

HOLY WEEK TEARS...

Monday – Day 1

Welcome to this week's Devotions. This is Holy Week, a week set apart by Christians to reflect on the final days of Jesus' life from his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to his death on the Cross on Good Friday and his Resurrection on Easter Day. A week full of high-tension moments, of tears and jeers, support and rejection, betrayal and denial. High points and low points, noise and silence, crowds and isolation. We will, especially during this time of Coronavirus, be able to sympathise and empathise with many of those emotions and happenings, sharing tears of joy as well as sorrow.

I have called this week's devotions **Holy Week Tears**.

A prayer to begin our reflections this week:

Eternal, ever living God, in times of certainty and uncertainty, you are with us.

in times of doubt and belief, you are with us.

In times of sickness and good health, you are with us.

In times of laughter and of sadness, you are with us.

In times of togetherness and aloneness, you are with us.

In the good times and the bad, you are with us.

In times of clarity and confusion, you are with us.

In our tears of sorrow and our tears of joy, you are with us.

Eternal, ever living God, we thank you for your presence and we entrust ourselves to your care.

Amen

Each day this week I want us to reflect on one of the symbols of Holy Week and I want to give you each the opportunity to create your own visual reminder that will build up to Easter Day.

Each day we will cut out a tear drop shape, ideally from a newspaper or a magazine, I cut mine about the size of an A5 piece of paper, so about 15cm x 21cm, but size isn't critical. You might want to cut yourself seven all at once and if they are all the same shape and size, your finished display will look much more pleasing.



So today is Day 1, take one tear drop shape and place it before you and on it place your **Palm Cross**, I hope you all have one...if not draw yourself a cross on your tear drop or cut one from a contrasting piece of paper. Now put this somewhere where you will see it during the day. Mine is on our kitchen table and will stay there all week to be added to each day. After all, we are on a journey, a journey following Jesus on his journey to the Cross and beyond.

Palm branches were scattered on the ground as Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, people shouted their support, 'Hosanna, God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord'. Palms were used to symbolise goodness and

victory, so on that day it seemed appropriate to scatter their palms on the road.

Listen to this Palm Sunday Hymn.....**StF 265 - Ride on, ride on, in Majesty.**

These days we are asked to support so many causes and people, even recently we were asked to light a candle and place it in our window and to open our windows and clap in support of the NHS. We have been asked to support the environment by reducing our plastic usage. We are asked to carry on supporting charities that have had to “shut up shop” during the coronavirus, we have been asked not to cancel our membership, but to let them carry on. We are in our actions shouting Hosanna, we are showing our support. We click “like” on Facebook pages to show we like and support ideas and things and people and the world can see what we do. So the world, or at least our little part of it, will see how we show our support, what we wave our palms for, who it is we follow and support. I hope that those who know us, know of our allegiance to Jesus and know why the Cross, and today the Palm Cross, mean so much to us. Our belief in God, our journey with Jesus, our encounters with the Holy Spirit are not separate to life, but are integral to it, a part of who we are, that is why we lay our symbols this week on sheets of newspaper, the two become one.

A closing prayer:

May the blessing of God who gave his Son for us, surround us with peace;

May the blessing of Jesus who rode into Jerusalem for us, give us peace;

May the blessing of the Holy Spirit poured out for us, burn within us and give us peace;

May our triune God bless us in our tears of sorrow and of joy;

This Holy Week, in these uncertain times and everyday. Amen

It is Tuesday, welcome to Day 2 of Holy Week Tears



If you are journeying with us this week, you will know that today is **Day 2** of our Holy Week Tears reflections and that we are creating a visual focal point as we move through this Holy Week. Take your tear drop shape and place it next to yesterday's Palm Cross and on it place a **bread** roll or a slice of bread, a naan or pitta or a cracker. Bread is an important symbol throughout the Bible, not least because it demands some sort of preparation.

A few weeks ago I would have said "it is easy for us to get bread", maybe it isn't so easy now, but certainly in Biblical times it took a bit of time, no corner shop or supermarket to supply it. Unleavened bread was a more speedy make because you didn't have to leave it whilst the yeast did its work and rose the loaf, but you still had to build a fire, which meant collecting wood and getting a flame. We know how long it takes to make bread to get it to rise, it means a bit of forward planning, a bit of preparation. A bit of a settled

existence...think of those displaced and homeless, refugees in a foreign land. I make all our own bread, including sour dough and that takes three days, you need time and patience, there is preparation and waiting.

Remember how the Israelites had to leave Egypt with no time to let their bread dough rise? (**Exodus 12:34**) The Jewish people still use unleavened bread to celebrate Passover and their rescue from Pharaoh.

Jesus refers to himself as "the Bread of Life" (**John 6**)

Bread is nourishment and sustenance for the body, but Jesus offers spiritual bread that feeds our spiritual lives.

We recall some of that each time we pray the **Lord's Prayer**...maybe pray that now.

In Holy Week, in Jesus's journey towards the cross, he asked his Disciples to go and prepare the Upper Room for a meal together, find the story in **Luke 22:7-13**. Here he would share a final meal with his Disciples, he broke bread and shared wine and we recall this when we share Bread and Wine together in church.

Listen to this hymn and reflect on the words, and for today the first two verses are very significant.

Hymn **StF 569: An upper room did our Lord prepare...**

A closing prayer:

Eternal, Holy God, you are amongst and with us and we praise, we worship, we adore you.

You are the calm at the centre of our beings, the hope of promises to come.

You are the one who adds yeast to our beings

You are the one who has prepared us, has kneaded and tended us.

You are the one who sees us rise and mature and become what you have us be.

You are indeed the Bread of Life for us and in us.

Eternal, Holy God, we praise and bless your Holy name.

Amen



It is Wednesday, welcome to Day 3 of Holy Week Tears

If you are journeying with us this week, you will know that today is **Day 3** of our Holy Week Tears reflections and that we are creating a visual focal point as we move through this Holy Week. Take your tear drop shape and place it next to Monday's Palm Cross and Tuesday's Bread and on it place some **Silver Coins**.

A quiet thought:

As we sit quietly and look at our silver coins we think of their value, their worth, their usefulness and we are thankful for them and for all else they give to us and mean to us.

The coins are symbols of the 30 Silver Coins that Judas was given for betraying Jesus, see **Luke 22:47-53**. Likely enough Judas would, last Sunday, have joined the support and shouts of Hosanna as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Here he is betraying his so called friend for 30 silver coins. What a change of allegiance...and all for money? We know all too well what happened to Jesus, but much less is written about what happened to Judas, but there are a few words of his journey, look at **Matthew 27:3-10** and **Acts 1:18-19**. Judas, who betrayed Jesus for money, seems to have had a change of heart and repented for his sin, but he had lied and in so doing betrayed his friend.

How easy it is to have a change of heart for the wrong reason. How easy it is to skew the truth or tell a lie. How easy to be blind to what the bigger picture really is. We are all guilty of that to some degree.

Hymn: **StF 267 - Jesus in the Olive Grove..**

A quiet thought:

Let us think again of our silver coins and link in our minds how Judas used his coins. Maybe in the coming months, after all the changes of recent weeks, our coins will take on a different value, a different worth, a different meaning.

A closing prayer:

Lord God, you know us through and through, you know our failings, our faults, our fears, our frailty.

You know our hopes, our dreams, our desires, our wishes.

You know the heartache of our present hibernation, isolation, home centred existence.

We recall the stories of Holy Week, we see the images they create

We imagine some of the pain of Jesus, the anguish of the disciples, the fear of the authorities, the uncertainty of friendship, the reality of desertion, betrayal and even denial.

The cost of commitment and friendship, or care and support is often greater than we had imagined it would be.

The cost of giving and receiving sometimes stretches us physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Lord God, you know us through and through, accept us as we are, work with us as we are, befriend us again and again so that we feel forever enfolded in your care.

Amen

It is Maundy Thursday, welcome to Day 4 of Holy Week Tears

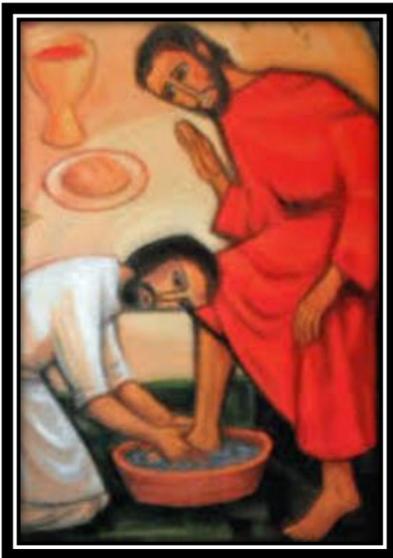
If you are journeying with us this week, you will know that today is **Day 4** of our Holy Week Tears reflections and that we are creating a visual focal point as we move through this Holy Week. Take your tear drop shape and place it next to Monday's Palm Cross, Tuesday's Bread, Wednesday's Silver coins and on it place some **Soap and small cloth or a tissue**.

A quiet thought:

Reflect on your bar (or bottle) of soap your cloth or tissue (or toilet paper!) and how something so ordinary and every day, something we have used with barely a thought, has in recent weeks become a

commodity of value and desire and need beyond anything we could have imagined a few weeks ago.

We add soap and towel (paper or otherwise) to our reflections this week as a reminder of Jesus' service to his Disciples, to his friends, to those nearest to him. He knelt and washed their feet. A final act from him to them, he was their servant king and he is ours too. No task too menial or humble. **John 13:1-15** tells the story for us.



Foot washing, normally the job of a servant, was an act that would have shocked and humbled his friends. He was aware that times were confusing for them, so he did something very basic, very every day, that they would understand, he would show them that they were to care and do for others as he had cared and did for them. Many of us are humbled now at the little acts of kindness shown to us in the present Coronavirus times. There are those who need their feet washing, but there are those who need a phone call, an email, a reassuring word, a shopping list collected, a prayer said, a letter posting. In their own right they are little insignificant acts, but they mean more than we can ever know. Even if we are self isolating we can offer service and the caring to those around us. Today, Maundy Thursday, maybe it is even more apt that we reflect on this.

A hymn for this day: **StF 249 - Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love...**

A closing prayer:

Servant God, you sit beside us, stand with us, breath with us, cry with us and we are humbled that you care for us. Wash away the dust from our minds, the dust in our eyes and our ears; let us see you and hear you and know you with such clarity, that we can rest in the knowledge of your abundant care, no matter what happens to us. Servant God, we give thanks for those whose acts of kindness make a difference to our lives, especially in these changing, confusing and frightening times; for those whom we rely on in times of need, for those who work tirelessly to ensure things are the best they can be. Bless them and bless us and all those we love. Amen.



It is Good Friday, welcome to Day 5 of Holy Week Tears

If you are journeying with us this week, you will know that today is **Day 5** of our Holy Week Tears reflections and that we are creating a visual focal point as we move through this Holy Week. Take your tear drop shape and place it next to Monday's Palm Cross, Tuesday's Bread, Wednesday's Silver coins Maundy Thursday's soap and towel and on it place some spiky bits of bramble or hawthorn (if your garden has them) or **some nails, a cocktail stick, anything sharp and maybe if you have it a bit of purple cloth or paper.**

A quiet thought:

Reflect on your spiky prickly things, what they feel like.

Reflect on your bit of purple, rich and regal, what images does it evoke for you?

We add our spiky things to represent the crown of thorns placed upon Jesus' head at the crucifixion and the purple cloth represents the robe that was put on Jesus. Purple for royalty, Jesus was King of the Jews and still we refer to Jesus as King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Read the story of Good Friday in **Mark 15**. The images today are of pain, anguish, desolation, death, of desertion, sadness, bewilderment, confusion, hopes dashed, fears raised, engulfing darkness, grief and more....these are the images of Good Friday.

Let's listen to a Good Friday Hymn: **StF 287 - When I survey the wonderous cross...**

Those words will be etched in many of our minds from Good Friday's in years gone by...but what about these words of Brian Wren **StF 273**

- 1 Here hangs a man discarded,
a scarecrow hoisted high,
a nonsense pointing nowhere
to all who hurry by.
- 2 Can such a clown of sorrows
still bring a useful word,
when faith and love seem phantoms
and every hope absurd ?
- 3 Yet here is help and comfort
for lives by comfort bound,
when drums of dazzling progress
give strangely hollow sound :
- 4 Life, emptied of all meaning,
drained out in bleak distress,
can share in broken silence
our deepest emptiness :
- 5 And love that freely entered
the pit of life's despair,
can name our hidden darkness
and suffer with us there.
- 6 Christ, in our darkness risen,
help all who long for light
to hold the hand of promise
till faith receives its sight.

A closing prayer:

Blessed God, our hearts feel broken as we reflect on the events of Good Friday and we try to feel your pain. We imagine the fear and anger and all the emotions of the day and somehow this year of all years, they resonate deeply with us.

Blessed God, we know you share the pain and anguish of the day with us. In Jesus, you suffered and you died for us; now in Jesus we pray for your protection, your love, your gentleness and we pray in this in between time for a vision of a brighter future, of life enriched and in all its fullness. Amen

It is Saturday, welcome to Day 6 of Holy Week Tears



If you are journeying with us this week, you will know that today is **Day 6** of our Holy Week Tears reflections and that we are creating a visual focal point as we move through this Holy Week. Take your tear drop shape and place it next to Monday's Palm Cross, Tuesday's Bread, Wednesday's Silver Coins, Maundy Thursday's soap and towel, Good Friday's prickly and purple things and on it place some **herbs or spices or perfume**.

A quiet thought:

Reflect on your Herbs. Spices or Perfume. What do you use them for and why?

Read about what happened to Jesus after he died, **Mark 16:1-8**

We, as Christians, normally spend the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Day preparing for the Easter Day celebrations in church and home. Maybe buying last minute Easter Eggs, planning an Easter Egg hunt for the youngsters drawing Easter bunnies and spring chicks with the children, "dressing" the church, filling it with flowers and getting ready a cross to decorate on Easter morning. All about preparation.

For the first disciples of Jesus it must have been a long day, not knowing what to do, where to go, how they were going to manage, suddenly their whole life had changed (I guess in many ways people who have been made redundant, or ever furloughed, have a bit of that feeling). Their "jobs" had relied on Jesus. Now he had been crucified and buried in the tomb. So, they had lost their leader, their jobs and they grieved for their friend. All human emotions we can relate to. They felt alone and bereft, again, especially in these days, we can empathise with them. The women had the task of gathering herbs and spices to anoint the body and that was what they would do on Sunday morning, they couldn't do it on Saturday, that was Jewish Passover. Preparation then for what was to come. BUT...what was to come was not what they expected...but for now, on this Holy Saturday, they waited, they prepared. Our herbs, spices, perfume, remind us of their waiting, waiting to perform what they thought was the last act of kindness and respect for their friend. Time must have seemed to stand still, must have weighed heavily on their shoulders; their minds filled with "what ifs", "maybe", filled with waiting and wondering, longing and hoping.

A reflection on our Lenten journey:

Together
and alone we set out on our lenten journey.

We set out as One
set out as one.

We have travelled, still will travel, to places we are not happy with
to places we are not comfortable with
to places that hurt us
to places that challenge us.

We have travelled, still will travel, to places that settle and sustain us
to places that cocoon us
to places that release us.

We have travelled, still will travel, alone and apart
together and at one.

We have travelled, still will travel, happy
and sad.

We have travelled, still will travel, willingly
and reluctantly.

But travel we will.

And after travel is journey's end.

If we have travelled Lent
If we have travelled Holy Week
then we will find Easter.

Find ourselves somewhere different to where we started with different tears.

Find ourselves somewhere different to where we started.

Find ourselves different to when we started.

Find ourselves different.

Find ourselves.

Find.

Find GOD

This hymn encompasses so much of what we have been reflecting on: **StF277 - My song is love unknown....**

A closing prayer:

Immortal God, these days of waiting are tinged with a myriad of emotions, like a kaleidoscope, each time we look and think, different images pass in front of us, different memories, pictures, smells, experiences. Hold us tight, hold us securely in your presence and bring us from the death of Good Friday to the glories of Resurrection Day. Amen

It is EASTER SUNDAY, welcome to Day 7 of Holy Week Tears

Love and Prayers to you all on this Easter Day!

If you have journeyed with us this last week, you will know that today is **Day 7** of our Holy Week Tears reflections and that we have been creating a visual focal point as we have moved through Holy Week.

Hallelujah! Christ is Risen, that is our joyful cry today...no more tears of sadness, today tears of joy. No more tears on our display but in the centre of your tear drops place a vase of **flowers** and if you can find some **butterfly** pictures to cut out or draw, add them to the vase as well.



No quiet thought, but a rousing hymn with which to launch our day, even an Easter Day different from what we had hoped for and imagined: **StF 303 -I know that my redeemer lives.**

Flowers and Butterflies are symbols of new life, bursting forth from the darkness. Easter celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus who was born for us, died for us and rose from the dead for us.

Read of the Resurrection that we celebrate today: **Matthew 28**

A meditation for this day:

The dark clouds that yesterday tumbled across the sky and rested on the hills,
are now yielding to the finger shafts of golden brilliance creeping across the darkness.
The tears of yesterday that blurred our vision and wet our cheeks and were without consolation
are now tears no more but salty stains marking the moment.
And the dawn brings light, golden brilliance as splinters of glass,
spreading and transforming before our eyes and our tears are gone, wiped away,
and we make our way in the changing light and a clearer vision to the tomb of sadness and oppressive darkness
and BEHOLD
the darkness is no more
the tumbled clouds have given way
deep sadness and bewilderment, the heavy pain of death
TRANSFORMED.
Light and Life stand before us.
"Who is it that you seek?"
Death is gone, overcome, overshadowed, overwhelmed.
Life lives, loves, hopes, tears of joy like diamonds glisten.
The cross is no more than wood chopped and fashioned.
The tomb a stone hewn place
Beyond and above Halleluiahs resound and echo and fill our minds...
For Christ is alive and the tumbled clouds have been transformed...
Tears of joy and relief of happiness and celebration wash away our fears...
Our spirits lifted, enlightened,
And Christ is the golden brilliance by which we see our lives,
and Halleluiah is our Cry...Halleluiah, Halleluiah, Halleluiah.
FOR JESUS CHRIST IS RISEN.

If you have youngsters with you, or even if you fancy a daily workout, why not try this Easter Hymn:
StF 310 – Sing a song, sing a joyful song..... then you can clap and jump and dance and wave and sing!
If you don't fancy a workout try my favourite Easter Hymn: **StF 313 – Thine be the glory**

A closing prayer:

May the tears of today

Be the balm to the pains of yesterday.

May the tears of tomorrow

Be the cleansing of memories.

May the tears to come

Be those of joy and laughter.

And may the Risen Christ go with you. Amen