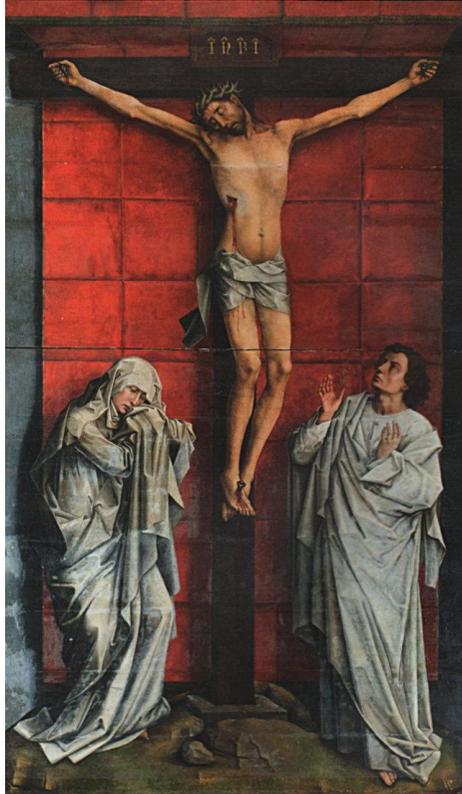


St Matthew's Westminster



Lent Booklet Week V

*Sunday 26th March -
Saturday 1st April 2023*

An Introduction to Lent

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means *lengthen* and refers to the lengthening days of spring. In many other languages, the word used for this season refers to the 40-day length of the season (*cuaresma* in Spanish, *carême* in French, *quaresima* in Italian) or to the fasting that characterizes it (*Fastenzeit* in German, *fastan* in Swedish, *paasto* in Finnish).

Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The first Sunday of Lent describes Jesus' temptation by Satan; and the sixth Sunday (Palm Sunday), Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent passion and death. Note that the readings during Lent, until Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

Week 3 | Passiontide

Passion has two basic meanings in English. It's a word for a deep love and enthusiasm – we might say that we are passionate about football, or that we have fallen passionately in love. However, passion can also refer to suffering or endurance. This is the original meaning of the word in English, and so these days when we mark our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, suffering, and death are called Passiontide. As we prepare for Easter, it is good to keep this double meaning of passion in mind.

Jesus knew that his journey to Jerusalem would lead to his arrest, condemnation, and death. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus even prayed to be spared from what lay ahead: he had no illusions about the suffering that his confrontation with sin and violence would call down upon him. What sustained Jesus was an overwhelming love for us that drove him to enter our pain and heal it from within. Jesus did what we could not do, and he did it because he loves us.

In Jesus, the two meanings of passion are united: suffering becomes an encounter with love, and love overcomes the suffering of sin.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Cover: Crucifixion, Rogier van der Weyden (1400 – 1464), Monastery of El Escorial.

Sunday March 26th *Fifth Sunday of Lent*

Reading

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Colossians 3. 12-15

Reflection

The death of Christ is the event to which all time looks forward and backward, and in the light of which all other events become illuminated. At Passiontide, we are reminded of the depth of Christ's love for us, a love that led him to endure unimaginable suffering and sacrifice on our behalf. Through his sacrifice, we are offered the gift of salvation and the promise of eternal life. Passiontide invites us to meditate on the meaning of Christ's sacrifice and to deepen our understanding of the love that led him to endure such suffering on our behalf.

The Four Loves, C S Lewis (1898-1963)

Prayer

Dear Lord, as we journey with you through this season of Passiontide, may we be filled with the power of your love and grace. May we be strengthened to face the challenges of life with courage and hope, knowing that you are with us always. May we be ever mindful of your sacrifice on the cross, and may it inspire us to greater love and service for others. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mother Teresa (1910-97)

Monday March 27th

Reading

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones. But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Isaiah 49. 13-15

Reflection

The cross of Christ is a symbol of the transformative power of God's love. It is a reminder that even in our brokenness and sinfulness, God is able to bring about healing and renewal. Through the cross, we are invited to participate in the redemptive work of Christ and to become instruments of his love and grace in the world. As we contemplate the cross, we are called to surrender ourselves to God and to live as agents of his mercy and compassion.

Bishop N.T. Wright

Prayer

O Lord my God, I believe in you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Insofar as I can, insofar as you have given me the power, I have sought you.
I became weary and I laboured. O Lord my God, my sole hope,
help me to believe and never to cease seeking you.
Grant that I may always and ardently seek out your countenance.
Give me the strength to seek you, for you help me to find you
and you have more and more given me the hope of finding you.
Here I am before you with my firmness and my infirmity.
Preserve the first and heal the second.
Here I am before you with my strength and my ignorance.
Where you have opened the door to me, welcome me at the entrance;
where you have closed the door to me, open to my cry;
enable me to remember you, to understand you, and to love you.
Amen.

St Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Tuesday March 28th

Reading

As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Jesus. There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet; but they shouted even more loudly, 'Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!' Jesus stood still and called them, saying, 'What do you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Lord, let our eyes be opened.' Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.

St Matthew 20. 29–34

Reflection

Passiontide is a time for us to reflect on the meaning of Christ's sacrifice and to examine our own lives in light of his example. We are called to take up our cross and follow him, to live lives of selflessness and service to others. Christ's sacrifice on the cross offers us a model for how to live and a path to salvation. During Passiontide, we are invited to enter into the mystery of Christ's suffering and to deepen our understanding of the love that led him to endure such suffering on our behalf.

The Cost of Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
who, of thy tender love towards mankind,
hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross,
that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility:
Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer 1662

Wednesday March 29th

Reading

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust. As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children.

Psalm 103.13-17

Reflection

Passiontide is a season of paradoxes. We contemplate the mystery of God's love revealed through the suffering of Christ on the cross, a love that is both infinite and personal, universal and particular. We are called to unite our own sufferings to his, to die to self and to rise to new life in him. In the midst of darkness and death, we find hope and light in the Resurrection.

Sister Helen Prejean

A Prayer of Conversion

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all - the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

I would be faithful through each passing moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be strong to follow where He leads me;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

Howard Walter (1883-1918)

Thursday March 30th

Reading

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

St Matthew 9. 35–38

Reflection

Passiontide is a time for us to reflect on the profound mystery of the cross and to meditate on the immense suffering that Jesus endured for our sake. It is a time to consider the depth of our own sinfulness and to seek forgiveness for our transgressions. But it is also a time of hope, as we look forward to the resurrection and the triumph of life over death.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

Prayer

O Lord we pray thee for all weighed down
with the mystery of suffering.
Reveal thyself to them as the God of love
who thyself dost bear all sufferings.
Grant that they may know that suffering borne in fellowship with thee
is not waste or frustration, but can be turned to
goodness and blessing greater than if they had suffered,
through him who on the cross suffered rejection and hatred,
loneliness and despair, agonizing pain and physical death,
and rose victorious from the dead, conquering and to conquer,
even Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

George Appleton

Friday March 31st

Reading

What then are we to say? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.

Romans 9. 14-16

Reflection

The cross of Christ is a sign of hope for Anglicans. It reminds us that even in the midst of suffering and hardship, God is present and active in our lives. Through the cross, we are given the strength and courage to face the challenges of life and to bear witness to the love of God. As we contemplate the cross, we are invited to deepen our trust in God and to live as faithful disciples of Christ.

Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA

Prayer

Lord God, give me victory over myself,
that nothing may imprison my life.
Be the guiding light of my heart,
lift me up from the dark depths.
May my soul be caught up in your wisdom,
Fight its way upwards in fiery flight.
For you alone understand me,
and only you can give me
the power to keep going.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

This prayer is said to have been prayed by Beethoven when he was turning deaf and realised that he would not regain his hearing.

Saturday March 25th

Reading

I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us, and the great favour to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Isaiah 63. 7

Reflection

The Cross of Christ is a reminder that God's love is not just a sentimental feeling, but a tangible and sacrificial love. It is through the Cross that we are able to experience the transformative power of God's love in our lives. Through the Cross, we are given the courage and strength to face our struggles and to bear witness to the love of God in the world.

Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham

Prayer

Father of all,
we pray for the world you have created,
in all its beauty and fragility.
In Jesus Christ you have taken the world's need,
confronted the world's evil
and, by the self-offering of Calvary,
have transfigured the world's despair.
As we look upon our world today
be with all who struggle for peace and justice at cost to themselves,
and all who suffer in the most violent and impoverished places on the earth.
Be with all who suffer unjustly for the sake of conscience,
and inspire us, through the teaching and example of Jesus,
to walk alongside the prisoners, the naked, the hungry,
the thirsty, the voiceless and the infirm;
for, as we serve these our brothers and sisters,
we are serving you, our God for ever and ever.
Amen.

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