



THE WORD FOR TODAY

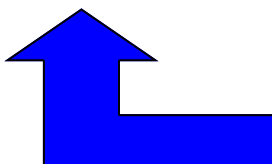
LENT—A JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

Lent is a time when we try to draw closer to Jesus and when we consciously try to spend more time looking at his word and thinking about what it means for us. The last part of Lent takes in Palm Sunday and Holy Week, leading up to Easter Day. The events of Holy Week take up a large part of the Gospels in our Bibles. This Word for Today picks out some of the momentous events of that time and speaks of their relevance to us today. As we look forward to Easter let's take time to think about the events leading up to it—we would not have Easter if we did not have Good Friday!

Follow the words of this passage round the church, beginning on the north wall of this little building.



The New International Version of the Bible, which we use, can be found under Bible Gateway on the internet. The whole “Word for Today” can be found on www.libertonkirk.net where you can also find previous “Words for Today”, with meditations and prayers on other Bible passages.



Turn immediately left to find the first Bible extract on the bench

“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 they should surely be with him, to support him as his friends; that this might mean death, but that somehow everything was going to be right.

It can be difficult sometimes to follow Jesus, daunting, and in some countries downright 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.***

(No. 2 is on the bench just round the corner of the church building you are looking at)



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)**

2



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. He rode in humbly on a donkey. 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.***

(Continue along this side of the church to find No. 3)



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)



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, some 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)

(Walk along the back of the church and turn right to find No. 4 on the Prayer Bench)



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)

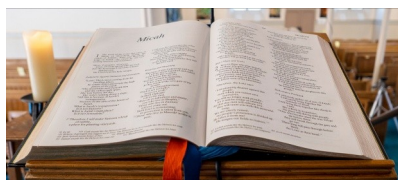
Bread and wine were part of the evening meal—they were everyday items in Jesus’ day. His followers were encouraged, whenever they ate together, to remember what Jesus had done for them—to remember that he had died to seal a new agreement between them and



God. They had only to believe, and their sins would be forgiven and they would have eternal life. Jesus spoke these words at the “Last Supper” which he had with his disciples before he was crucified, and they are the origin of our communion service. We celebrated communion over Zoom during lockdown, and used whatever bread and whatever drink we had to hand. The important thing is the remembering and the togetherness. At Liberton Kirk we welcome to Communion all who believe and trust in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

***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.***

(Turn left to find No. 5 on the bench at the side of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

5

“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)

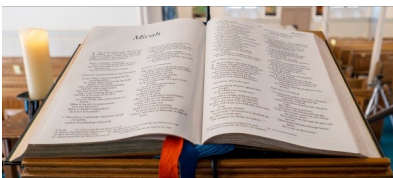
Jesus was a 33-year-old man at the peak of his powers. He didn’t want to die, and it was torture just thinking about what was ahead. He knew this was why he had come to earth—God’s great plan to save the world was dependent on him. Perhaps God might change his mind? Find some other way?

Obedient as always, Jesus defers to his Father’s will. The only way to get through this was through prayer. (So often we read that he prayed before he had something important to do.) Given the strength he needs as a result, 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.*

(Walk towards the front of the church and find No. 6 on the bench beside the cairn.)



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)

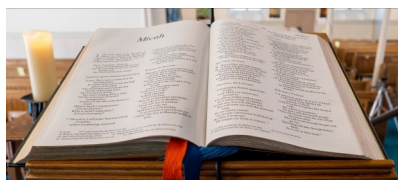
After his arrest late on Thursday, Jesus was tried by King Herod, by the High Priests, and by Pilate, the Roman Governor. He was flogged, mocked and finally crucified between two thieves, a most painful and degrading way to die. It was the day we call “Good Friday”. You would think there could be nothing “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. He had died so that we could be saved from our sins and be brought back to God.



For us the good is our salvation and the knowledge that we are God’s dearly loved children for always. Amidst all the sadness we can truly call this “Good Friday”.

***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)

(Walk round the corner of the church to find No. 7 on one of the benches)



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)



The end—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, to visit the tomb, where the women wanted to anoint his body. 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. Visit “the tomb” in the Offering House at the main gate.

*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.*

If anything you have read has prompted questions you would like to discuss, please contact John Young on 664 3067 or jyoung@churchofscotland.org.uk



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