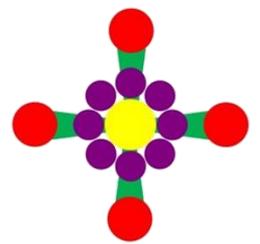


The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme Reflections for Holy Week



Monday of Holy Week.

Opening words

We tell your story

We follow in your footsteps

Lead us into Holy Week

We walk towards the city,

We watch while Mary perfumes your feet,

We gather in an upper room,

We wait in the garden.

Lead us onto holy ground.

We journey towards death

We hope for resurrection

Lead us into holy joy.



Read John 12 v 1-8

Voice of the Jewish priest:

I saw the whole thing (from outside, of course. It was Simon the leaper's house, so I couldn't risk going in there. I mean, he's supposed to be cured, but I didn't want to risk getting unclean and not being able to go into the Temple. I was only there out of curiosity- to have look at Lazarus and see if this chap who is parading around alive can really be him. Anyway, next thing, this woman comes running out of the house and running back with a jar of something. This next bit is almost too shocking to tell you- she starts stripping of her clothes and letting her hair loose- what sort of behaviour is that- some sort of publicity stunt? I'm afraid it got worse. I suddenly realised that the jar was full of nard- well she broke the whole bottle over his feet! I mean, a small sample would have been bad enough- but the whole lot. The smell was so strong that some people had to come out of the house! The cost! Outrageous!

A promising, sensible looking lad called Judas took a lead and complained, taking Jesus to task about the immorality of this waste when people are going without . If he has any sense, he'll stay away from that rabble. But the Nazarene was having none of it. He just smiled at the women and said that the poor would always be there. Well, that's a departure from his normal opinion. He's usually so keen to help the poor. I'm going to write a strongly worded letter of complaint to the chief priests. This man should be stopped before he causes some sort of revolution.

Mary

I saw him across the table. He was eating some bread and olive oil. He was the one who could breathe life into the dead. He brought back my brother Lazarus. What could I give him in return for that? Nothing could get close to repaying him. Except, maybe- could I? What about my most precious possession? The savings from my distant past; a pint jar of nard, the perfume of legends and love songs; ridiculously expensive at £20,000 a bottle. Grown far away in India, placed in an alabaster jar and shipped on a Greek galley. It was the dearest thing I had.

I had heard stories of Jesus, wise men from the East had brought him gifts and knelt at his feet, prostitutes had washed his feet with their tears... I ran to my house and got the bottle. It was a moment of madness- an anointing for the anointed one. The Christ. The Messiah. I snapped the cap, no going back now. The money was spent and the scent flooded the room. It was so strong, it was making me dizzy. I knelt at his feet. Maybe I should have anointed his head the traditional way, but I wanted to kneel. I pulled off my scarf and unbound my hair- I could hear sharp intakes of breath, but I didn't care. I started poring and didn't stop until the whole bottle was empty. My life's savings all over the Messiah's toes, rolling like a rich river and filling the place with the scent of princes, princesses and kings. I wiped some up with my hair, to dry him off a bit. My hair smelt like Heaven.

Then there was a moment of silence. Time stopped. What had I done? All that mess! All that money gone! I looked up and Jesus was smiling.

That smell lingered in the air and on us for a long time! I like to think Jesus could still smell it when he suffered and died.

I kept that empty bottle for years, until the smell was a distant memory. Like a good smell, love lingers on long after an act of kindness.

Poem:

Did that perfume linger, Lord?
In the days ahead, did you catch its fragrance?
Like honeysuckle on the breeze.
Did it take you back to the beautiful thing;
The evening spent with friends,
The last time you were touched with gentleness?

When the holy turned to hate
Did it remind you of the Temple?
Against the metallic smell of your own blood
Did it provide a note of care?
When bones were broken
Did you smell crushed roses?
In the reeking stench of death
Was there still an undertone of love?
I hope so.

What lingers
What remains
What stays
May be as insubstantial as perfume in the wind,
But it is more solid than anything.

Suzanne Nockels

Take time to come before God in stillness

Blessing

In your peace we go to our homes
In your love we will take our rest
In your light may we rise tomorrow to follow you afresh.
Bless us, hold us, keep us in your love. **Amen.**

Tuesday in Holy Week

If you are able, gather three candles to light, lighting one with each prayer:

I will light a light in the name of the Maker
who lit the world and breathed the breath of life for me

I will light a light in the name of the Son
who saved the world and stretched out his hand to me

I will light a light in the name of the Spirit
who encompasses the world and blessed my soul with yearning



We will light three lights for the trinity of love;
God above us, God beside us, God beneath us
The beginning, the end, the everlasting one.

Be still and enjoy the light of the candles

The knees of our hearts we bow
In the sight of God who created us
In the sight of the Son who died for us
In the sight of the Spirit who helps us
In friendship and affection
Through your own Son, O Maker of all
Grant us the fullness our lives long for.

Love for God
Love from God
The smile of God
The grace of God
The wisdom of God
The fear of God
The imagination of God
And God's purpose in all things

So may we live in this world
As saints and angels do in heaven
Each shadow and light
Each day and night
Each moment in kindness
Give us your spirit. Amen

O God of the weak
O God of the lowly
O God of the righteous
O shield of your people
Speak through your Word

Read Luke 22:39-53

Take time to come before God in stillness

O God of all gods
Grant us your light this night
Your grace as we sleep
Your joy in the morning
And let us be made pure in the well of your health

Lift from us any anguish
Take from us empty pride
And lighten our souls with the light of your love.

Jesus Christ, son of Mary,
Holy Spirit, Light of Life,
Shield and sustain us
And all our dear ones,
This night and every night. Amen.

On our heads and our houses
The blessing of God

In our coming and going
The peace of God

In our live and believing
The love of God

At our end and new beginning
The arms of God to welcome us and bring us home.
Amen.

Wednesday in Holy Week

Readings and reflections based on Stations of the Cross, Eggs and Ashes, Ruth Burgess.
Through this service, we will be walking the way of the cross, following Jesus on that painful and difficult journey. As we journey together, take time to read the passages from the Bible, reflect on Jesus' suffering and let that lead you into prayers for your relationship with him and prayers for the world.

You may like to use the traditional response before each station.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you
Because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.



First station: Jesus is condemned to death

Mark 15: 1-5, 11-15

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Reflect on the trial, the decisions made and Jesus' response.

Pray for those on trial this week and for those appointed to judge them.

Second station: Jesus takes up his cross

Mark 15: 16-20

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

*Reflect on the actions of the soldiers, their use or misuse of their power— and Jesus' response
Pray for those appointed to keep public order – and for those tempted to abuse their power.*

Third station: Jesus falls the first time.

Isaiah 53: 1

Who would have believed what we now tell?

Who could have seen God's hand in this?

Reflect on Jesus' tiredness as he carried that heavy cross – and why he was carrying it.

Pray for those who are tired or in pain.

Fourth station: Jesus meets his mother

Luke 2: 22, 25, 34, 35

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Reflect on Mary's love for her son, her determination to be there for him until the end.

Pray for parents whose children are in pain or in trouble.

Fifth station: Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

Mark 15: 21

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Reflect on the willingness of Simon to help Jesus shoulder his burden

Give thanks for the willingness of others who help, both friends and strangers and pray that you may echo that willingness.

Sixth station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Matthew 25: 35-36, 40

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Reflect on the actions of one who cared enough to wipe Jesus' face, who sought to ease his suffering.

Pray for those whose faces we wipe – and those who wipe away our tears.

Seventh station: Jesus falls the second time

Isaiah 53: 7

Ill-treated and afflicted, he never said a word.

Like a lamb led to the slaughter house,

Like a sheep dumb before its shearers

He never opened his mouth.

Reflect on Jesus' increasing suffering.

Pray for those who today will struggle and fall.

Eighth station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Luke 23: 27,28

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

Reflect on areas of conflict at this time.

Pray for those who live in areas of conflict and danger; pray for peacemakers and peacekeepers in every land.

Ninth station: Jesus falls the third time

Isaiah 53: 4-5

Surely he has borne our infirmities

and carried our diseases;

yet we accounted him stricken,

struck down by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,

crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the punishment that made us whole,

and by his bruises we are healed.

Reflect on Jesus' suffering, the love that made him endure his painful journey, his love for God, his love for all people, his love for you.

Pray for those you love, for those you struggle to love, for those who love you and for those who find you difficult.

Tenth station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

Mark 15: 22-24

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they

crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

Reflect on Jesus' vulnerability, not only stripped of his clothes, but disciples and friends. Pray for those deserted by friends, those who are alone and those who are vulnerable.

Eleventh station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Luke 23: 35,49

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Reflect on what it means to you to think of Jesus dying on the cross – for you. Give thanks for the depth of his love.

Twelfth station: Jesus dies on the cross.

Luke 23: 44-46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

Reflect on how Jesus surrendered his life into God's loving embrace. Pray for all who have died recently, for those who love them and will miss them.

Thirteenth station: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Mark 15: 42-43, 46

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth.

Reflect on the loss of Jesus' friends. Pray for our families and friends who have died – and for ourselves as we carry their stories.

Fourteenth station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Mark 15: 46-47

Joseph placed the body in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

Reflect on closing of the tomb, the encroaching darkness. Pray for all who are waiting. Pray for all who are longing for light.