

Collects & Readings for April & May 2022

We encourage you to use these meditations as a supplement to the Daily Hope phoneline. The phoneline offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line – which is available 24 hours a day- is on **0800 804 8044**.

Sunday 10th April 2022

Palm Sunday

True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory.

Amen.

Luke 19.28-40; Isaiah 50.4-9; Psalm 31.9-16; Philippians 2.5-11; Luke 22.14 – 23.56

It is a day of mixed emotions. On this Sunday, the faithful will gather at their respective churches, process, wave branches or palm crosses, shout and sing joyfully, with or without a donkey. However, it is also the start of Holy Week, a time when we remember the sufferings of Christ and his death on the cross. Palm Sunday, then, is a day of both sorrow and joy. I am sure that there are moments in our lives when pain and sadness often walk hand-in-hand with joy. There are times in our lives when we face both the light and the dark. But Jesus is the light of the world, and as it says in John's gospel, the darkness cannot overcome it. In moments of trial, we know that we can turn to the Lord in prayer.

Thursday 14th April 2022

Maundy Thursday

God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end
and drank the cup prepared for him:
may we who share his table
watch with him through the night of suffering
and be faithful.

Amen.

1 Corinthians 11.23-26; Psalm 116.1,10-17; John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Today we recall the institution of two 'new commandments'. "Love one another as I have loved you" says Jesus, and "do this in remembrance of me." In the reading from 1 Corinthians, St Paul points out that he's handing on a tradition that was received from the Lord, that of the story of the Last Supper – the first occurrence of what we now keep and share in as 'The Eucharist' or 'Holy Communion'. The Church down the ages has followed this commandment and taken bread and wine to share and to bring to mind once again the events of that fateful night and the events of the day following. In doing so, we share with Our Lord in his passion and his resurrection. In doing this, however, we must also consider how we can share in the other commandment (in some ways the one which is much harder) "Love one another as I have loved you." How might we obey *both* commandments this Eastertide?

Friday 15th April 2022

Good Friday

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

Amen.

Isaiah 52.13-53.12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10.16-25; John 18.1-19.42

Sometimes liturgy simply speaks for itself. What words could we possibly add to the liturgy of Good Friday, amid its ferocity and despair, to disclose further meaning? Perhaps today we simply need the complex and richly textured Passion narrative to challenge and discomfort us, though we might prefer reassurance. It is difficult to say anything in the face of the most poignant moments that John describes, other than to say that attention to the life of Jesus will show us how to occupy the spaces of our own lives – even in the midst of great suffering – in ways which reflect the love, compassion, and generosity of God, which are the characteristics of life in the Kingdom. Such understanding requires us to see with eyes of belief: belief in love. Without love the cross is nothing more than a gruesome and pointless death. And so, love also demands trust. The landscape of belief is a vast territory stretching from certainty at one end

to doubt at the other, and through which we must navigate our way. The same is true of love. And though either may take us to the darkest places and uncertainties in life, both will give just enough to enlighten the way. Today, love is exiled, but love also finds its way home – it begins on the cross from where we hear the cries of One who understands our pain and journeys with us throughout.

Saturday 16th April 2022

Holy Saturday

In the depths of our isolation
we cry to you, Lord God:
give light to our darkness
and bring us out of the prison of our despair;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Job 14.1-14; Psalm 31.1-4, 15-16; Matthew 27.57-end

After the storm, there is great peace. The horror of the crucifixion is followed by an uneasy calm. Many of main characters who featured in Christ's last days, such as the disciples, seem to disappear, leaving God's son alone, lying in a cold stone tomb. We can only guess what thoughts were running through their minds at this time. They may have been mulling over what had happened in the previous week; they may have been analysing Jesus' teachings. What did it all mean? Holy Saturday is also an opportunity for us to consider the past forty days of Lent. What have we discovered about ourselves and our relationship with God? Jesus may lie silently in the grave, but the grave cannot contain the Messiah.

Sunday 17th April 2022

Easter Day

God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Acts 10.34-43; Psalm 118. 1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15.19-26; John 20.1-18

When we think of the first Easter, we conjure in our minds visions of sunshine, beautiful surroundings and cries of joy at the news of the risen Lord. However, John's gospel describes that first Easter in a slightly different way. In fact, John begins with darkness, just before the dawn, and then records people's shock, fear and bewilderment. We read of Mary Magdalene, Peter and the 'Beloved Disciple' John, coming in to inspect the empty tomb. The darkness, then, is broken by light, not just the light of the dawn, but by the light of the risen Christ. He is the light who breaks through the gloom, overpowers death and hatred, and gives us hope. We can rejoice today because we know the whole story. Although we can find ourselves anxious, fearful or afraid, we know that Christ will break through and we can bathe in his light.

Sunday 24th April 2022

Easter 2

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father.

Amen.

Acts 5.27-32; Psalm 150; Revelation 1.4-8; John 20.19-31

The reading from John's gospel is a familiar one to us, especially in a Benefice with a St Thomas' Church! So we can leave you to ponder that one at your leisure. The Acts reading offers a number of interesting aspects though and bears some more attention. The Apostles, emboldened by the Resurrection and by the events of Pentecost, waste no time in proclaiming the risen Christ, even if that brings them into conflict and risk. They testify to Jesus above all things and their zeal is palpable. What things have we witnessed in our time? What things would we be more willing to testify to or tell people about than others? Might our faith and experience of God make that list?

Sunday 1st May 2022

Easter 3

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Acts 9.1-20; Psalm 30; Revelation 5.11-14; John 21.1-19

Do you love me? The question asked three times of Peter, and the moment for which Jesus had been preparing ever since his Resurrection. The last encounter before Jesus' death was that poignant occasion when he looked at Peter and forgave him after his threefold denial. Now Jesus is alone with Peter and gives him the chance to affirm a threefold pledge of his love. The one supreme condition for Jesus to renew Peter's commission to tend his sheep is Peter's love for his Master. Love is the one supreme condition for each of us who aspire to be followers of Christ. Peter's love has been purified by his betrayal of Jesus during the Passion: now love resembles greater humility and trust. And so, Peter entrusts everything, his love and himself, into Christ's hands: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Because, as we see in Christ, true love is the gift of one's entire self.

Sunday 8th May 2022

Easter 4

Risen Christ,
faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:
teach us to hear your voice
and to follow your command,
that all your people may be gathered into one flock,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Acts 9.36-43; Psalm 23; Revelation 7.9-17; John 10.22-30

Sheep are mentioned very frequently in the Bible, which is not surprising, given that people in the Middle East made a living from raising animals. John's gospel records that Jesus' followers are his sheep; they hear his voice. Jesus goes on to say that he will give them eternal life and that they will never perish. But this passage highlights something else and that is

the relationship between the Son and the Father. The reason Jesus can promise eternal life to his 'sheep' is because of that bond of love between the Father and the Son. This is the truth of our faith. In what ways does this truth enable us to live our lives as Christians with confidence?

Sunday 15th May 2022

Easter 5

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Acts 11.1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21.1-6; John 13.31-35

A little reprise of Maundy Thursday's Gospel reading as the curtain prepares to fall on this act of the earthly ministry of Jesus. We get a reminder of the commandment to love one another and the fact that Jesus will be glorified. This time, however, we understand Jesus being glorified in the context of his crucifixion, resurrection and, soon, the ascension too. Where Jesus is going, the disciples cannot follow (yet) but we do get a foretaste of what that place may look like in the reading from Revelation 21. Meanwhile, there is work to be done; work that the Apostles attend to with the zeal and enthusiasm that we're witnessing in these weeks after Easter in the readings from Acts. What might our work look like? How might we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit with the same sort of zeal?

Sunday 22nd May 2022

Easter 6

Risen Christ,
by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples:
help your Church to obey your command
and draw the nations to the fire of your love,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Acts 16.9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21.10, 22-22.5; John 14.23-29

Jesus' words to the disciples form part of the farewell discourse at the Last Supper. The following day, the immense outpouring of love on the cross discloses a love that is unconditional and eternal. Jesus is saying that for the believer both faith and life are not shaped by absence but by God's abiding presence. Further, God's presence overcomes any anxiety about absence, and the present holds the seeds of a future shaped by love and joy, not fear. Jesus' relationship with the Father and the disciples' relationship to Jesus enable one to be bound to the other. As our celebration of the Easter season approaches its end, these words tell us that Jesus remains with us through the Holy Spirit, reminds us of all that Jesus taught, and brings us peace.

Thursday 26th May 2022

Ascension Day

Acts 1.1-11; Psalm 47; Ephesians 1.15-23; Luke 24.44-53

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ
to have ascended into the heavens,
so we in heart and mind may also ascend
and with him continually dwell;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Luke's accounts of Christ's ascension are incredibly mysterious. Here we have the resurrected Christ moving into the heavenly realm. It is a truly mind-boggling event! However, this incredibly important moment has significance for the whole human race: human nature is no longer separated from God. Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, ascended and was received by the Father. Bishop William Wand once said that after the ascension, the human race is like a person standing up to the neck in water, safe that the head is above it. This is all part of strengthening that relationship with humanity. Christ's disciples were spurred on by this event to go and speak in their master's name. Although we don't experience signs quite like the ascension today, the ascended Lord still calls us to minister to others in our everyday lives.

Sunday 29th May 2022

Easter 7

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Acts 16.16-34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22.12-14, 16,17,20-21; John 17.20-26

Jesus prays to God, the Father. It is the night of the last supper. Jesus has shared a meal with his disciples, washed their feet, given them a new commandment to love as he loves, and told them of his leaving. In today's gospel we overhear part of this prayer to his Father and for us. Three times he asks the Father that we would become one as he and the Father are one. If Jesus is praying for our oneness then he is also recognising and rejecting the boundaries and differences that divide us. We live in a world full of divisions, and yet, division exists not primarily in the world, but in the human heart. We often project onto the world our fragmented lives, and so, division becomes self-perpetuating. Oneness is not about eliminating differences. It is about love. Love is the only thing that can ever overcome division. Over and over Jesus tells us this. And that is his prayer for us – in, with, and through him.