

Transformation – NOW!
Passiontide

Take up thy cross

sung by St Martin's Voices

"Take up thy cross," the Saviour said,
"if thou wouldst my disciple be;
deny thyself, the world forsake
and humbly follow after me."

Take up thy cross; let not its weight
fill thy weak spirit with alarm;
His strength shall bear thy spirit up
and brace thy heart and nerve thine arm.

Take up thy cross, then, in His strength,
and calmly every danger brave;
'twill guide thee to a better home,
and lead to victory o'er the grave.

Take up thy cross, and follow Christ
nor think till death to lay it down;
for only he who bears the cross
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

To thee, great Lord, the One in Three,
all praise for evermore ascend:
O grant us in our home to see
the heavenly life that knows no end.

Charles William Everest (1814-1877)

Opening Prayer

(the alternative Collect for 5th Sunday of Lent)

Gracious Father,
you gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Bible Reading: Luke 23: 33-43 (NIV)

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Reflection: Mothers at the Cross

featuring Mary, the mother of Jesus and the mother of the penitent thief on the cross; exploring what the feelings of these two women may have been in the week leading up to the crucifixion of their sons.

Mary: Yes my love, I’m making bread again. We’re back in Jerusalem for Passover. You are here too, somewhere with your friends. You will have Passover with them, I think. You will be missed here – by me anyway. I wish I could see you.

MOT: They won’t let me see you. There’s no compassion for the mother of a thief. I tried my love – they wouldn’t let me through. So your last days will be spent with him – your ‘friend’. What comfort is he I wonder? Careless of his own life and careless of yours.

Mary: Ah, but I do love Passover. I love making the bread. It takes time, and I love that. It takes energy and effort, and I love that too. It reminds me of a time when I had some control, before I had to let you go.

MOT: I should never have let you go. You were safe here with me. But somehow I couldn't stop you. Your father had gone and part of you went with him.

Mary: When you were little you used to sit and watch me as I worked. I would work away at the dough and you would talk, of many things - normal boy stuff as well as higher spiritual things. Yes, the human and the divine were both there, right before my eyes, even then.

MOT: When you were little you would come to the synagogue. You would listen so intently and afterwards you would ask me questions and get so frustrated when I couldn't answer them. Yes, you had a temper, but you knew right from wrong.

Mary: Then, when you were grown up, you would work away at a table or a chair as I worked away at the bread. And still we would talk, about good and bad; your growing desire to serve - you couldn't hide your excitement when you knew your time was coming. And then, when your dear father died, we would talk away our grief. You were such a comfort to me then.

MOT: And when your father left us, everything changed. You had longed for his attention and his affirmation, but there was nothing in him to give. He took the easy way out and left you thinking you should do the same. You looked for someone else to impress, and he was easily found. Took you under his wing and led you down a different path of violence and stealing.

Mary: So now I still talk to you as I make bread; foolishly perhaps, I imagine you listening somewhere.

MOT: Foolishly, I would imagine you wanting to come home.

Mary: I don't see you much now – you have so much to do – and I wonder if you ever think of me, making bread.

MOT: Did you ever think of me waiting here?

Mary: You did say, when you were out in the wilderness, looking at the rocks around you and feeling the ache in your stomach, all you could think about was my bread.

MOT: Did you think of me at all out in the wilderness, with your friend, waiting for your next victims? Did you think of those days in the synagogue?

Mary: Do you have time to think of me at all – maybe not?

MOT: Are you scared – sitting there – waiting to die?

Mary: But I'm still your mother.

MOT: I'm still your mother.

Mary: And if you were here now, I'd tell you to be careful.

MOT: I'd tell you that I'm sorry for not being stronger.

Mary: I'd tell you to watch out for those people, powerful people, who resent you and the attention you are getting.

MOT: I'd tell you that it's not too late.

Mary: But I'd tell you how proud I was too – proud of the man you are.

MOT: I'd tell you it's not too late to be the man you really are – not the one that others have made you.

Mary: A man who brings comfort and healing with a touch or a word.

MOT: A man who knows truth when he sees it.

Mary: May God protect you my love.

MOT: May God have mercy on your soul.

*From 'Touching the Cloak'
by Jackie Mouradian*

Love is his word, love is his way

sung by St Martin's Voices

Love is his word, love is his way,
feasting with all, fasting alone,
living and dying, rising again,
love, only love, is his way.

*Richer than gold is the love of my Lord:
better than splendour and wealth.*

Love is his news, love is his name,
we are his own, chosen and called,
family, brethren, cousins and kin.
Love, only love, is his name.

Chorus

Love is his name, love is his law.
Hear his command, all who are his:
'Love one another, I have loved you.'
Love, only love, is his law.

Chorus

Love is his law, love is his word:
love of the Lord, Father and Word,
love of the Spirit, God ever one,
love, only love, is his word.

Chorus

Luke Connaughton (1917-1979)
© McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd

Prayers:

You call us to be your voices in this world
and we stay silent.

You call us to be your hands in this world
and we keep them hidden.

You call us to be your feet in this world
and we go our own way.

When we meet those who are doubting
and say nothing, forgive us.

When we meet those who need your touch
and do nothing, forgive us.

When we are called to take up your cross
and carry nothing, forgive us.

Breathe life into these bones
bring freedom to these lives
that we might declare
with heart and soul and voice
that you are our Lord and our God. **Amen**

© John Birch

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children,
at risk and in fear, that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Amen

*Archbishops of Canterbury and York
©Church of England*

Mary Sumner's Prayer

**All this day, O Lord,
let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken,
whether through the word I speak,
the prayer I breathe,
or the life I live.**

Amen

All glory, laud, and honour
sung by St Martin's Voices

*All glory, laud and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.*

Thou art the King of Israel,
thou David's royal Son,
who in the Lord's name comest,
the King and blessed one:

Refrain

The company of angels
are praising thee on high,
and mortal men and all things
created make reply:

Refrain

The people of the Hebrews
with palms before thee went:
our praise and prayer and anthems
before thee we present:

Refrain

To thee before thy passion
they sang their hymns of praise:
to thee now high exalted
our melody we raise:

Refrain

Thou didst accept their praises,
accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good delightest,
thou good and gracious King:

Refrain

*Theodulf of Orleans (c.750-821)
translated by John M Neale (1818-1866)*

Blessing

By the Rt Revd Mark Ashcroft, Bishop of Bolton

So now may the Father,
who so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
bring you by faith to his eternal life.

May the Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of his great love for us accepted the cup of sacrifice
in obedience to the Father's will, keep you steadfast as you
walk with him in the way of the cross.

May the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us in our service and in
our suffering that we may share the glory of eternal life,
set your hearts and minds on life and peace.

So may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and
the Holy Spirit rest upon you and all whom you love this day
and always.

Amen

So let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Thank you for joining in with Thursday Prayers.

Choral music: The Church of England St Martin in the Fields

Material: as stated

Theme music: Catherine Hilton

Theme image: Aarn Giri on Unsplash.com

Background: Wesley Tingey on Unsplash.com

Readers: Ian Butterworth, Dan Lloyd, Lisa & Dulcie Lloyd,
Margaret Shewring, Catherine Hilton, Barbara Taylor

CCLI: 5097385

Next Thursday Prayers will be on 12th May 2022