

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 13 April 2025 - Palm Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 31.9-16 (or 31.9-18); Philippians 2.5-11; Luke 22.14-end of 23

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Kate Pateman, LLM in the Leverington, Newton & Tydd St Giles Benefice

Lent is almost over! Today marks the beginning of Holy Week, the busiest, most emotional, draining, joyful, inspiring, and uplifting time in our Church calendar. We have raised our palm crosses and joined in the jubilation of the crowds who welcomed Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed colt. We have listened to the telling of the story of his final days. We are on the spiritual pathway that leads us, through the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, through the darkness and waiting of Holy Saturday, to the glorious dawning of the Resurrection Morning!

But, before we can begin to celebrate, we have this most Holy Week to travel through together; and we begin with today's reading of the Passion from Luke's Gospel. With such a very long Gospel reading, it can be difficult to know where to focus for a Palm Sunday homily; which aspect of the story of Christ's Passion to emphasise as we set out on our own Easter journeys.

One of the most moving passages of our reading from Luke comes in Chapter 24, Verses 61 and 62. Peter has just denied Jesus for the third time as the cock begins to crow. Then something truly amazing happens; something amazing but so easy to miss as we listen to the story, unfold. Luke writes; "*The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.*". Notice those seven words, "**The Lord turned and looked at Peter.**". Think about them for a moment. Jesus didn't just happen to look at Peter – he **turned** and looked at him. This wasn't a chance glance across the crowded courtyard - Jesus **turned** and looked. This was a deliberate act of recognition and of love, an act of sorrow and compassion.

Jesus knew that this moment would come. The previous evening, at supper, Jesus had told Peter that this would happen. '*I tell you, Peter,*' Jesus said, '*the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.*' Poor Peter! No wonder he went out and wept so bitterly! He must have felt that he wanted the earth to open up and swallow him, such would have been his shame and his sorrow. Dear, boastful Peter, who so often got things wrong! Who, when Jesus had predicted his betrayal, had blustered that we would never deny his Master. He was prepared to go to prison and to die for Jesus's sake. Yet, when it came to the test, and Peter was challenged about his relationship with Jesus, he denied it, not once, but three times, just as Jesus had predicted he would.

But Jesus, loving Peter as he loves us all, in the midst of his trial and questioning, knowing everything that was to come, could still, in a small moment of calm, find Peter in the crowd and meet his gaze with love. That look must have pierced Peter to the core. No wonder he wept so bitterly.

What does it mean for us? We can't stand in the courtyard with Peter. We can't feel his fear and the panic he must have felt at the thought of discovery and arrest. If we were to imagine ourselves into the scene, as if we were there in that moment, do we think that we would be any braver than he was? Or would we too deny knowing Jesus in order to save ourselves?

Unlike Peter, we are not in any particular danger here in England in the 21st Century. We are very unlikely to be arrested and imprisoned for our faith. We can safely proclaim our allegiance to our Saviour without fear of harm. But that doesn't mean that we are not capable of denying him in our own way.

For example, people often seem to use expletives about God or Jesus to express annoyance, frustration or disbelief. What do we do when we hear them? Do we protest? Do we, in the words of the old hymn, Stand up for Jesus? Or do we ignore it? Turn a deaf ear, because we don't want to make a fuss? Because we don't want to draw attention to ourselves or for people to think that we are being "holier than thou"?

Each time we let such language pass unchallenged, then we are, just like Peter, denying Jesus. Each time we fail to call people out for such swearing, we too deserve that look of sorrow and compassion! But remember, what the look tells us is that, like Peter, we too can be forgiven. God loves us, despite the pain we cause him by our acts of denial and rejection. He loves us completely, generously and unconditionally. If, like Peter, we can realise our failings, and confess our love for God, though we may weep bitter tears of shame and regret, we can be redeemed and fulfil our Master's plan for us. He had a plan for Peter after all – "*On this rock I will build my Church.*" – and he has a plan for all of us.

In the post-resurrection stories in John's Gospel, Jesus asks Peter three times, "*do you love me?*" and commands him to "*feed my sheep.*". At the third time of asking Peter feels hurt to be asked again and says, "*Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.*" (John 21:15-18). Perhaps, at that moment, Peter thought back to that dreadful time in that courtyard in Jerusalem and those three denials. Perhaps he remembered the look that Jesus gave him and was thankful for the opportunity to redeem himself in the eyes of the Lord.

So, as we embark on this wonderful journey of Holy Week, let us keep that picture of Peter and Jesus in our minds. Let us live our lives the best way that we can, reflecting God's love for us in all that we think, or do, or say. And, when the moment comes that we are called upon to stand up for our Saviour, let us be brave and true so that, when he turns to look at us, we can bear his look with joy, and not have cause for bitter tears.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to

feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how Peter felt when he realised what had happened?
- I wonder how you feel about talking to others about your faith?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder why Peter said that he didn't know Jesus?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Let us follow in the way of Christ and pray through him to the Father..

Give true humility to your people, making them more worthy to proclaim the sufferings of Christ, the just for the unjust. As he was smitten for us, strengthen us when we must bear scorn and opposition for his sake.

[Specific petitions for Church, clergy, ministers, congregations]

Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.

Turn and soften those who take the false and easy way when choice is demanded. Cleanse the world of corruption that is concealed under a show of goodness.

[Specific petitions for the environment, the peace of world, nations, governments, etc]

Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.

Give us the desire to serve those whose lives touch our own. Let us honour one another for the sake of him who humbled himself to the Cross for us.

[Specific petitions for families, neighbours, colleagues, local societies, charities, family and children's organisations, schools, clubs, etc]

Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.

Have compassion on those who are condemned by unjust laws and cruel regimes. May they feel, in their suffering, the suffering love of Christ.

[Specific petitions for people in prison, the victims and perpetrators of crime, etc]

*Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.***

Have mercy on all who are sick in body, mind or spirit. Give to the suffering the comfort of your presence. Heal the broken bodies, bring peace to the suffering minds, calm the troubled spirits, and wipe away all tears and pain.

[Specific petitions for the sick in body, mind or spirit]

*Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.***

We pray for those who have been put to death through anger, blindness or cowardice, or by the violence of injustice. Give them the peace that was refused them in this life. We pray for all the faithful departed. Grant to them eternal life in your kingdom.

[Specific petitions for the departed, the bereaved, year's mind]

*Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.***

Casting our cares and our sins before the feet of Christ, may we have grace to follow him to the end.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

*Adapted from: *Leading Intercessions*, Raymond Chapman (Canterbury Press, 2006)*

Suggested hymns/songs

All glory, laud and honour

And didst thou travel light, dear Lord?

At the name of Jesus

From heaven you came (Servant King)

Hark! The glad sound, the Saviour comes

I, the Lord of sea and sky

Lord, the light of your love is shining (Shine, Jesus, shine)

My song is love unknown

Ride on, ride on in majesty

You are the King of Glory

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)