

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit**  
**Service at Home Sheet 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025**  
**Passion Sunday**  
**Prepared by Pat Fry and Lisa Ball**

**Today is Passion Sunday.**

The church calendar rushes through Holy Week, rushes forward from Palm Sunday to Good Friday, but so much happened in the few days in between. The disciples must have felt they were on a rollercoaster caught up in a whirlwind of surprising events and challenging conversation that turned their thinking inside out and upside down. Then the horror of the arrest and crucifixion, then the wonderful shock of Easter would have pushed all this to the back of their minds, only to be remembered and thought deeply about much, much later.

So it has become traditional., on Passion Sunday, either to look forward to events in Holy Week, or to ponder the deep meaning of the Cross. Today's lectionary focuses on one event early in Holy Week, and Lisa will reflect on that, and then I will focus on another event, this one from Maundy Thursday.

But we begin with a poem to set the scene, a poem written this year by Catherine James, a Methodist local preacher in Derby, an old friend of mine

**LENTEN JOURNEY\***

It began in the wilderness  
the unforgiving desert,  
entered for our forgiveness  
hard and harsh  
with stones mocking loaves.  
Water scarce  
after the winter rain  
and any greenness drying fast  
among the layered metallic rocks.

Soon Galilee will come and go,  
a brief, heady, life-changing memory  
for those who were there beside the glittering  
lake,  
and the road will lead south

past hills tended and terraced to the sky  
past vineyards and barley,  
the white road punctuated  
by olive and cypress  
for a moment's shade

There will be talk,  
hopes, dreams  
of the kingdom round campfires.  
There will be sheltering walls  
for thoughts, for rest,  
and peace in Bethany.  
But the track leads south,  
onwards, relentless  
to Jerusalem,  
and palms and praise,  
before the deepening darkness  
of Gethsemane.

And onwards to Calvary.  
bleached and brutal,  
scorched in the glare of noon,  
in the unforgiving sun -  
an echo of the desert  
where it all began,  
the journey  
for our forgiveness.

**Hymn StF 277 My song is love unknown**

<https://youtu.be/HMart4wXsIO>

This hymn is too long to reprint on this service sheet, so I have chosen three appropriate verses.

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.
2. He came from his blest throne  
salvation to bestow,  
but men made strange and none  
the longed for Christ would know.  
Bu O my friend  
my friend indeed

who at my need  
his life did spend.

7. Here might I stay and sing  
no story so divine  
never was love, dear King  
never was grief like thine.  
This is my friend  
in whose sweet praise  
I all my days  
could gladly spend.

*Samuel Crossman c.1624-1683*

### **Prayer \*\***

Gracious God  
we bring our thanks and praise  
that in the fullness of time  
you gave your only Son  
to share our human nature  
and to be tempted in every way as we are ,  
yet without sin.  
to set his face resolutely towards Jerusalem  
and to be lifted high upon the Cross  
that he might draw all creation to himself..  
  
Lord God you have drawn us together  
on the way of the Cross, and illuminated our  
path by the insights of others.  
Come freshly to us loving God, with your  
disturbing power as we reflect on your Word.  
Give us courage to stay with the discomfort of  
your call through these Scriptures,  
and help us to understand how to walk in  
harmony with your will. Amen

### **Bible reading: John 12 1-8**

and now **Lisa's reflection on this passage:**  
**A passionate act of devotion**

Isn't it wonderful when a dear friend stands up for you, especially when you have made yourself an easy target for criticism? Jesus defended Mary with the words 'leave her alone', and followed these words by justifying her actions to what had been the 'righteous' indignation of Judas. Judas may have thought he was in the right pointing out what good could have been done but he misunderstood the immense good that Mary had done by her

action. Jesus understood and was deeply touched by what Mary had done.

Our way of expressing our devotion to Jesus is as individual as we are, and it would probably be best not to think that we know the right way for others to express theirs. Jesus knows our hearts – it is always the attitude of our hearts that he is looking at, and what could be the result of that attitude.

From the perspective of that day it may have looked like Judas was being pragmatic. He had a point – but we know the direction that his thinking would eventually take him, and it wasn't the path that Mary took.

We can sometimes make sense of the events of our lives after they have happened, but only God can truly know what is going on within our lives and lives of those we touch by our deeds. It is easy for us to look at someone else's behaviour and say 'what were they thinking? Surely it would have been better if ...' Judas displayed this kind of thinking, and Jesus said 'leave her alone'.

So what can we draw from this account? Mary's passionate act of devotion is noted by Jesus, and he was moved by it. He was also moved by the quiet act of sacrifice the widow gave when she put in all the money she had at the temple - she too was devoted to God. Therefore whether it is a quiet act or an extravagant one it is the passion and the loving devotion to God that matters. Jesus gave everything – his life of ministry and healing and his death on the cross was his most passionate act of all.

### **Prayer of confession**

Gracious God, This story is challenging in many ways. We see the depth of Mary's devotion, and realise how feeble and half-hearted we sometimes are in our worship. We hear the carping criticism from Judas, and hear echoes of our own tendency to criticise too readily.

And we see Jesus looking beneath the surface, and truly valuing Mary's

unconventional action, and we see how often we fail to understand another person's good intention.

So we come to ask forgiveness,  
for clearer insight,  
for greater openness to understand another point of view,  
and to see the best in those around us.

Help us to know that each of us can be assured of your understanding love, and encouragement as we seek to follow Jesus way. Amen.

I have chosen another story that precedes a meal, this time from Maundy Thursday. The word Maundy has always puzzled me, and I read recently what it means\*\*\*. Maundy is derived from the Latin word *mandatum*, from which we get our words command, demand and mandatory. If something is mandatory it is not just an instruction, but a legal requirement, as for example having a valid driving licence and car insurance before driving a car!

So the instructions Jesus gives in the course of Maundy Thursday are not just to be seen as good advice, but as mandatory, as commandments that should govern our behaviour as Christians. Bear that in mind as you read the story.

### **John 13: 1-17 and 34**

#### **Pat's reflection on this passage**

Living at a different time, in a different climate and a different culture, it's hard for us to realise just how shocking this was for the disciples as they gathered for Passover. Walking in sandals on rough, dusty paths in warm weather, feet quickly became dusty and sweaty, so it was customary for the humblest person present, in a big house the lowest slave, to wash the guests' feet as they arrived for a formal meal. Not a pleasant task, smelly feet are not something we like to deal with and feet were considered very personal

indeed. It was certainly not the role of a respected rabbi; way beneath the dignity of the potential Messiah.

Yet Jesus insisted He must perform this task. It was a very memorable down to earth way of teaching about the nature of God's Love, something very practical and physical that would stay in the memory of everyone there. Actions speak louder than words, we say, and as a primary school teacher I was always looking for practical, tangible ways to let the children experience the ideas I was trying to convey.

In verse 15, Jesus said he was giving them an example to follow, not an easy example, but something practical and attainable, that did not require great knowledge or special skill, but did require a change of attitude in a society where seniority, honour and status were highly regarded.

This is the context of the "new commandment" in verse 34: "Love one another as I have loved you." And we have to work out how to translate this into everyday life, into our attitudes and actions in our time, and our particular individual circumstances .

As we move on through the mind-blowing events of Holy Week, through the horror of the arrest, the agony of the Crucifixion, , the desolation of Saturday and the glory of Easter morning, let's not lose sight of the significance this down to earth demonstration of God's love, and what it can mean for our everyday lives.

#### **We use a hymn as a prayer**

**Hymn StF 249 Jesu, Jesu fill us with your love** <https://youtu.be/ZjFNpoEy8mY>

*Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve  
the neighbours we have from you.*

Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
silently washing their feet,  
Master who acts as a slave to them.

Neighbours are rich folk and poor  
neighbours are black folk and white  
neighbours are nearby and far away.

These are the ones we should serve,  
these are the ones we should love .  
All these are neighbours to us and you.

Kneel at the feet of our friends,  
silently washing their feet  
this is the way we should live with you.

*Jesu , Jesu....*

*North Ghanaian song adapted by Tom Colvin 1925-2000*

### **Prayer for others**

Sometimes, dear Lord, we feel we have nothing to offer, that it's hard enough just to keep going . Sometimes we really want to offer help, but we don't know how. As we hear the news\_headlines we feel helpless and overwhelmed. So we bring our concerns to you in prayer, as Jesus taught us..

We pray for the leaders of warring nations, and the other world leaders trying to find peaceful solution. May they be conscious of their responsibility for the welfare of people whose lands are being destroyed, and given wisdom and strength to speak out for good.

We bring our concern for people affected by war or persecution, praying that they may find some comfort and a way to rebuild their lives, thinking especially of refugees living in our home area.

And we think too of councillors trying to make ends meet, having to make cuts in essential services which mean harsh decisions.

We pray for people anxious about the cuts in welfare benefit,, or facing redundancy .

We lift to God people we know personally in particular need,

May we, and all those we have prayed for know the presence of the upholding Spirit of God. Amen

And we bring our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus taught us: Our Father....

It seems appropriate to finish with a favourite Passiontide hymn.

**Hymn StF 287 When I survey the wondrous cross** [https://youtu.be/4\\_fvFfPqjO4](https://youtu.be/4_fvFfPqjO4)

When I survey the wondrous Cross  
on which the Prince of Glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it Lord that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

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 .

His dying crimson like a robe  
spreads o'er his body on the tree;  
then am I dead to all the globe,  
and all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were an offering far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life , my all.

*Isaac Watts 1674-1748*

### **Blessing \*\*\*\***

May the love of the faithful Creator,  
The grace of the wounded healer,  
the joy of the challenging Spirit,  
The hope of the Three in One,  
surround us and encourage us  
today and for ever. Amen

\*copyright Catherine James

\*\* United Church Winchester Communion for Lent,  
adapted from Methodist Worship Book , Anne Lewin  
Words by the Way and Eggs and Ashes ( Wild Goose)

\*\*\* Borg and Crosnan : The Last Week

\*\*\*\* Kate McIlhagga: The Word in the World

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