

**COLLECT**

Almighty and everlasting God,  
 who in your tender love towards the  
 human race  
 sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ  
 to take upon him our flesh  
 and to suffer death upon the cross:  
 grant that we may follow the example of  
 his patience and humility,  
 and also be made partakers of his  
 resurrection;  
 through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
 who is alive and reigns with you,  
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, now and for ever.

**LITURGY OF THE PALMS**

**GOSPEL Matthew 21:1-11**

*Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.*

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

**PSALM**

**Psalm 118:1-2. 19-end (or 118:19-24)**

*R This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.*

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy endures for ever.  
 Let Israel now proclaim,  
 "His mercy endures for ever." **R**

Open to me the gates of righteousness;  
 that I may enter and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord;  
 the righteous shall enter through it. **R**

I will give thanks to you, for you answered me  
 and have become my salvation.  
 The stone which the builders rejected  
 has become the chief cornerstone. **R**

This is the Lord's doing,  
 and it is marvellous in our eyes.  
 This is the day that the Lord has made;  
 we will rejoice and be glad in it. **R**

Come, O Lord, and save us as we pray.  
 Come, Lord, send us now prosperity.  
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of  
 the Lord;  
 we bless you from the house of the Lord. **R**

The Lord is God; he has given us light;  
 link the pilgrims with cords  
 right to the horns of the altar.  
 You are my God and I will thank you;  
 you are my God and I will exalt you.  
 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
 his mercy endures for ever. **R**

**LITURGY OF THE PASSION**

**FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-9a**

*A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.*

The servant of the LORD said: The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

**PSALM Psalm 31:9-16 (or 31:9-18)**

*R Into your hands I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O God of truth.*

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in trouble;  
 my eye is consumed with sorrow,  
 my soul and my body also.  
 For my life is wasted with grief,  
 and my years with sighing;  
 my strength fails me because of my  
 affliction, and my bones are consumed. **R**

I have become a reproach to all my  
 enemies and even to my neighbours,  
 an object of dread to my acquaintances;  
 when they see me in the street they flee  
 from me. **R**

I am forgotten like one that is dead, out of  
 mind;  
 I have become like a broken vessel.  
 For I have heard the whispering of the  
 crowd; fear is on every side;  
 they scheme together against me,  
 and plot to take my life. **R**

But my trust is in you, O Lord.  
 I have said, "You are my God.  
 My times are in your hand;  
 deliver me from the hand of my enemies,  
 and from those who persecute me.  
 Make your face to shine upon your  
 servant,  
 and save me for your mercy's sake." **R**

**SECOND READING Philippians 2:5-11**

*A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.*

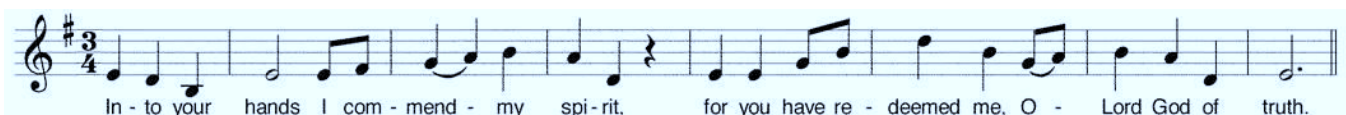
Let the same mind be in you that was  
 in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in  
 the form of God, did not regard equality  
 with God as something to be exploited,  
 but emptied himself, taking the form of  
 a slave, being born in human likeness.  
 And being found in human form, he  
 humbled himself and became obedient  
 to the point of death – even death on a  
 cross. Therefore God also highly exalted  
 him and gave him the name that is above  
 every name, so that at the name of Jesus  
 every knee should bend, in heaven and  
 on earth and under the earth, and every  
 tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is  
 Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**PASSION Matthew 26:14 – end of 27**

*Or Matthew 27:11-54*

**POST COMMUNION**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
 you humbled yourself in taking the form  
 of a servant,  
 and in obedience died on the cross for  
 our salvation:  
 give us the mind to follow you  
 and to proclaim you as Lord and King,  
 to the glory of God the Father.



# Sharing the message

Heather Smith *reflects on*  
Isaiah 50:4-9a

**D**on't shoot the messenger," the saying goes, but it is often the reaction of those who do not like the message that they are hearing. As Jesus knew, the message that God wants us to spread often finds a hostile reception. God gives us the tongue of a teacher, with words to sustain the weary, but the weary are suspicious and angry. Being sustained may involve letting go of something that is very dear, or of a long-held, greatly valued attitude. It becomes clear that words that at first seemed soothing have an unwelcome challenge or call to change.

On the first Palm Sunday the people welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. He was their king. But soon they were swayed by the views of the chief priests, who viewed Jesus as a threat. They could not understand that God's love is not a zero sum game and that nobody loses by embracing it.

If we speak out about God's love we will in all likelihood encounter hostility or disdain. At the very least we may find a



lack of comprehension. "You're not normal. You aren't motivated by the same things as other people," a work colleague told one Christian.

However hostile people are to the message that we bring, it's not possible to kill God's love. The resurrection proves it. Jesus may have submitted to death; that was his triumph, but death didn't stick. Resurrection was inevitable. 🍷

**Loving God, may we have courage to love others, no matter how hostile they are. Inspire us by the example of Jesus, who died at the hands of angry people, but rose again when love triumphed. Amen.**

## Leap into Lent

Ricarda Witcombe concludes her Lenten series.

This is Holy Week, and if we dare to walk its path, we will ponder the absolute depths of pain and fear and hold them before the absolute love of God. Holy Week is about honesty – it gives us a place to put all our pain. Maundy Thursday reminds us of the command to love one another. Good Friday makes us gaze on

the very worst that can happen in a human life. Holy Saturday takes us into emptiness. Sunday will draw us into the knowledge that death and pain are not where the story ends. This is an exhausting week, and we will be wise to live it slowly, perhaps using this prayer, from *Common Worship*:

Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of sin and the depth of your love:  
in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet all that we have and all that we are,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. 🍷

## Holy Week in Coventry Cathedral

by John Witcombe

Holy Week is one of the most important weeks of the year here. We gather in the choir stalls every evening at the beginning of the week for Compline, a beautiful simple service with a meditative address, held in the gathering dusk. Earlier in the day, we try to temper the cathedral's natural busyness, though not always successfully.

Throughout our activity we find ourselves caught up in the swelling chords of the passion narratives that frame the week through the liturgy.

By Thursday we are going more or less full throttle with large-scale services – the Chrism Mass, where clergy and others renew their vocational commitments, the washing of feet and the stripping of the altar. Then come the Good Friday penitential rites.

This liturgical busyness comes to a natural pause on Holy Saturday before we meet, just as dawn breaks over the ruins, for a service of baptism, Eucharist and confirmation early on Easter morning, to proclaim that "Christ is Risen!" 🍷

**“The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, ‘O God, forgive me,’ or ‘Help me.’**

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist and preacher