

The Benefice of **St Andrew's**
and **St Barnabas**, Wellingborough

Holy Week Booklet

With reflections for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter Day



Benefice Call to Prayer

Maundy Thursday 9th April—8pm to 9pm

Good Friday 10th April—2pm to 3pm

Palm Sunday Reflection—by Carol Deamer

When I was a child, I always saw Palm Sunday as a celebration. The processions through the streets of Jerusalem, the joyful reaction of the crowds, the waving of palms and the singing and shouting ‘Hosanna’ seemed to me to create a carnival atmosphere – a true triumphal entry.

So, later, when I discovered that this was a triumphal procession tinged with foreboding and approaching tragedy, it came as quite a shock.

The event was far from a spontaneous outburst of jubilation from the onlookers, it was something that seems to have been planned in advance by Jesus.

The disciples had been directed where to find the colt, specifically chosen to fit with the prophecy of the arrival of the Messiah in Zechariah: ‘Rejoice greatly, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey – even on a donkey’s colt.’

By entering this way, Jesus was making an unmistakable claim to be the Messiah.

The people were expecting the Messiah to be a liberator, a military conqueror, coming to free them from the oppression of the Romans.

But the trappings of a military king were missing – such a show of strength and leadership would have alarmed the Romans, and instead, the gentle and weak appearance of Jesus on a donkey would have reduced any sense of threat.

They thought Jesus could do for them what Rome had done for their rulers—make their lives better, deliver them from the oppressive system under which they lived and worked, and turn the tables on the Romans.

That’s why the crowd turns on Jesus by the end of the week. They don’t think he’s going to do any of those things.

Instead of confronting the authorities, Jesus simply went to the temple, looked around and then returned to Bethany, where he and his disciples were staying. By the end of that day, there may have been many people in Jerusalem who were

disappointed and disillusioned with Jesus.

The crowds simply melted away, and later in the week, their enthusiastic cries of 'Hosanna!' turned to cries of 'Crucify!'

Even those closest to Jesus, the inner circle of disciples, would either betray him outright, or abandon him in confusion and fear.

Sometimes we put all our hopes into something, building ourselves up, planning our future, basing our dreams on the success of everything that we wish for.

But when our hopes and dreams are snatched away, when the bubble bursts, we are left with huge disappointment, a sense of being cheated, and sometimes, a desire for revenge.

Faith is about persevering, sticking with Jesus, even when things don't go the way we expect or want them to. Hang in there, and Jesus, our truly triumphant King, will be far from disappointing, and we also will be victorious, rejoicing in His kingdom.



PALM SUNDAY
Sunday 5th April

Decorate your front door with green branches on the morning of Sunday 5 April!

We may be physically distanced, but we are not separated.
We are the Church.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Krippe Spraxton
Central Parishes
Saltby Branston

Holy Monday—by Revd Margaret

I don't know about you, but this is the point I usually start counting down to Easter. Not for any holy reasons but for returning to chocolate and alcohol. (Not this year however.... too many unnecessary calories....)

Some of you usually strip the altar and the church this week and some of you are normally busy planning the flowers for Easter. Those of us who are ordained would be going the Cathedral to renew our ordination vows. This year it's on Zoom. (Memo to clergy: find make-up. No pyjamas.)

This year everything is different. The familiar routines? Gone. Yesterday? No waving of palm crosses. No shouting Hosanna. Churches locked.

What we call Palm Sunday and Holy Week was also a very different week for the followers of Jesus. The ride into Jerusalem was exciting. At last! Jesus comes into his own. If you look back to the beginning of chapter Mark chapter 11 you'll catch that excitement. But also, the anti-climax of verse 11: Jesus goes into the temple, has a look around, and then goes back to Bethany. What! Is that it?

Mark's gospel continues the next day. Jesus goes back to the Temple. Now he is like a whirling dervish. Kicking out all the traders and upsetting the religious leaders (and the traders with their nice profits!). They want him dead. A troublemaker. A rabble rouser. Too much of a challenge to the status quo.

I imagine that those with Jesus might have been frightened and excited in equal measure. The reception by the crowds had been all they had hoped for. But then Jesus doesn't take over Jerusalem. Instead he is stirring up powerful enemies. How will it end? How can it end?

Take a few moments to imagine where you are in that crowd. Are you feverish with excitement? Or scared? Who has the greater power? The Jewish authorities backed up by the might of the Roman empire? Or a man who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey?

Of course we know how the story ends. We know that God wins the day. But on this Monday of Holy Week it won't have felt like that. All this week it won't feel like that. For a long time to come it won't feel like that when we listen to the daily Covid 19 briefings.

Where is God? How can this all end?

As we have to abandon our routines for Holy Week maybe we can embrace uncertainty instead? Not counting down the days but accepting that we don't know how it might end. Who we will lose? When might we be free of this plague?

Holy Week is traditionally the time of walking the way of the cross. The Via Dolorosa: the way of sorrow. It may be a much longer journey than we had imagined. But we can make it. Not by counting the days but keeping step with Jesus. Without fear. With faith. One step at a time.



HOLY WEEK

Holy Tuesday—by Nick Bewley Tippler

God loves all mankind, even those of us who don't even know he exists, or have turned away from him.

When Jesus was on the road to Jerusalem, he knew that he would meet those who were weeping for the loss of Lazarus. Even though he knew that he would raise Lazarus from the dead, he wept with his friends.

But this isn't just to show that Jesus was human as well as God. Think of it instead as God weeping for all humankind. Because we all die. Because we as so often sinful even when we have the best of intentions.

Let's move forward from Passiontide (last week) to Holy Week (this week). Today's passage from the Lectionary is Luke 22:24-53. It starts with the disciples bickering about who is the greatest. Jesus tells them, quite clearly, "Not you!"

Jesus prays at the Mount of Olives that God will not make him suffer the crucifixion, and the writer tells us that he sweated and suffered anguish. But the disciples went to sleep.

As he was telling them off for sleeping, a crowd arrived, and Judas stepped forward to betray Jesus by kissing him. Yet again, the disciples show their humanity by getting rowdy. One of them, probably Peter, cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave.

No wonder Jesus wept. In front of his very eyes is all humanity behaving badly. But all humanity behaves badly most of the time. No matter how hard we try not to, it seems to be in our nature.

On the one hand, there's Peter, effectively saying, "Don't worry, God, I've got this." On the other hand, there's Judas saying to those around him, "I don't need this God." And on the other hand (to quote *Fiddler on the Roof*) there are the three disciples having a nap when their friend and mentor could most do with a bit of support.

No wonder Jesus wept.

And nothing has changed, no matter how hard we try. As we stand before God, or bow our heads in prayer, we will always know that we tried to rely on our own strength to do something that God has told us he would do with us.

But today, instead of doing, we can take this opportunity of just being. Be with God. Spend some time in thought about all the times that God has answered your prayers and you perhaps didn't notice. After all, for once, you're probably not going anywhere because you have to spend time at home in "self-isolation".

Perhaps thank God for his generosity in answering prayers you had forgotten you prayed. Thank him for suddenly having the time to talk to him. Imagine the delight in his voice as he hears your conversation.



Holy Wednesday—by Revd Michelle

John 13: 21—32

During this Holy Week, we follow Jesus through the days of his passion verse by verse, almost minute by minute; and the spotlight turns from person to person in the surprisingly large cast of people who play a part in his destruction.

On Monday the spotlight fell on his friends from Bethany, Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. On Tuesday on Philip and Andrew in their role of helping some Greek enquirers to meet Jesus. Today our attention is drawn to this strange little exchange between Simon Peter and the disciple referred to in John's Gospel not by name but as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'.

Jesus declares to all the disciples that one of them will betray him. They look at one another uncertain of whom he's speaking. Jesus then says 'Watch' and he gives bread to Judas.

You wonder why Peter, the impulsive fisherman, and the other disciple, usually thought to be John, one of the Sons of Thunder, didn't jump on Judas and lock him away so he could do no harm. But even more intriguing, John's Gospel says it was *then* that Satan entered into Judas.

There is no mention in this Gospel of Judas having had any prior contact with the priests and Pharisees, no mention of thirty pieces of silver; but the Gospel writer has previously described Judas as a cold-hearted thief. At the beginning of this chapter has said 'The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray him' - but you're left with the distinct impression, as always in this gospel, it is Jesus who is in charge of proceedings, setting the pace, asking the questions, determining what happens next and even deciding whom to entrust with the task of betraying him.

The fact that in this Gospel Judas appears not to have done a deal with the priests suggests that Jesus could have handed that piece of incriminating bread to any one of the twelve.

They were right to look at one another with uncertainty. They were right in the other gospels to ask, 'Lord, is it I'. It could easily have been any one of them.

And when it comes to the betrayal, the denial, the abandonment of Jesus it could be, and is, any one of *us*.

How many times in a week, how many times in a day does our behaviour clearly say 'I don't know him', 'He is nothing to me', 'Don't involve me in this'.

Maybe that's what we need to bring to the foot of the Cross today. Maybe that's what we lay at the altar – the weakness of our own discipleship, our laziness and unwillingness to give our faith the same investment of time and energy that we give to far less significant aspects of our life.

Let us put the time in now.

The arms of Jesus nailed to the cross, are the arms of God eternally held wide open in loving embrace for creation – for you, and for me – so that we know how much we are loved, and that nothing in life, or death, or beyond will stop God loving us.



Maundy Thursday—by Val Wingate

Jesus, God-made-man, complete with all that makes up a man, the physical and the emotional. Today we reflect on the man on the eve of the greatest act of love the world will ever know.

To quote St John “Christ knew his hour had come.....” and “it was time for supper”. Christ has the evening planned, an evening that would be full of symbolism, ritual and emotion.

He enters the prepared room. His feet, that once travelled throughout the area, that had been washed in tears and that had been anointed with precious oils, now resolutely carry him to his destiny.

Feet that would soon travel along a path to pain and death.

His senses are on high alert, his eyes taking in the scene around him - the table, the simple meal of bread and wine.

Eyes that had once filled with love as he welcomed and blessed children, filled with tears over the death of a friend, now rest on his disciples reclining around the table.

Eyes that would soon take in the hostile stare of his accusers.

His ears pick up the banter, the discussion of the events of previous days, the noise of friends at ease in each-others' company, looking forward to a shared meal. Ears that once heard the approval of his father, heard the cries of people in need of healing, heard the cheers of the crowd, heard the charges of his challengers.

Ears that would soon hear the accusations of his enemies.

Christ washes the disciples' feet. Despite protestations, the customary ritual of ensuring the guests' comfort must be carried out. Towel and water ready, his loving, gentle hands - hands that have performed miracles, have healed and blessed, now perform this act of humble service.

Hands that would soon feel the agony of driven nails.

Giving thanks, Christ breaks bread, pours wine and again serves his companions. He has set out a ritual that his followers must observe whenever they remember him. Jesus “is troubled in spirit” and is about to shatter the mood. “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.” Now the room is filled with shock and disbelief – inconceivable that anyone around the table would betray their friend and master. Incredulity turns to devastation when the traitor is revealed.

As the traitor leaves the room “it was night”. The darkness of betrayal, the blackness of a traitor’s heart, the conflict of good versus evil, a world soon to be without Jesus that stumbles around in the dark.

The scene now turns to the garden of Gethsemane, where, emotionally and physically exhausted, the disciples have difficulty staying awake, despite Christ’s appeals to keep watch. “Crushed with grief” Jesus prays “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me.”

Not to be taken away, the cup of suffering is to overflow with the sound of approaching soldiers, a traitor’s kiss, harsh words, rough handling, friends’ desertion.

The final scene is set.



Benefice Call to Prayer

Maundy Thursday 9th April—8pm to 9pm

On Maundy Thursday our Lord had his last supper with his friends, he then washed the disciple's feet saying:

“When Jesus 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. I give you a new commandment that you love one another”.

Later in the garden of Gethsemene. Jesus asked his disciples to remain with him and to stay awake (whilst Jesus prayed to his Father in heaven)—but the disciples kept falling asleep.

Judas and the chief priests, elders and a crowd came to arrest Jesus.

From 8pm let us all light a candle, read Matthew chapter 26: v 17 – 75 and pray.

(Jesus asked his disciples ‘stay awake and wait with me’, Jesus then goes on to say ‘could you not stay awake with me for one hour?’)

This night the Altar is stripped bare, the Church is emptied.

Good Friday—by Jessica Cotton

Luke 23 v26 –49

Good Friday. The day when it is finished. The day when Mary's son, Jesus, was crucified on the cross. The day he died for us. Why? What does it mean that he died for us on the cross?

Mary watched on as her son, bruised, bloody and beaten hung from the cross. She saw him weak, wounded and weary and drawing his last breaths, and there was nothing she could do but watch on.

As Mary watched, her eyes glazed over with tears, her heart aching so much it felt like it could explode, and she could hear shouts and cries from the crowds. Mary was almost in disbelief of what was happening all around her on that day and what was going to happen in the coming minutes and what the aftermath would be.

The horror was too much to take in, too much to comprehend. But Mary was determined to stay strong and very much in the present for her son, taking it minute by minute. Until the very end.

Mary was so proud of her son. Even in his last moments, exhausted and in excruciating pain, he was showing compassion to a criminal on a cross next to him, 'today you will be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23:43) and seeking mercy on those who didn't show faith 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). Mary mourns, she takes it minute by minute and she waits.

She cannot think beyond the pain of losing her son or comprehend what may happen next. Mary, and all those who were there that day were united with her son in his death. In this strange union their old selves were crucified with him so that the body of sin was destroyed.

What we know, but Mary did not know at the time, was that in three days' time Jesus would rise again. There was a greater plan. In this plan sin was *dealt with*, its agonies and its consequences.

One of the most beautiful and profound aftermaths of this horror is that sins are *dealt with* not just for those who were physically present at Jesus' death, but for all of us who believe.

But for now, in this hour of her son's death, Mary takes it a minute at a time, consumed with grief, surrounded by darkness and not knowing what to do next. Mary feels as though her own heart has been pierced.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbours,
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.

We are truly sorry,
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. **Amen.**



Benefice Call to Prayer

Good Friday 10th April—2pm to 3pm

At 2pm let us all light a candle, read Matthew chapter 27: v 1 – 61 and pray.

At 3pm blow the candle out.

It is finished...

Holy Saturday—by Revd Margaret

It sounds so peaceful. Holy Saturday.

A favourite hymn 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' captures such a Saturday:

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

Except this is not such a Saturday. True there is a silence. But it is the deafening silence of God not replying to the cry of Jesus: 'my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

There was no calm to that first Holy Saturday. I imagine the women who had stood by the cross watching their beloved Jesus die in agony were frantic to tend his body. To bind up the wounds; to rub sweet smelling oils onto the by now cold flesh. But they can do nothing. They have to sit and wait.

They know where the body is. They will have heard that Nicodemus managed to take the body to a tomb. But they cannot fulfil all the rituals of death and burial. It is the Sabbath. No work can be undertaken.

A dear friend is isolated on a Greek island. Even if there was a plane to bring him home there are no boats allowed to take him to the mainland. And if there were it is too late. His adored mother died today at dawn. He was not there. And he will not be there as a priest to conduct her funeral. He can only watch, on social media, from a distance.

Many people in this pandemic are experiencing what he is experiencing. The grief of loved ones dying when we are not there. Not able to tell them how much we love them. Not able to kiss them as they draw their last breaths. Having to leave them in the hands, and to the mercies, of others.

And so we sit. With our thoughts. And our memories. And our fears. That first morning you wake after a loved one has died and for a moment.... And then you remember. The exhaustion. The regrets.

The disciples of Jesus ran away. I wonder if in their grief they justified leaving Jesus to save themselves? They have run away before. From their lives and occupations. Can they run back? Back to Galilee? To fishing? To safety. Their minds must have been full.

Silent, empty churches are lovely places. But churches with locked doors give us no scope for entering that stillness. Lock down forces us – and no doubt forced the disciples keeping the Sabbath – into our heads. Into the thoughts that we avoid in the busy-ness of daily life.

And into the question we usually avoid: ‘where is God?’

Next week we can answer that question. But today we can sit with that question unanswered. And turn it round? Where are we? When we can no longer clamour for the best seat in the kingdom. When our dog collars and robes are laid aside. When our choir music is folded away. When there are no rotas. No liturgy.

My god, my God where am I?



Easter Sunday—by Revd Michelle

John 20 v1—18

What a journey we've been on - Lent, Holy Week and Easter... it's been a hard, extraordinary journey – like no other. Closed churches, no services, no contact with people and in lock down.

Can you imagine seeing Jesus die on the cross?
Can you imagine going to the tomb and finding it empty?

The empty tomb speaks volumes - most of it, mysterious and unthinkable.

It has huge implications for his disciples then, and us now. The greatness of it - cannot be overstated.

No one was there to see the stone moved to one side, or to see Jesus rise from his death bed.

I'm not sure anyone could have handled it.

The even greater, mystery of God's love for us, is overwhelming in its depth. That in Christ, God was pushed to extreme pain, of losing his Son, and He felt despair, pain, and isolation.

That he visited the depths of hell, and from there His Father lifted him up, triumphing over sin and death. That in all this, His forgiveness knows no bounds - it is for you, and it is for me.

Despite Jesus having hinted strongly, and in some places stressed in no uncertain terms that death would not be the end - and he would rise from the dead, the disciples still could not grasp it.

When the disciples visit the tomb – their reactions are interesting. The reaction of Mary is confusion; 'they have taken my Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him'; the reaction of Peter is wonder and amazement.

It is only the beloved disciple who shows more faith; 'he saw the grave clothes and believed'. Perhaps remembering too, the raising of Lazarus from the dead a few weeks previously.

For Mary who sees the signs and seeks Him, she turns, and unable to focus on Him through her tears, he calls out to her - and she recognises Him.

We may not feel we have had such a dramatic encounter with Christ, but God likes to leave tell-tale signs of His presence in our lives too. Gentle, unassuming signs, that 'yes' He is with us, and He has **not** gone away.

God's message to each one of us, through the risen Lord Jesus is: 'Seek me and you will find me, find me and you will love me, love me, and your lives will be transformed.'

And the good news we hear, is not just a wonderful story from the past – finished. Safely tucked away in history. Because it is our good news, and it is our story.

Christ's death and resurrection are just the beginning – the beginning of a new relationship with God. Christ's resurrection marks the beginning of our lives with him.

Christ died for you! Even if you were the only person in the world (he still would have died for you – because you matter, and you are loved) – I truly believe this.

In these weird and uncertain times – we may not have all the answers or the solutions, but God is still with us, loving us right to the end of time. We just need to trust and seek him, because he is the way, the truth and the life.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed Alleluia