

This is not the end....

Whilst we have come to end of this series of reflections, this must not be the end! If our journeying with Jesus reaches its climax in celebrating Easter Sunday - then we miss the whole purpose of His coming.

Though the 40 days prior to Easter, that season we call Lent, are important days of preparation for celebrating the Risen Christ, through reflection, devotion, and self denial - the 40 days after Jesus's resurrection are also important.

Check out these Bible verses as to what happened next;

*Luke 24:13, 45-49; John 20:19-22, 26-28; Acts 1:3-5*

The 40 days after Jesus is resurrected are vital in Jesus preparing His disciples for what is ahead. It is a season of proof that He is alive, teaching the Kingdom, commissioning His people, a season in which the Holy Spirit was received and the promise of a greater infilling was given. Easter wasn't the end of Jesus ministry, it continued thereafter and... it still does! Furthermore it continues through you and me.

Can I encourage you therefore to take time to look again at the evidence of His resurrection, to go deeper in faith and in your relationship with Him. Taking time to study His kingdom teachings, to hunger and thirst for more of God and His Holy Spirit. To respond eagerly to His calling upon your life - so that in receiving His commission, we will each be ready to play our part in building His Kingdom, going forward in His Name - Equipped with His Power.

#### **For further reflection**

'In Christ Alone': <https://youtu.be/ouGuG97I2RY>  
(SASB 861)

Guardian of my Soul: <https://youtu.be/uygD7xJjY60>



[Romans 8:35-39](#) <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither 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.

The Salvation Army  
Newcastle City Temple  
Tel. 0191 266 6086



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## **NCT SA Connected**



HOLY WEEK & EASTER IN A BAG - PART 2

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

**DAY 6** : Maundy Thursday 1st April

**Item:** Wooden Figure

**Bible Readings:** Mark 14:32-42; Luke 39-46; Philippians 2:1-11

**Suggested Songs:** I stand amazed in the presence (SASB 466)  
King of my life, I crown thee now (SASB 179)

*'There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said. SASB 165 v2*

Before Jesus went to the cross He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Gethsemane is a Hebrew word that means 'olive press.' It was probably an orchard of olive trees with a press for extracting this oil; and this is strangely appropriate considering the agony that was about to press in on our Lord.

Jesus knew that the disciples would abandon Him once He was arrested. He would go to the cross and die alone. His friends, upon whom He was counting to win the world, would desert Him in the crisis of those agonising hours.

Inside your bag you'll find a wooden figure - and what we need to understand is that when Jesus entered the garden He did so as a man, and in His humanity He faced perhaps the biggest battle / the biggest of His life.

Mark 14:33 tells us that he began to be deeply distressed and troubled; and at verse 34 Jesus said to Peter, James and John "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, stay here and watch with me".

He prayed so earnestly that Luke tells us 'that being in anguish... his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground'

*'For me it was in the garden  
He prayed: Not my will, but Thine;  
He had no tears for his own griefs,  
But sweat drops of blood for mine.'* SASB 466 v2

Jesus was troubled to the point that He sweat blood. According to medics this is a very rare condition called hematidrosis and has been observed by doctors on occasions when people face extreme distress. So why was Jesus so troubled?

Jesus knew the sheer amount of pain and suffering that He is going to face. In the Garden of Gethsemane we see Jesus facing the consequences of choosing to become a man. In Philippians 2 it describes how Jesus gave up His divine rights and willingly became a human, even though He knew it would lead to death on a cross. Jesus becoming a human was always leading to this very point in time when He would take on the suffering of the world. He knew this very clearly. But this knowledge did not make it easier. This knowledge made it more difficult. Whilst ignorance may not be bliss, it is easier sometimes! If Jesus did not know in detail what was going to happen to Him, He would not have been so troubled, but He knew. Every scourge of the whip, every hit with the rod, every prick of the crown of thorns, every hateful insult, every hammer of the nails, every bruise, every cut, and worse of all, the weight of the world's sin on His shoulders, (the weight of your sin and mine) Jesus knew exactly what He was going to experience.

When Jesus prayed 'Yet not my will but yours' - He was placing Himself fully at the will of God the Father - and He did it for you. He did it for me!

Lord, there are times when I have to ask why.  
Times when catastrophe gives faith the lie.  
Innocents suffer and evil holds sway,  
grant me some answers,  
Lord, teach me your way.

Lord, there are times when I have to ask, 'What?' –  
times when your love is not easy to spot.  
What is life's purpose and what of me here?  
Grant me some answers, Lord, make your will clear.

Lord, there are times when I have to ask, 'How?' –  
times when what's preached doesn't square with life now.  
Wrestling with doubt I ask, 'How can this be?'  
Grant me some answers, Lord, help me to see.

Lord, there are times when the questions run fast –  
times when I fear that my faith may not last.  
Help me, support me, Lord, help me get through.  
Lead me through darkness till light shines anew.

(Nick Fawcett)

But I wonder... have you ever returned to your old ways because Jesus's presence seemed distant?

**"I'm going fishing", Simon Peter said.** John 21v3

This spiritual darkness otherwise known as abandonment affected even Peter who despite seeing the Glorified Jesus decided it was time to return to fishing. Yet, Jesus forgives Peter (including his denial) filling him spiritually and precisely with many fish without breaking the net so he can then share the abundance.... And Jesus expects the same from us.

*Now... To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy –to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen*

**DAY 10:** 1st Sunday after Easter Sunday 11th April

**Item:** Glass bottle with sand

**Bible Reading:** John 21:1-25

**Suggested Song:** When Jesus looked o'er Galilee (SASB 209)  
My Jesus, I love thee (SASB 878)  
Lord. Thou art questioning (SASB 607)  
Knowing my failings (SASB 715)

We have reached the end of our journey. Having journeyed with Jesus from Bethany, into Jerusalem then up to the upper room where He shared a final meal with His closet friends. Having felt His anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane; and observed the torture He endured on the Cross at Calvary before His body was laid in a borrowed tomb; then celebrating His glorious Resurrection on the third day... we now join with Jesus on the beach at Galilee. For brothers Simon Peter and Andrew this is where it all began of course. This is where Jesus had called to them to leave their fishing nets, for they were fishermen, and to follow Him.

We will return to the story in a moment but I want to begin today by encouraging you first of all to reflect on the words, found on the next page, by Nick Fawcett, (for those with internet access or access to a recording of the band piece 'Prelude to Lavenham' I invite you also to listen to that also).

<https://youtu.be/6XI6nNxjpow>

I don't know about you, but living in such challenging times as we are now, it's so easy to ask the questions 'Why, What, How... when? Perhaps also to ask 'God, where are you?' Time and time again I've been overwhelmed by all manner of emotions as I've watched almost in disbelief news reports focused on the current circumstances we all find ourselves in; the selfish idiocy of some people – seen in panic buying, opportunist crime and the blatant flouting of governmental advice; in the mass suffering and tragic loss of life; *but also* in the coming together of community; in the selfless caring, in the sharing of faith and the receptiveness of others to it. Where is God? God is here! God is with us! God has never, nor will ever - leave us.

**For further reflection:**

<https://youtu.be/8CIY-OvQBV8>

(Song by Stuart Townend - Gethsemane, Lyrics printed on the next page)

<https://youtu.be/ZWIX24J00Wc>

(Claire Ryan sings Gethsemane, Lyrics printed over the next page)

**For consideration and prayer**

It was God's will for Jesus to die on the cross to provide atonement for our sins; it was also God's plan to resurrect His son from the dead. This was the best possible outcome for the whole world! Had Jesus not obeyed the will of the Father, we would all still be dead in our transgressions and would have no hope of salvation.

Do we really trust God's will for our lives? Even if it includes suffering?

We pray the words "thy kingdom come, thy will be done," but do we really mean it? I encourage you to pray the Lord's prayer now - pray it slowly, pray it thoughtfully. Pray it sincerely.

**Our Father** who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.

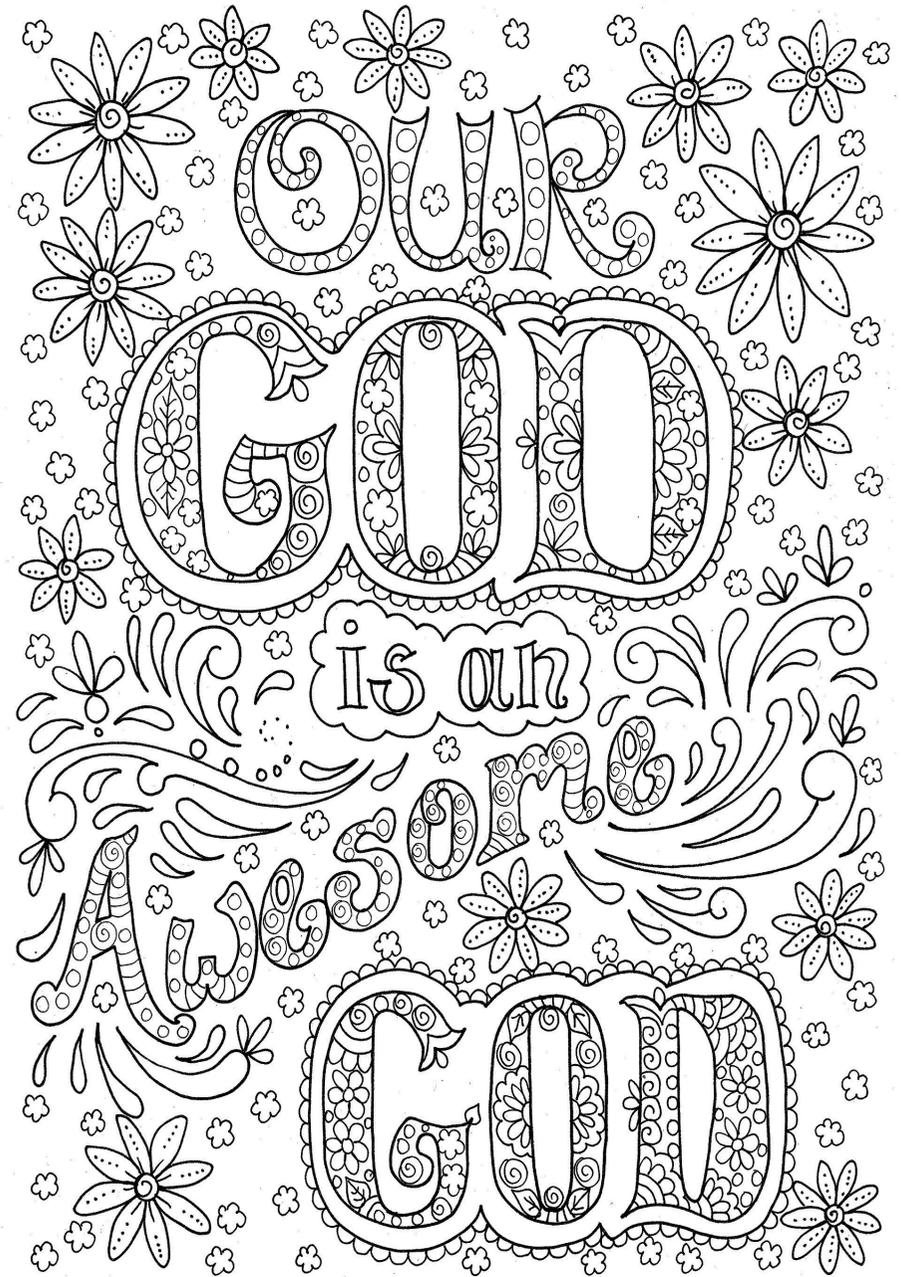
## The agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane

To see the King of heaven fall  
In anguish to His knees,  
The Light and Hope of all the world  
Now overwhelmed with grief.  
What nameless horrors must He see,  
To cry out in the garden:  
'Oh, take this cup away from me!  
Yet not my will but Yours  
Yet not my will but Yours.'

To know each friend will fall away,  
And heaven's voice be still,  
For hell to have its vengeful day  
Upon Golgotha's hill.  
No words describe the Saviour's plight  
To be by God forsaken  
Till wrath and love are satisfied,  
And every sin is paid,  
And every sin is paid.

What took Him to this wretched place,  
What kept Him on this road?  
His love for Adam's curséd race,  
For every broken soul.  
No sin too slight to overlook,  
No crime too great to carry,  
All mingled in this poisoned cup,  
And yet He drank it all  
The Saviour drank it all,  
The Saviour drank it all.

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty Copyright © 2009 Thankyou Music



For those who wish to try something a little more creative; many people have found colouring a helpful way to relax and meditate and so here are a couple of pictures for you to colour. Why not listen to some Christian music whilst doing so and use this time to celebrate the love and joy of our Risen Lord.



### **Gethsemane**

Jesus climbed the hill  
To the garden still  
His steps were heavy and slow  
Love and a prayer  
Took Him there  
To the place only He could go

*Gethsemane, Jesus loves me  
So He went willingly  
To Gethsemane*

He felt all that was sad, wicked or bad  
All the pain we would ever know  
While His friends were asleep  
He fought to keep  
His promise made long ago

*Gethsemane, Jesus loves me  
So He went willingly  
To Gethsemane*

The hardest thing That ever was done  
The greatest pain that ever was known  
The biggest battle that ever was won  
This was done by Jesus.  
The fight was won by Jesus.

*Gethsemane, Jesus loves me  
So he gave His gift to me  
In Gethsemane*

*Gethsemane, Jesus loves me  
So he gave His gift to me  
From Gethsemane*

Words: Melanie Hoffman

**DAY 7:** Good Friday 2nd April

**Item:** Wooden Cross

**Bible Readings:** Isaiah 53:1-7, Mark 15:1-41;

**Suggested Songs:** SASB No's 159-215

**Inc.** There is a green hill (SASB 203)  
Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice (SASB 176)  
Man of sorrows (SASB 183)  
When I survey (SASB 208)

Based on a wonderful poem by Katharine Tynan, many will recall Sir Hugh Robertson's 'All in an April Evening' .

All in the April evening  
April airs are abroad;  
The sheep with their little lambs  
Pass'd me by on the road.  
The sheep with their little lambs  
Pass'd me by on the road;  
All in the April evening  
I thought on the Lamb of God.

The lambs were weary, and crying  
With a weak human cry;  
I thought on the Lamb of God  
Going meekly to die.  
Up in the blue, blue mountains  
Dewy pastures are sweet:  
Rest for the little bodies,  
Rest for the little feet.

Rest for the Lamb of God  
Up on the hill-top green;  
Only a cross , a cross of shame  
Two stark crosses between.  
All in the April evening,  
April airs were abroad;  
I saw the sheep with their lambs,  
And thought on the Lamb of God.

**Video Link:** [https://youtu.be/\\_omAdpZIO8o](https://youtu.be/_omAdpZIO8o)

This Easter Sunday evening I invite you to light this candle and if possible to step outside your front door, and pray this prayer over your neighbourhood.

God of compassion,  
I pray for each member of this neighbourhood  
Each one known and loved by you.  
Be close to those who are unwell, afraid or in isolation.  
In their loneliness, be their comfort;  
In their anxiety, be their hope;  
In their darkness, be their light;  
Through Him who suffered alone on the cross,  
but reigns with you in glory,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### **Suggested links for Worship**

March "He Lives" Noel Jones: <https://youtu.be/xSaXhTso9fA>  
"Easter Singalong" arr. Ray Steadman-Allen: <https://youtu.be/TljHIAApbwz>  
"They Could Not" ISS: <https://youtu.be/6X5Q9QaZb9s>  
"I have seen the glory of the Lord" ISS: <https://youtu.be/bYg0BzcQVfg>  
"Glorious Day" Casting Crowns: <https://youtu.be/xODpgyqGCYM>

"THIS IS THE DAY that the Lord has made; Let us REJOICE and BE GLAD in it" Psalm 118:24

### **Prayer**

Father God, we thank you for the great message of Easter, that in what the world counted defeat, you won the greatest of victories. We praise you for your triumph over evil and death. Most of all we thank you for our own experiences of your resurrection power. Help us to remember that in you we can triumph even in what seem to be the most hopeless of circumstances.

Teach us to live each day in the light of what you have done, confident that no situation, however dreadful it may seem, is finally beyond your power to redeem. And so may we put our trust in you always for this life and the life to come. Amen

**DAY 9 :** Easter Sunday 4th April

**Item:** Candle

**Bible Reading:** Luke 24: 1-12

**Suggested Song:** SASB No's 216-234

Inc. Christ the Lord is risen today (SASB 218)

Low in the grave He lay (SASB 228)

O Joyful sound! O glorious hour (SASB 229)

He is Lord (SASB 222)

On the Sunday morning the three women made their way solemnly to their master's tomb. There would be tears in their eyes of disappointment and utter devastation; the One who had been the centre of their lives, the One upon whom they had pinned their hope, had gone. It was over - finished! Until suddenly, the tomb was before them - empty, a stranger telling them that Jesus had risen, and then the Lord Himself standing before them, greeting them as He had greeted them so often before. Defeat had been turned to victory; a victory not just for them but also for us. This means new life for all, new beginnings, new hope. This brings to us the assurance that whatever we face, nothing can stand between us and the love of Christ Jesus, and the resurrection life that has been made available for all. This is not the end, but the beginning of something new, something wonderful.

*Great celebrations on that final day  
When out of the heavens you come.  
Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end,  
And rulers will bow at your throne.  
Our great commission complete,  
Then face-to-face we shall meet.  
Come, Lord Jesus. (SASB 220)*

The symbolic item for today is a tea light candle. Throughout this Coronavirus pandemic we have been encouraged by Church Leaders to light a candle, each Sunday evening, in the windows of our homes, as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

### **Isaiah 53 v 4-7**

*<sup>4</sup>Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup>We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

Read again the taunts faced by Jesus on the cross.

*"He saved others, but he cannot save himself!"* (Mk15:31) - words of mockery and derision - aimed at adding to the suffering already experienced by Jesus. You can imagine His tormentors smirking and congratulating themselves on making Jesus eat his words, they thought; now let's see how smart he is!

Could He have saved himself? Of course He could! Not only could He have steered well clear of Jerusalem in the first place, but for someone who had healed the sick, stilled the storm, fed the multitude and raised the dead - to come down from the cross would be nothing; but to do that would have been to go back on His mission and deny His calling; for it was only through His accepting suffering and death that He could open up the way to life for others. It was a straight forward choice and He chose to save us rather than save Himself.

### **A Prayer**

*Lord Jesus Christ, we marvel again today at the astonishing truth that lies at the heart of this week - that you endured the humiliation of Gethsemane, the agony of the cross and the darkness of the tomb, not because you had to, but because you chose to. We praise you that despite the jeers and ridicule that you faced, your concern was always for others rather than yourself. We thank you that though you could have saved yourself, you chose instead to save the world - and to save me! Thank you that because you accepted the punishment that was mine, I can now share the life that is yours. Amen*

### **Suggested Video Links to Band, Songsters & Singing Co. pieces**

Nothing But Thy Blood: <https://youtu.be/TAHR042oH8k>

An Easter Tale - Reflections in Nature: <https://youtu.be/5tghqW29o8w>

Your Grace Still Amazes Me: [https://youtu.be/XU8\\_0MR7DY](https://youtu.be/XU8_0MR7DY)

### **DAY 8 : Holy Saturday 3rd April**

**Item:** Glass Stone *representing the stone which sealed the entrance to the tomb in which Jesus was laid.*

**Bible Reading:** Mark 15:42-47; Lamentations 3:19-24

**Suggested Song:** Were you there? (SASB 206)

Say are you weary? (SASB 197)

*Holy Saturday is a day of remembrance, a day of waiting. It is a day of disappointments, of deferred hopes, of dreams in ruins, of the aching void of grief. A day of darkness, doubt and disappointment, even of despair. It is the day for all those struggling with loss, bereavement, uncertainty, chronic depression or any of the other forms of inner darkness. It is a lightless day when the sun refuses to rise—the Dark Night of the Soul; the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is a day in which there seems to be no end in sight, no light at the end of the tunnel; a day when all the former certainties and supports on which life and faith were based have been suddenly snatched away. It is a day which for some can last for months, even years.*

*Holy Saturday is a day in which hope seems dead and God distant.*

*[Source: Walking in darkness—reflections on Holy Saturday, The Evangelical Liberal]*

Holy Saturday is the day in the Christian calendar that celebrates the 40-hour-long vigil that the followers of Jesus Christ held after His death and burial on Good Friday and before His resurrection on Easter Sunday. It's a day of contemplation. On the first Holy Saturday, the disciples did not know the end of the story as we know it. Their Sabbath was a day of confusion, desolation, failure, fear and loss. But even though we know the events of Easter Sunday, we too can experience these things in our own lives. And when we do, we must strive to make this place, that is Holy Saturday, a place of waiting and a place of hope.

### **A prayer**

Lord God,  
On the Sabbath,  
Jesus rested.  
He was in the grave.  
He had finished his work.  
To most people's eyes,  
It looked as if it were all over.  
He was dead and buried.  
But only as a seed dies when it is planted in the earth,  
Not to decay, but to spring to new life.  
Teach us to take refuge in you when we are afraid  
Teach us that death is not our end  
Teach us to hope always in you  
And in the resurrection, the making of all things  
New.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

*[Source: [www.ibelieve.com/faith/8-prayers-to-pray-each-day-of-holy-week](http://www.ibelieve.com/faith/8-prayers-to-pray-each-day-of-holy-week)]*

*'Low in the grace he lay,  
Jesus my Saviour  
Waiting the coming day.  
Jesus my, Lord'. SASAB 228 v1*

**For further reflection:** John 19:41 Jesus Christ Superstar  
[https://youtu.be/\\_xxWje0UAW4](https://youtu.be/_xxWje0UAW4)