strange glory
of a King who chooses to kneel;
a Lord who opts to serve;
a holy one who chooses to love our calloused, grimy humanity
to the very end.

Lord God, what strange glory you show us in Christ;
what staggering, selfless love you have for your creation.

Like Peter, we shrink back,
both wanting and dreading this kind of closeness with you.
May our trust in who you are calm our fears.
You haven't just touched our flesh,
you've assumed it; dignified it; elevated it.



You know humanity from the inside.
So in your company there is no need and no place
for hiding. Only honesty, openness, repentance and gratitude.

In love, you serve us,
and commission us to go and serve the other in agape love;
relating to folk as they are
and not as we would have them be.

And this is where the story leaves the page
and takes flesh, in the names and faces of the people
we're called to serve day after day,
month after month, year after year.

Lord we confess that it's an easy task to serve some of those people;
it's much harder with some others.
so we ask you to bless us, daily,
with the reserves of love, patience and grace we need
to minister your kindness to others
and help us be vulnerable enough to accept your touch, through them, in return.

So hear these our prayers this Maundy Thursday,
because we ask them all in Christ's name,
to whom, with the Father and the Spirit,
be all praise and glory
now and forevermore.

Amen

Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.



Good Friday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 19:1-37

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.



So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be King of the Jews."

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."

This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that said,

"They divided my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment."

So this is what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another Scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Moderator's Reflection

On the 14th August 1941, Catholic priest, Maximilian Kolbe, died in an Auschwitz starvation bunker. Prisoner 16670.



A couple of weeks earlier, a prisoner had escaped from the camp, prompting the deputy camp commander to pick ten men to be starved to death in an underground bunker, by way of deterring future escape bids.

One of the men, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out, 'My wife, my children!'

Father Kole volunteered to take his place - and his offer was accepted.

According to an eyewitness who was a janitor at the camp, Kolbe remained a serene presence, leading the others in prayer each day. In the end he was the only one left and was given an injection of carbolic acid to finish him off. The account suggests that he calmly raised his left arm and waited for the deadly injection.

On January 13th, 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the icy waters of the Potomac River as it was nearing Washington D.C. 73 of the 79 passengers were killed in the initial impact.

Among the six who survived, was Arland D. Williams. Footage shows a rescue helicopter hovering over the crash site and lowering a rope to the survivors. Williams got hold of the rope but took it to a fellow survivor who was pulled from the freezing water. Again the rope was lowered and again Williams took it to another of those still in the water. Five times in all this scene was repeated and all five of those who were pulled up survived.

But when the copter returned for the sixth time, it was too late. Arland Williams had succumbed to the cold and slipped beneath the waters to his death - the only one of those who had survived the initial crash to lose his life.

Or should we say to 'give his life.'

There's no such thing as a perfect illustration but these two at least take us into the right place.

For Jesus gave his life that we might live.

Jesus was whipped and beaten, slapped, spat at, mocked and ridiculed.

Hearing the fullness of John's account must surely move us beyond passing interest to deep mourning and bitter tears and, yes, to heartfelt gratitude.

Thirty years later, at a special event to honour Kolbe, Franciszek Gajowniczek was among the first to speak. He declared, 'I want to express my thanks for the gift of life.' And in 1994, he said, 'So long as I have breath in my lungs, I consider it my duty to tell people about the heroic act of love by Maximilian Kolbe.'

And that's what he did, in the end dying at home in Poland at the age of 93.

And might it be that we would have that same sense of thankfulness that we have life and that we have it in all its fullness?

And might we too say, 'So long as I have breath in my lungs, I consider it my duty to tell people about the heroic act of love by Jesus.'

'So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him.'

'When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.'

Yes, for me. And for you. For us.



Reflective Taize Music

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom

Prayer

Lord God, mighty and glorious,
for your love that continues creating,
your power that is forever strong,
your mercy that is always forgiving,
your purpose that never ceases,
and your goodness that goes on inspiring:
You deserve to receive our praise.

Lord Jesus Christ,
Revealer of the Fathers love,
proof of his power,
instrument of his forgiveness,
fulfiller of his purpose,
agent of his goodness:
Receive our praise.

Lord Jesus Christ,
once despised and rejected,
broken and beaten,
condemned and crucified,
we celebrate you now, our risen Lord;
in fact Lord of lords,
and source of perfect forever life.
Receive our praise.

Loving God,
you showed us through Christ
that what seemed to be weakness was strength,
what appeared to be defeat was victory.
what appeared to be the end was a new beginning.
You, who turned our expectations on their head,
Receive our praise.

Forgive us for so easily being deceived by appearances,
for measuring success by our own flawed standards.
Teach us to recognise that it is
not only in the risen Christ but the broken Christ,
not only in the victorious Christ but the crucified Christ,
not only in the living Christ but the dying Christ,



that we see your purposes fulfilled
and your will being done.

We give you our praise
in his name.

Amen.

Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.



Holy Saturday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 19:38-42

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Moderator's Reflection

It's never too late to show just how much you love Jesus.

Both Joseph and Nicodemus had been drawn to Jesus but neither was quite confident enough to come out from the shadows. Allegiance to Jesus was hardly going to go down well with their peers. It was one thing for the riffraff to be swept along by 'Jesus mania' - cloaks and cheering and cutting palm branches - but these two were respectable, well-to-do, upstanding citizens, members of the elite.

And yet there had been something about Jesus that had drawn these two men. Was it what he had said, or done, or was there just something about who he was, or the way he looked at you?

I wonder if they both felt a degree of shame that they hadn't been public about their love for Jesus? Perhaps in taking Jesus body and preparing it for burial, they were doing what they felt they should have done for him while he was alive - been publicly devoted to him?

But it's never too late.

The thief on the cross - who in his dying hour begged for mercy and asked Jesus, 'Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.'

It wasn't too late.

And Joseph and Nicodemus - doing what they could in the circumstances - and no doubt doing it with the heaviest of hearts - and yet it wasn't too late.

We've been preparing for Easter since Ash Wednesday, the 17th of February. Or maybe this year there's been too much to distract us - too many concerns about living with daily restrictions and



anxiety and all kinds of worries? Or maybe you're just exhausted - and the thought of following Jesus - of going anywhere! - has just been too much?

But it's never too late. And so maybe on this quiet day - between Good Friday and Easter Sunday - you might take this moment - yes, even a few moments - to ready your heart for Jesus - as he rises, as he breaks in, as he disturbs the established order, as he whispers 'peace be with you,' as he promises that death is overcome, and, as with Mary, as he calls you by your name.

That's coming tomorrow. Today, prepare your heart.

It's never too late.

Reflective Taize Music

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;

Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!

Cantor: Prepare the way for the Lord
Make a straight path for God
Prepare the way for the Lord!

Rejoice in the Lord always
God is at hand Joy and gladness for all who seek the Lord

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;

Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!

Cantor: The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed
All the Earth will see the Lord I waited for the Lord; The day of my God

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;

Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!

Cantor: Seek first the kingdom of God
Seek and ye shall find

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;

Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!

Prayer

Living God,
at the end of a Holy Week
we come to Saturday -
a strange day,
a day of nothingness after Friday's horror,
a day perhaps of waking and wondering -
maybe the death of our Lord was a strange dream?
But no, for the tomb was unoccupied yesterday,
and now it is filled, the solemn stone rolled across.



Gracious God,
help us to value this space between death and resurrection,
to be aware that this, too, is a Holy Day.
Place deep in our hearts a lasting sense
of what Jesus has endured:
the Son of God, crushed under the weight of our sins,
consumed by death and darkness in a borrowed grave.

God of compassion,
be with all who are grieving today;
with those who have woken to find that the losses of yesterday are still all too real,
and with all for whom sleep and rest are quite impossible.

We remember, too, that you are the God of hope.
We thank you that what was a grieving day for those first disciples
is for us a waiting day.
Be with all who are in the in-between times of life,
living in limbo, waiting for news.

Help us all to live each day with hope,
for we know that your purposes will come to pass;
may today's grief and waiting be infused with tomorrow's joy.

We pray in the name of the one who brings Easter hope,
our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Amen

Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.



Easter Sunday

Opening Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.

Scripture Reading – John 20:1-18

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth which had been around Jesus' head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was rolled up by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) Then the disciples went back home.

Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked her.

She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!"

Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means "Teacher.")

"Do not hold on to me," Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God."

So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

Moderator's Reflection



My great aunt Berta was, well, great! She was one of four sisters, the oldest of whom lived past her hundredth birthday.

But Berta was special to me. She was the first person to introduce me to classic literature and she had me memorising lines from quite a young age.

From Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, 'Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.'

From Robert Louis Stevenson's *Requiem*, 'Home is the sailor, home from the sea, and the hunter home from the hill.'

And from *A Tale of Two Cities*, 'It was the best of the times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.'

But of everything she taught me, it was the Bible verses that have stood me in good stead through the years - and especially these words from Isaiah, which I've turned to all through the years and not least in this last year.

'He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.'

You know, maybe it's not fashionable nowadays but I reckon there's still a lot to be said for memorising verses of scripture.

I was about 13 or 14 when she died. I don't remember if I cried but I know I was sad.

And I remember this; it was early on an Easter Day when my mum told us that Auntie Berta had died. And having heard that news, it was straight to our local park, Rouken Glen on the south side of Glasgow, near to where we grew up, for our church's Easter Sunrise Service.

That was the day when for the first time it struck me that Easter was more than just an old story from another time and place. As the congregation sang Easter praise and listened to the familiar readings, I had the thought - and the feeling - that this is true - that Jesus is here. And then the thought, of my Aunt Berta, 'isn't this the best possible day to die - when we're so much caught up in the victory of life over death?'

I still remember her and while I remember my own parents on special occasions, such as their birthdays, it's today, on Easter Sunday, that I'm especially minded of them - because today I rejoice that for them, death is defeated, that they rest eternal in that place prepared for them from before the beginning of time.

You see, Easter is much more than theological proposition.

Jesus says, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' And today, my heart isn't troubled.



Jesus says, 'And no-one shall rob you of your joy' and I'm joyful today.

Jesus says, 'that you might have life in all its fulness' and today I am truly alive.

And this too: 'Nothing, not even death, shall separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus' and today I am caught up in that promise and help fast by the one who died and rose again and is with me any now.

And if for me, then also for you.

He is Risen. And all God's people said, 'He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!'

Reflective Taize Music

Jesus, the Lord is risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!

Jesus, the Lord is risen today!

Alleluia, Alleluia!

In a round:

Jesus, the Lord is risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!

Jesus, the Lord is risen today!

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Prayer

This is the day the Lord has made.

And this is the day when he rose again!

Almighty God, we praise you that you did not leave Jesus in the tomb but that you raised him in power and glory that all might see and believe.

And yet there was little by way of trumpet and fanfare that first morning. It was early and all would have been quiet - and the women would have approached the tomb with heavy hearts and in trepidation. How were they to move the stone from the entrance and would the guards let them?

But for you, Lord, all things are possible. Out of nothing, you brought the whole universe into being. You spoke and by the power of your word, it was. And so you raised Jesus and in that act, broke the power of sin and death forever.

This good news is ours and ours to proclaim. In word and deed, empower us, we pray, to live as Easter people - as those who know newness of life, as those who know hope rather than despair, as those who know light rather than darkness and, yes, as those who know life rather than death.

Yes, this is the day that you have made.

Yes, this is the day when he rose again.

Yes, we will rejoice and be glad in it.

In Jesus' name, AMEN.



Moderator's Blessing

And now, Go in peace,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you all,
and remain with you today and forevermore.

Amen

Closing Taizé Chant

Bless the Lord, my Soul
and bless God's Holy name.
Bless the Lord, my Soul
Who leads me into life.