

Palm Sunday into Holy Week – ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’



GATHERING IN GOD’S PRESENCE

If you would find it helpful, light a candle to symbolise God’s presence with us.

Call to worship

We gather in the Name of the One who calls us into being.
We gather in the Name of the One who comes,
not to be served, but to serve, and give his life that we might live.
We gather in the Name of the One who continually embraces us in sacrificial love.
We gather in the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Suggested hymn: [From heaven you came, helpless babe](#) (StF 272) (11/23)

- 1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*
- 2 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.
- 3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.
- 4 So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Opening Prayer

As we draw ever closer to your cross,
remind, us God, of all you have given for us.

Remind us how you created all things for your glory and our enjoyment;
 remind us how you rescued your people from oppression and slavery;
 remind us how you sent your prophets to call us back to you;
 remind us how you came in Jesus to challenge our long-held beliefs and attitudes;
 remind us how you gave your very life for ours;
 remind us how death does not have the last word;
 remind us that you are with us now, even in this moment.

As we recall all that you have offered to us,
 so we offer ourselves to you in worship,
 trusting in your presence
 and in your gracious and forgiving love. Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

Luke 23: 26-34

²⁶As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." ³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, '**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.**' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Questions for reflection:

1. What does it mean to you to hear these words of forgiveness from Jesus?
2. How easy do you find it to forgive others?
3. How easy do you find it to receive forgiveness or to forgive yourself?
4. Is there anyone with whom you need to make peace at the moment?
5. How might you go about doing that?

A Time of Prayer

'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'

Before you die, Jesus Christ,
 and the world goes into deep darkness,
 take from our lives,
 from our souls,
 from our consciences,

all that has offended you,
all that has hurt others,
and the indifference
which has made us numb to the plight
of those whom we could help or heal.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us your peace.

On this day, at this time,
irrespective of our faith or lack of it,
we accept deeply in our hearts
the only words that can set us free:

'Your sins are forgiven.'
*My sins are forgiven. Amen.**

(Adapted)

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Suggested hymn: [My song is love unknown](#) (StF 277, v.1 only) (11/28)



1 My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?

Samuel Crossman (c. 1624-1683)

SENDING OUT

We walk in the shadow of the cross;
we commit ourselves to forgiving others as Christ forgave us;
we turn from our worship to a world in need;
we go in God's Name, to share God's love. Amen.

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