

A time to prepare

Lent is a time to prepare for Easter. It starts on Ash Wednesday when the Church remembers the 40 days that Jesus was tempted in the desert.

The last week, Holy Week, commemorates the final week of the earthly life of Jesus. It begins on Palm Sunday which celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Passover.

It includes Maundy Thursday, when Jesus shared his last meal (the Last Supper) with his friends and followers, before his death on the cross on Good Friday. It ends with Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday.

(This booklet looks at the words Jesus spoke from the cross.)

Ride on, ride on in majesty!



Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), Singing the Faith (StF) 265, vv. 1, 2

Father, forgive them...

"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) (NRSV)

In the midst of the pain and suffering that Jesus experienced on the cross, he asked God to forgive. His prayer for forgiveness extends from those who were responsible for his crucifixion (such as the Roman soldiers and the authorities) to everyone across all time and space.

Here is the depth and extent of God's love – unending and unconditional.



"While they are actually nailing him to the cross, he seems to feel the injury they did to their own souls more than the wounds they gave him; and as it were to forget his own anguish out of a concern for their own salvation."

John Wesley (1703-1791)

Suffering to give us life



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God's love and grace

"Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

(Luke 23:43) (NRSV)

According to Luke's Gospel Jesus was crucified between two criminals. One mocks him but the other recognises who Jesus is and that he is innocent. He asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom.

In reply Jesus assures the criminal of his forgiveness and salvation. It is a reminder that no-one is beyond the love and grace of God.



There is a green hill

† † †

There is a green hill far away, outside a city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified,

who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,

what pains he had to bear, but we believe it was for us he hung and suffered there. He died that we might be forgiven.

He died to make us good, that we might go at last to heaven,

saved by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough

to pay the price of sin; he only could unlock the gate

of heaven and let us in.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895), StF 284, vv. 1-4

New relationships

"When Jesus saw
his mother and the
disciple whom he
loved standing beside
her, he said to his
mother, 'Woman, here
is your son.' Then he
said to the disciple,
'Here is your mother.'
And from that hour
the disciple took her
into his own home."

(John 19:26-27) (NRSV)

Jesus' concern is for his mother who is about to lose her firstborn son. He places her into the care of "the disciple whom he loved", generally assumed to be John. It is an example of how followers of Jesus should live together.



"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

(John 13:34-35) (NRSV)

Feeling abandoned

"At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

(Mark 15:34) (NRSV)



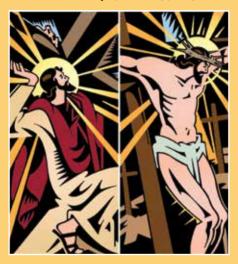
Jesus uses the words of Psalm 22:1. Some people think it is a cry of the Son who has been abandoned by the Father. Others say it shows how human Jesus was and how painful were the emotions that he faced.

'Why has God forsaken me?' cried out Jesus from the cross as he shared the loneliness of our deepest grief and loss.

William L (Bill) Wallace (b. 1933), StF 291, v. 1 Text: Bill Wallace, © 2001 Selah Publishing Co. Inc

Jesus' distress

"I am thirsty." (John 19:28) (NRSV)



Jesus' words are a reminder of the physical agony that he was suffering, and are a very human request for something to relieve the pain.

In response, Jesus was offered a drink of sour wine. This is seen as a fulfilment of the prophecy in Psalm 69:21. Psalm 69 is a prayer asking God to end persecution, and a reminder of what was going to happen to Jesus.

The words present a very human picture of Jesus.

God's victory

"It is finished." (John 19:30) (NRSV)

These words can be seen as Jesus simply announcing the end of his earthly life.

But they can also be heard as a cry of victory as Jesus has now achieved what he came to do. He has shown God's love for people in the strongest way possible. He has died for each one of us that we might be forgiven.



See from his head, his hands, his feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown? Isaac Watts (1674-1748), StF 287, v. 3

Jesus and the Father

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46) (NRSV)



Jesus ends his earthly life speaking to his heavenly Father.

Despite previous feelings of loss and abandonment, these words show his complete trust in God. He dies just as he has lived, offering and placing himself in his Father's hands.

We, too, can use these words as a prayer to place our trust in God whenever things are difficult or painful.

Father, hear the prayer we offer: not for ease that prayer shall be, but for strength that we may ever live our lives courageously.

Love Maria Willis (1824-1908), StF 518, v. 1

Jesus is laid in a tomb



"Joseph of Arimathea ... asked for the body of Jesus. Then
Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped
it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn
out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the
tomb."

(Mark 15:43, 46) (NRSV)

He is risen indeed

"After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ... the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised."

(Matthew 28:1-2, 5) (NRSV)

"The great gift of Easter is hope – Christian hope which makes us have that confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake."

Basil C Hume (1923-1999)



He is risen

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound to distant years in Palestine, but saving, healing, here and now, and touching every place and time.



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PA621-CT-15