

Holy Week Meditation and Prayer

The following is a short service of meditation and prayer for us to undertake during a time when we are separated.

I have used specific hymns on which we can meditate during this Holy Week. We can read or sing each hymn to ourselves slowly and listen to what God is saying or revealing to us.

This is a strange new world in which we now live. No-one has any experience of a like situation. Yes we have experienced massive catastrophes but nothing of this scale. Despite our age or experience none of us has a monopoly of knowledge to adequately advise on a 'right' way. So we have a unique situation where we truly have to support each other at all levels, across different cultures and race to work through this situation successfully.

First **let us pray**

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Hear our voice, O Lord, according to your faithful love,

According to your judgement give us life.

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation,

to you be glory and praise for ever.

In the darkness of our sin you have shone in our hearts

to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God

in the face of Jesus Christ.

Open our eyes to acknowledge your presence,

that freed from the misery of sin and shame

we may grow into your likeness from glory to glory.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,

let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,

so may your mercy come down upon us

to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. **Amen.**

Our Christian lives are built on faith, hope and love and our first hymn reminds us of this:

All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendor, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from man to God eternal

sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

In the gospel of Mark 5: 25 – 34 we see that hope played out by the woman who had suffered bleeding for twelve years. She knew that if she could get near to Jesus and just touch his cloak she would be healed.

Time for reflection

We also know that God shares our lives through Jesus who walks with us through our lives supporting us and strengthening us in our times of need. All Jesus asks of us is to live our lives in service and prayer and look out for our neighbour. We consider the next hymn that gives us good advice especially at this time -

What a friend we have in Jesus

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

Time for reflection

We are living at a time during the present pandemic when for some there seems little hope. But when we allow our faith in Jesus Christ to be at the very centre of our life he will give us life and peace. When we read about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in the gospel of John 11: 17 – 45 he tells us, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever has faith in me shall live even though he dies, and no one who lives and has faith in me shall ever die.'

We give thanks to God for the gift of life and especially today we think of those people who are selflessly doing all they can to save and preserve lives. We also remember those who selflessly gave their lives during the World Wars so that might enjoy our freedom today.

Perhaps God is calling me and you to play our part in some way to help others in their time of suffering. Meditate on the following hymn, particularly the chorus and listen to what God is asking us to do.

I the Lord of Sea and Sky

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?
 Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
 I have heard you calling in the night.
 I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
 I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my words to them.
Whom shall I send? Here I am, Lord.

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will send the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send? Here I am, Lord.

So as we reflect on what God may be asking us to do we resolve to do all we can to do His will and for His glory.

Time for reflection

My next hymn although often sung at funerals is actually a message of hope and faith for the future.

The day thou gave us Lord is ended

The day you gave us, Lord, is ended,
the darkness falls at your behest;
to you our morning hymns ascended,
your praise shall sanctify our rest.

We thank you that your church unsleeping,
while earth rolls onward into light,
through all the world her watch is keeping,
and rests not now by day or night.

As to each continent and island
the dawn leads on another day,
the voice of prayer is never silent,
nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking
your church beneath the western sky,
and hour by hour fresh lips are making
your wondrous doings heard on high.

So be it, Lord: your throne shall never,
like earth's proud empires, pass away;
your kingdom stands, and grows for ever,
till all your creatures own your sway.

So as we look forward to Easter Day a time of resurrection and new life we have faith in God through the Risen Christ that we will win through this crisis. Therefore, hopefully although we are separated by distance we can rejoice together acclaiming **Alleluia Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed Alleluia.**

Time for reflection

Final Prayers

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Merciful God, we entrust to your tender care those who are ill or in pain, knowing that whenever danger threatens your everlasting arms are there to hold them safe. Comfort and heal them, and restore them to health and strength; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'. Be with me today, as I offer myself to you. Hear my prayers for others and for myself, and keep me in your care. Lord we commend ourselves the world and all for whom we pray to your mercy and protection. Amen

Collect

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his
victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Trusting in the compassion of God,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Conclusion

May God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to us who believe the gates of everlasting life. **Amen.**

May God the Son, who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory,
give us joy as we share the Easter faith. **Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit, who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord,
empower us and fill us with Christ's peace. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

It is highly unlikely that we will be able to meet at Easter, and so I wish you all despite everything a joyful and blessed Easter.

Every blessing, **David Local**

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