

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let us go back to Judea.’ ‘But Rabbi,’ they said, ‘a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?’

1

Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’”

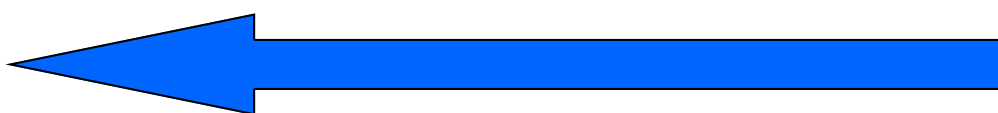
(John 11: 7, 8 & 16)



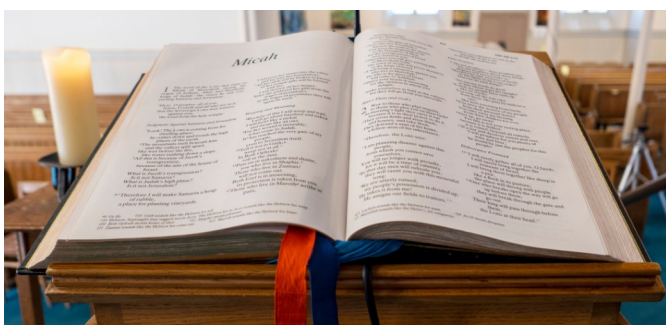
Jesus wanted to be in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, along with many other Jews who would be making the journey for the same purpose. For Jesus, it was dangerous—people were plotting to kill him. Thomas is often known as “Doubting Thomas” because he always seemed to want more information, more proof, but here he seems to have grasped something his fellow disciples haven’t: that whatever is going to happen to Jesus is somehow going to be right, and that they should surely be with him.

It can be difficult sometimes to follow Jesus, and in some countries dangerous, but if we have the courage we will discover that in him lies all our hope.

***Lord, forgive me when I doubt you.
Help me to follow you wherever you lead.
Fill me with hope for the future.***



to Panel 2 on the Tower door



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘ Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!’ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it.”
(John 12: 12-14)

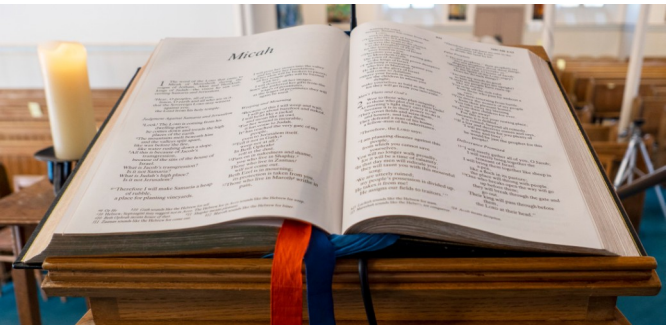
The crowd was keen to welcome God’s long-promised Messiah, but Jesus turned out not to be the sort of King they were looking for—he didn’t ride into the city on a war-horse, prepared to subdue all their enemies. Jesus was the King of Love, and his kingdom was one of justice and peace and joy. In the space of only five days they were shouting for him to be crucified. Yet here was a King who loved them sufficiently to die to save them from their sins—and they couldn’t or wouldn’t see it.



*Lord, help me to understand your sacrifice for me.
 Give me the strength to respond by living a life of love
 and working for justice and peace for all.*



to Panel 3 on the side door



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present rebuked her harshly. ‘Leave her alone,’ said Jesus. ‘Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.’”

(Mark 14: 3-6)

3



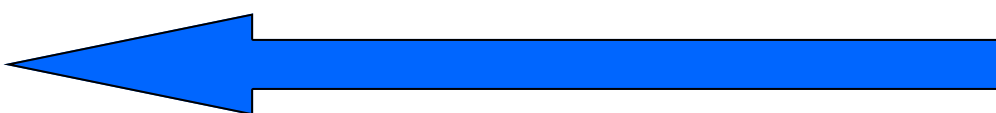
Have you ever broken a perfume bottle? The scent is almost overpowering. Imagine being round that table—probably outside in a courtyard in the warm still air. Suddenly the heady scent of expensive perfume takes over.

It was probably the most expensive thing she owned, that jar of perfume. All gone in one extravagant, exuberant gesture of love and thanksgiving. Clearly Jesus had transformed her life. Was it over the top?

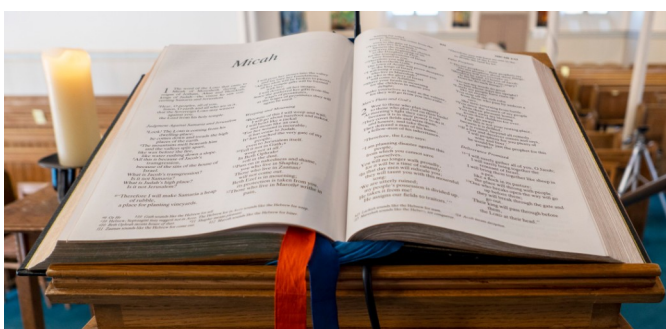
But then to give up your life the way Jesus was about to do to save us all was sacrificial love—over the top, you might say. We each need to ask ourselves— how can I respond?

***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.***

(From the hymn “When I survey the wondrous cross” by Isaac Watts 1674-1748)



to Panel 4 on the back door



THE WORD FOR TODAY

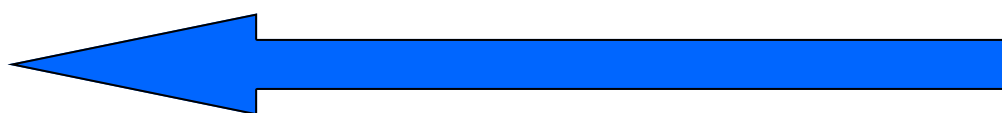
“And Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’”

(Luke 22: 19-20)

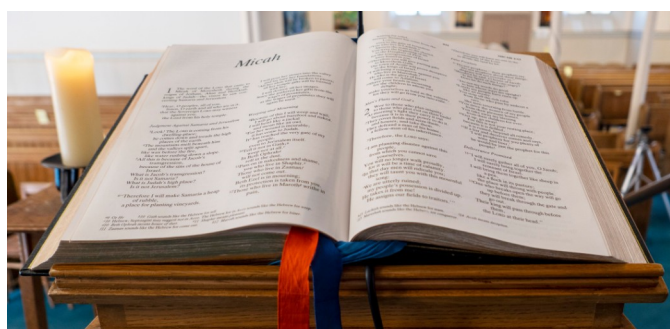
Bread and wine were part of the evening meal—they were everyday items in Jesus’ day. His followers were encouraged, whenever they ate together, to remember what Jesus had done for them—to remember that he had died to seal a new agreement between them and God. They had only to believe, and their sins would be forgiven and they would have eternal life. These words at the “Last Supper” which Jesus had with his disciples, are the origin of our communion service. We celebrated communion over Zoom during lockdown, using whatever bread and whatever drink we had to hand. The important thing is the remembering and the togetherness.



***Lord, never let me forget what you did for me on Good Friday.
Help me to treasure the times of communion,
which bind us to you and to fellow Christians past and present.***



to Panel 5 on the side door



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ‘Father if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

(Luke 22: 39-44)

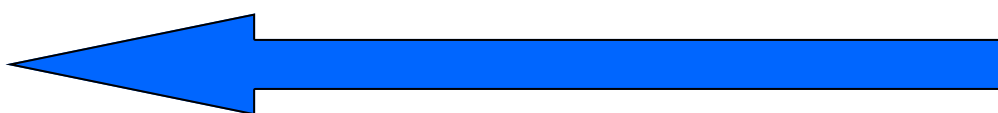
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Jesus was a 33-year-old man at the peak of his powers. He didn’t want to die, and it was torture just thinking about what was ahead. He knew this was why he had come to earth—God’s great plan to save the world was dependent on him. Perhaps God might change his mind? Find some other way? Obedient as always, Jesus defers to his Father’s will.

Given the strength he needs as a result of his prayer, he moves forward to his arrest.



***Lord, how can we thank you for your obedience and your sacrifice?
Teach us to keep close to God in prayer
and so to find everything we need.***



to Panel 6 on the wall



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

(John 19: 28-30)

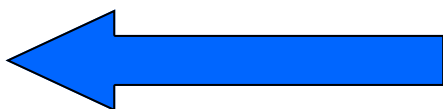
6

After his arrest late on Thursday, Jesus was tried by King Herod, by the High Priests, and by Pilate, the Roman Governor. He was flogged, mocked and finally crucified between two thieves, a most painful and degrading way to die. You would think there could be nothing “good” in all this for Jesus, yet his last words tell us otherwise. “It is finished” he said. He had completed the task God had sent him to do and he could now be re-united with his Father in Heaven.

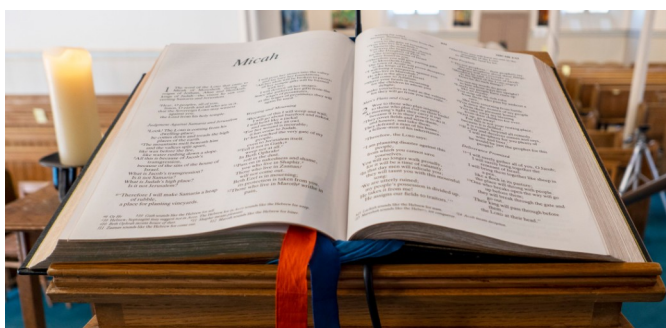
For us the good is our salvation and life for ever with our Lord. Amidst all the sadness we can truly call this “Good Friday”.



***Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life—I know that it is finished.
(from the song “How deep the Father’s love for us” by Stuart Townend, © 1995 Kingsway’s Thankyou Music)***



to Panel 7 on the Offering House near the gate



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.”

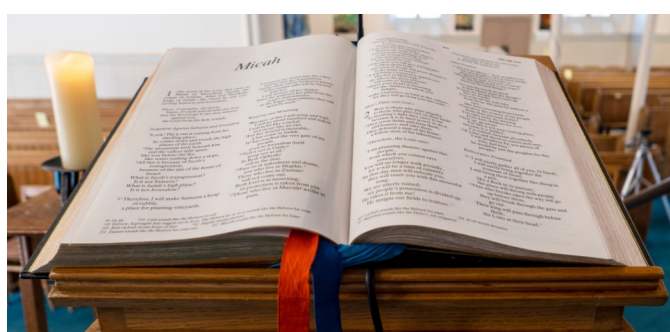
(Matthew 27: 57-60)

7



This is what his friends thought it was. They could do nothing on the Saturday as it was the Jewish Sabbath, and we can only imagine the depths of their despair. They had to wait until Sunday morning, the morning of the third day. It was worth the wait! If you return to this place on Easter Day or the days following you will be able to read what happened.

***Lord, to have Easter there had to be Good Friday.
Make me mindful in these days approaching Easter
of the depths of your love and sacrifice for me.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY

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