

GOOD FRIDAY

WELCOME TO THIS TIME OF WORSHIP

Let us, in a moment of silence, prepare our hearts and minds to worship God.

Let us pray.

Gracious God,

on this the darkest day of the Christian calendar  
we come before you and thank you for Jesus.

In Him we have learned of your love for us;  
we have heard of your desire to hold us,  
to save us, and to restore us to all you made us to be.  
We are imperfect beings – made perfect by Christ's love.

Forgive us when we let you down  
and give us the grace to try again.  
Bring us closer to you today  
as we contemplate on the death of Jesus  
and the restoration of our relationship with you.

Thank you for this opportunity through technology  
to meet in this place with our brothers and sisters.  
May the story of your love circumnavigate the world  
to the glory of your name.

We join now in the words Jesus taught us : -

Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen

Psalms 22 NIV

<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?

<sup>2</sup> My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest

<sup>3</sup> Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the one Israel praises.  
<sup>4</sup> In you our ancestors put their trust;  
they trusted and you delivered them.  
<sup>5</sup> To you they cried out and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

<sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.  
<sup>7</sup> All who see me mock me;  
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.  
<sup>8</sup> "He trusts in the LORD," they say,  
"let the LORD rescue him."  
Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

<sup>9</sup> Yet you brought me out of the womb;  
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.  
<sup>10</sup> From birth I was cast on you;  
from my mother's womb you have been my God.

<sup>11</sup> Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

<sup>12</sup> Many bulls surround me;  
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

<sup>13</sup> Roaring lions that tear their prey  
open their mouths wide against me.

<sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint.

My heart has turned to wax;  
it has melted within me.

<sup>15</sup> My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;  
you lay me in the dust of death.

<sup>16</sup> Dogs surround me,  
a pack of villains encircles me;  
they pierce my hands and my feet.

<sup>17</sup> All my bones are on display;  
people stare and gloat over me.

- <sup>18</sup> They divide my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.
- <sup>19</sup> But you, LORD, do not be far from me.  
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.
- <sup>20</sup> Deliver me from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dogs.
- <sup>21</sup> Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;  
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.
- <sup>22</sup> I will declare your name to my people;  
in the assembly I will praise you.
- <sup>23</sup> You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, honour him!  
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
- <sup>24</sup> For he has not despised or scorned  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.
- <sup>25</sup> From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;  
before those who fear you<sup>[f]</sup> I will fulfil my vows.
- <sup>26</sup> The poor will eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the LORD will praise him—  
may your hearts live forever!
- <sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth  
will remember and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,
- <sup>28</sup> for dominion belongs to the LORD  
and he rules over the nations.
- <sup>29</sup> All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;  
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—  
those who cannot keep themselves alive.
- <sup>30</sup> Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord.
- <sup>31</sup> They will proclaim his righteousness,  
declaring to a people yet unborn:  
He has done it!

## THOUGHT FOR GOOD FRIDAY

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

These words, spoken by Jesus from the cross, are surely among the most desperate words ever spoken. As Jesus endured the most horrific form of execution the emptiness of despair surrounded him and he cried out to God.

It is perhaps too easy to forget that Jesus was a human being. We think of him as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, God Incarnate – so many names tell us of his divine status, but these words from Psalm 22 remind us that, while here on Earth, living among the people, Jesus was also fully human.

Many of his friends had fled from his side. Some of the women stood at a distance – close enough to witness his suffering but unable to relieve it. On either side of him were the two criminals crucified with him – but the time for conversation was past. Every breath was fought for, every gasp paid for with pain. No wonder then that he felt so truly alone.

Which one of us when overcome by suffering, overcome by the isolation of pain, has never for a second wondered just where God is in our time of need? Whether our pain is physical, mental or emotional, there comes a time when enough is enough and our spirit may be broken.

I find myself thinking so much about those who are ill at this time with Coronavirus. People in their own homes, forced to isolate themselves from their loved ones for fear of passing the virus on. People in hospitals, surrounded by medical equipment and by medical practitioners anxious to help, close enough to witness the suffering but unable to relieve it. People separated from the patients on either side who are going through the same process – unable to communicate as they each focus on their own predicament. No doubt feeling alone.

And I think of their loved ones – standing close by, longing to draw closer, longing to share the pain or take it on themselves, longing . . . just longing.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Words which so many will speak in some form or another in the days and weeks ahead. Even those who claim no belief in a Deity can be heard to utter God’s name in their despair.

Yes, these were words spoken by Jesus from the cross. As a Jewish man he would have been very familiar with the words of the Psalms – words that were used in the synagogue and shared with the people. And Jesus would have known what many of us do not know – that these are only the opening words.

Go back and read the psalm again, and let your heart discover what Jesus already knew – that this psalm, which begins with words of abandonment, isolation, trouble, suffering and despair, goes on to develop into words of thanksgiving

and praise for a God who has been there with people from the outset. The writer of the psalm knew, as Jesus knew, that God had rescued the people and would go on rescuing the people. Just as, when called by God, Moses led the people out of the clutches of Pharaoh, so Jesus led the people out of the clutches of sin. As God in Jesus hung on the cross, despair turned to joyful worship as the gates of Heaven were thrown open to all who would go in.

The world is in mourning today – for Jesus who died on the cross – for loved ones struck down by Coronavirus. However, Psalm 22 tells us that we should not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by any feeling of abandonment – there is more to come.

THIS IS FRIDAY . . . BUT SUNDAY IS YET TO COME!!

Let us pray.

Holy God,

for all who suffer in our world

LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all who are in pain, in body, mind or spirit

LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all who are overwhelmed by life

LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER

For all who are despairing

LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER

For our gratitude to you, the God who loves us!

LORD HEAR OUR PRAYER

LET ALL GOD'S PEOPLE SAY "AMEN!"

HYMN 390

(Tune: Song 13 or try it to Tune 616 Lauds – There's a spirit in the air)

Open are the gifts of God

gifts of love to mind and sense;

hidden is love's agony,

love's endurance, love's expense.

Love that gives, gives evermore,

gives with zeal, with eager hands

spares not, keeps not, all outpours,

ventures all, its all expands.  
Drained is love in making full,  
bound in setting others free,  
poor in making many rich,  
weak in giving power to be.

Therefore he who shows us God  
helpless hangs upon the tree;  
and the nails and crown of thorns  
tell of what God's love must be.

Here is God: no monarch he,  
throned in easy state to reign;  
here is God, whose arms of love,  
aching, spent, the world sustain.

(William Hubert Vanstone 1923-1999)

As we wait in the darkness and silence of Good Friday  
for the light and the glorious joy of Easter Sunday  
May the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding,  
fill your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus,  
and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
descend on you and remain with you, and those whom you love, evermore.  
Amen