

Video link: Your Grace Still Amazes me

https://youtu.be/fXVUYC_ykwE

Prayer

A prayer based on Matthew 26:27-56 and 1 Corinthians 1:18
by Rachel Marie Stone

Lord God,
We tremble to think
That it was one of Jesus' own friends who betrayed him.
One who sat by him, who broke bread with him.

Give us strength, we pray,
To walk faithfully with Jesus,
Even when the road we walk is rocky
Even when the message of the cross seems like foolishness
And even when we feel betrayed.

You, Lord, are always faithful.
We stumble, we become lost,
But you are steady and sure.

Give us the grace to endure our troubles,
And reveal to us the glory of your kingdom,
Through your son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

TO BE CONTINUED

Days 6-10 to follow

[Romans 8:35-39](#) ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD.



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HOLY WEEK & EASTER IN A BAG - Part 1

Journeying with Jesus from Bethany to Galilee (Sat 27th March - Sun 11th April)

There's something very special about HOLY WEEK & EASTER - it's a season through which many emotions are explored and stirred from excitement to anxiety, fear, relief, bewilderment, sadness, desperation, regret, amazement and exhilaration, and I want to invite you now to join together in *JOURNEYING WITH JESUS FROM BETHANY TO GALILEE*. I encourage you not to rush through this meditation—but rather day by day take time to STOP and REFLECT; to LISTEN to what it is that God is saying to you through these days. USE YOUR IMAGINATION to place yourself in the story. BE AWARE of the SIGHTS and SOUNDS, may your whole senses be awakened as you EMBRACE THE EMOTIONS and may your heart be stirred with a desire to RESPOND to Jesus and HIS LOVE FOR YOU .

Accompanying this reflection is a small bag which is filled with items which I pray you will find helpful. One item for each day.

Let's begin with prayer ...

God, as we move through this Holy season, give us the gifts of concentration, of focus, and of empathy, as we seek to determine where your astonishing story, which is at once so familiar and yet so incredible, fits with our own narratives. We believe wholeheartedly that your passion, death and resurrection have significance beyond our comprehension. Allow us to be touched and awestruck by the holy events of this season and to claim them once again for our own lives. Amen.

As we commence this journey you might find it helpful to take a moment to reflect on the words of the Songsters Piece 'Bow the Knee'

https://youtu.be/VLdfNJq_Mnw

Bow the Knee

There are moments on our journey following the Lord
Where God illumines every step we take
There are times when circumstances make perfect sense to us,
As we try to understand each move He makes
When path grows dim and our questions have no answers, turn to
Him

Bow the knee; trust the heart of your Father
when the answer goes beyond what you can see.
Bow the knee; lift your eyes t'wards heaven
and believe the One who holds eternity.
And when you don't understand
the purpose of His plan,
In the presence of the King, bow the knee.

They are days when clouds surround us, and the rain begins to fall
The cold and lonely winds won't cease to blow
And there seems to be no reason for the suffering we feel;
We are tempted to believe God does not know.
When storms arise,
Don't forget we live by faith and not by sight.

Bow the knee; trust the heart of your Father
when the answer goes beyond what you can see.
Bow the knee; lift your eyes t'wards heaven
and believe the One who holds eternity.
And when you don't understand
the purpose of His plan,
In the presence of the King, bow the knee.
Bow the knee
Bow the knee.

Words: Christopher Machen and Michael Harland
Arr. Tom Fettke

How do you feel about Judas? What emotions do you connect to hearing his name? Is there any way in which you can identify with him?

I came across an article which asked the question, 'Are you a Judas' and the article went on to say;

'Just because you were raised in church, baptized in church and have been a tithe paying member of church all your life doesn't mean you know Jesus

Judas was a friend of Jesus. Judas was active and engaged in the life of ministry with Jesus. He was in Jesus' small group. He was even a disciple of Jesus but he didn't really believe in Jesus. Many times we go to church and go through the motions but we fail to recognize who Jesus is. How often when faced with difficulty, doubt or options do we willingly choose sin based on our needs over God's will.

As Christians the most important thing for us to practice is repentance. Recognizing that we are sinners and the Jesus died in our place so that we might live like him. Allowing the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and empower us to live like Christ.

Judas recognized his sin but instead of turning and trusting in Jesus he took matters into his own hands. Under the guilt, shame and condemnation Judas rejected Jesus.

If there is a lesson to be learnt from the accounts given of Judas then surely it is this....

An outward show of loyalty to Jesus is meaningless unless we also follow Christ in our heart. Satan and the world will try to get us to betray Jesus, so we must ask the Holy Spirit for help in resisting them.

As long as we are alive and have breath, it's never too late to come to God for forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Sadly, Judas, who had been given the opportunity to walk in close fellowship with Jesus, completely missed the most important message of Christ's ministry.

Prayer by Rachel Marie Stone

Lord God,
You sent your Son into the world,
And before his hour had come,
He washed his disciples' feet.

You had given all things into his hands.
He had come from you, and was going to you,
And what did he do?
He knelt down on the floor,
And washed his friends' feet.

He was their teacher and their Lord,
Yet he washed their feet.
Lord God, help us learn from his example;
Help us to do as he has done for us.

The world will know we are his disciples
If we love one another.
Strengthen our hands and our wills for love
And for service.

Keep before our eyes the image of your Son,
Who, being God, became a Servant for our sake.
All glory be to him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. Amen.

DAY 5 : Wednesday 31st March

Item: Silver coin

Bible Readings: Judas agrees to betray Jesus (Luke 22:1-6)
(Matthew 26:13-15, NIV)

Suggested Song: Such love (SASB 845)

Judas Iscariot is remembered for one thing: his betrayal of Jesus Christ. Even though Judas showed remorse later, his name became a symbol for traitors and turncoats throughout history. Although Judas attempted to undo the harm he had done, he failed to seek the Lord's forgiveness. Thinking it was too late for him, Judas ended his life in suicide.

DAY 1 : Saturday 27th March

Item: Wooden Heart

Bible Reading: Jesus Anointed at Bethany (John 12:1-8)

Suggested Songs: All there is of me, Lord (SASB 569)
And is it so? A gift from me (SASB 570)
Take my life and let it be (SASB 623)
When the music fades (SASB 635)

What a beautiful act of devotion Mary bestowed on Jesus. She brought her treasure that she had saved and broke it open, pouring it on Jesus' head and then going to His feet and pouring out the rest of the pungent perfume.

Mary then did something no self-respecting Jewish woman ever did; she unclipped her hair from being tied up and allowed it all to hang loose and proceeded to wipe the perfume all over His feet with it; and the whole house was filled with the beautiful smell of expensive perfume.

Appreciation, love, and thankfulness welled up with a desire to do something in return. To love in return, to give Him something in response to His love.

Here we see the power of agape love (self-sacrificial love) that God has lavished on us. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). When we, indeed, see the depth of love that the Father has bestowed on us, we become lovers of God and lovers of those He loves. We are able even to love our enemies when we see how God loves us. It creates in us a heart of love in response.

Can you ever recall a time when you were the recipient of selfless love? When someone went out of their way to do something beautiful for you. How did it make you feel?
How much is Jesus worth to you? Is there anything too costly to lay at his feet?

Reflective Prayer by Rachel Marie Stone

Lord God,
Six days before his death, your son sat with Lazarus,
Whom he had raised from the dead,
And ate dinner with his friends.

Once again, your gospel tells us, Martha served,
And Mary knelt at Jesus' feet
To anoint them with costly perfume.
The disciple who was about to betray him
Said that it was a waste.

He didn't care about the poor, really –
He just wanted to fill his own pockets
And make Mary feel ashamed.

Lord God,
Often we cannot discern what is best:
When to pour out costly perfume for your sake,
Even if the world thinks it a waste.

When to be busy serving,
Or when to rest at your Son's feet and learn.
Give us ears to hear you and eyes to see.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

DAY 4 : Tuesday 30th March

Item: Piece of towelling

Bible Readings: Jesus Washes His Disciple's Feet (John 13:1-17)
Philippians 2:1-11

Suggested Songs: Meekness and majesty (SASB 383)
From Heaven you came (SASB 165)
If on my soul (SASB 650)

In an act of selfless service Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, wrapped a towel round his waist, poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of His disciples.

It's a story we are familiar with and we are invited to read it again alongside Philippians 2:1-11.

Notice what Jesus did... and notice what He said... *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.* (v15)

Paul said; that in our relationships with one another, we are to have the same mindset as Jesus (Phil. 2:5)

So what does this mean? Song No. 1005 says *'Brother, sister, let me serve you, Let me be as Christ to you; pray that I might have the grace to let you be my servant too.'*

How can we better serve each other? Take some time to pray asking God to reveal to you some practical ways in which you can reach out to others with the heart of Christ.

Also take time to pray asking God to reveal to you those situations where you may have denied others of the opportunity of service, perhaps through stubbornness or pride - ask for His forgiveness, then resolve to be more accepting of assistance from others whenever and wherever it is offered.

Continued...

What Jesus talks about is one of the great paradoxes in the Bible, a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement.

Jesus says, the seed must die if it is to bear fruit.

The person who strives to play it safe, in his relationship with God dies, while the one who sacrifices life, lives. The road to glory is servanthood. That was true for Jesus, and it is true for all who would follow him.

Before His passion and death, Jesus is limited to His earthly ministry and He was met with opposition, hostility, rejection, and persecution not only from the Scribes and Pharisees in particular and the Jews in general but also of His relatives to the point that He was thought to be mad or out of His mind. But after the resurrection, many people repented, were converted and began to believe in Him as their Lord and Saviour, through the witness of the disciples by the power of the Holy Spirit which came upon them (Acts 2).

Jesus, by being faithful to the saving mission entrusted to him by God the Father, became a fruitful servant of God. Jesus in His life, death and resurrection, like a grain of wheat, who was sown and died, lives and produces an abundant harvest.

...And Grains of wheat - that is what we are. Through death, we can become the bread of life. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies..."

Can you identify anything in your life which you need to die to in order to gain the fullness of life which Jesus has promised?

Consider making these words your prayer today...

'Lord, let me share that grace of thine
Wherewith thou didst sustain
The burden of the fruitful vine,
The gift of buried grain.
Who dies with thee, O Word divine,
Shall rise and live again.'

Albert Orsborn (SASS 610 v3)

DAY 2 : Sunday 28th March

Item: Picture of Palm Leaf

Bible Readings: The Triumphal Entry (Matthew 21:1-11)

Suggested Songs: Ride on Ride on in Majesty (SASB 196)

Praise Him! Praise Him! (SASB 231)

Make Way, make way (SASB 148)

All glory, laud and honour (SASB 135)

Hosanna, hosanna (SASB 366)

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/IQ23ryYK8ac>

The story of Holy Week which begins on Palm Sunday is basically a human drama; it is our drama. As Jesus enters into His final week, He takes humanity with Him and continues to do so every Easter. We are not just remembering an historical event that happened over two thousand years ago. We celebrating and taking part in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as it happens today to us and for us.

His entry in to the city begins with a huge wave of optimism, joy and hope. The people line the streets; they wave palm branches, they put their cloaks and garments on the ground and they shout out His name. This was an ancient Roman tradition used to welcome soldiers and armies home after their success in battle. The crowd welcome Jesus in a similar way as they shout out, *Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*

Yet, how quickly the crowd changed and turned on Jesus. The same people who were happy to welcome Him with shouts of joy, would soon begin to shout '*Crucify Him, Crucify Him.*'

Even Jesus closest friends would betray Him, deny Him, run away and desert Him.

Take a few moments to place yourself in the scene... where are you and what are you doing? How do you feel as Jesus passes by on a donkey? Are you shouting 'Hosanna!' and if so, what is it that motivates you to call out His name?

As the crowd disperses - where do you go from here, will you stand with them again on Friday, will you be found amongst those who will spit out insults at Him and cry out 'Crucify Him!' ?

A Poem for Palm Sunday by Andrew Bale

A stretch provoked a mouth-wide yawn,
As Peter rubbed his heavy eyes
Not knowing that this normal dawn
Began a week of such surprise.
The Rabbi had been up a while
But seemed another world away
So, Peter with a wistful smile
In love just watched his master pray.

Eventually his Lord returned,
His mood seemed sad but steady,
The light within his eyes that burned
Declared that he was ready.
Whatever Satan threw his way,
If punches left him winded dazed,
Redemption would begin today
The first time grace the world amazed.

He saw the smiles, he heard the cheers,
He felt the breeze from branches fanned,
As freedom fighters fought back tears
Their ears pricked for his command.
He broke his bread and poured his wine,
Explained he'd die but live again,
Then bled his prayers and said 'it's time...'
And walked into a world of pain.

He took upon his bloodied back
A cruel, heavy splintered cross.
As spitting demons cried 'attack'
And gleeful giggled at his loss.
But on his bloodied heart he bore
Much more than taunts and ugly grins
Along with thorns and nails he wore
A coat stitched up with mortal sins.

Cont.

But love unlike its counterpart
(for hate will always fall away)
Sustained that battered broken heart
And let it beat beyond decay.
And those today who dare believe
The few that find the narrow way,
Will watch Good Friday turn and leave
And Easter Sunday come to stay. (AB)

Prayer

Gracious God, the energy and emotion of a parade can generate joy. Yet the joy of your parade into Jerusalem turned so quickly to pain signalling the sacrifice of your own self. Let this day remind me that while emotions can be fickle, your faithfulness and love remain true. May I see in the giving of your life the power to give myself for others simply for love. When life's struggle sears my soul or sacrifice strips me of hope, strengthen me with your spirit that strode into Jerusalem to face death even as palm branches were strewn before your path and the crowd cried "Hosanna in the highest."

Source: explorefaith.org

DAY 3 : Monday 29th March

Item: Small Packet of Seeds

Bible Readings: Jesus Predicts His Death (John 12:20-36)

Suggested Songs: Man of sorrows! (SASB 183)

My Life must be Christ's broken bread (SASB 610) v3

He who would valiant be (SASB 956)

Within our Bible reading today Jesus predicts His own death. Death isn't something we generally like to talk about. The death of our loved ones is too real, too painful; and as much as we say we have faith and have the hope of eternity in our hearts - to actually contemplate dying can be scary. Jesus said *'I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.'*