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LENT 6B

24th March 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Today is the last Sunday of Lent, at the beginning of Holy Week. Over the next few days, Christians all around the world will be following the story of Jesus' final days – listening again for what this story has to say to us today.

As you prepare for this journey, let us return to All We Can's Lent resources and listen to the quiet invitation to rest. Perhaps, this Lent, you are called to do 'nothing', to say 'no', to put something down. And so, turn to God in prayer.

Lord of all,

Thank you that you invite me to rest. Thank you for weaving sabbath into the very fabric of creation, and for making each of us to lie down in green pastures. Thank you that I do not have to do everything to earn your love.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

Save me, Lord, from thinking that everything relies on me and my efforts. Help me to trust in your Spirit's guidance, not only my own experience or analysis. Spur me to action where it is needed, and lead me to rest when it is not.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

I am sorry for the times when I have tried to do too much. Where I have burnt myself out, or where I have been doing things that would be better left to others. Help me to have the courage to know when to step back, as well as when to step up.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

Thank you, God, that you hold all of creation in your hand. That while you choose to involve me in the building of your Kingdom, the ultimate work of reconciliation is already achieved for everyone by your Son. May I rest in what has already been achieved for me and the world.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do.

Amen.

You may wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Readings: Mark 14:1-15:47 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Today we reflect on the cost of discipleship – does that cost put you off, or is it something you can embrace? As you journey through the intense narrative of Mark 14:1-15:47, you

may have recognised the way that this passage encapsulates the profound sacrifice and radical love of our Lord Jesus Christ. In these verses, we witness the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry: his betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and ultimately, his resurrection. This is a slightly longer reading than we would usually set for a Sunday service, but it is helpful to delve into this narrative and discover how it challenges and inspires us to embrace the cost of discipleship.

The Cost of Authenticity:

Jesus' unyielding authenticity in the face of opposition serves as a poignant reminder of the cost of discipleship. As followers of Christ, we are called to embody authenticity, even when it leads to discomfort or persecution. One of the challenges of our discipleship is to wrestle with what this looks like for each of us, in our own lives and communities. How am I authentically me? How does that authenticity reflect the very best version of myself?

The Cost of Love:

Jesus' radical love knows no bounds. He willingly endures betrayal, abandonment, and crucifixion out of love for humanity. As Christians, we are called to embody this radical love—love that transcends boundaries, embraces diversity, and seeks justice for all. How does Jesus' love compel us to love others sacrificially, even when it's difficult? Where do you notice love at work this week? Can you be attentive, and join in?

The Cost of Justice:

Jesus' ministry was marked by a commitment to justice and liberation for the oppressed. His confrontation with religious and political authorities highlights the tension between the kingdom of God and the powers of this world. As followers of Christ, we are called to work towards justice and liberation for all marginalised and oppressed communities.

That is about our own families and local neighbourhoods, but it's also about politics, charity, how we shop, how we bank, what kind of car we drive (or whether we drive one at all).

Spend some time today thinking about the injustice that makes you angry, and how you can respond.

As you reflect on the narrative of Jesus' passion and resurrection, may you be challenged and inspired to embrace the cost of discipleship. May you embody authenticity, radical love and justice in your life and in the places where you are known. May you go forth from this place, empowered by the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice, and may your life be a testament to the radical love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

- How does Jesus' authenticity in the face of opposition challenge us to live more authentically in our own lives and in our communities?
- In what ways can we embody Jesus' radical love—love that transcends boundaries, embraces diversity, and seeks justice for all—in our interactions with others and in our advocacy for marginalised communities?
- Reflecting on Jesus' pursuit of justice and liberation for the oppressed, how can we confront systems of oppression and advocate for the marginalised in our society today?

Responding in music

Today is also Palm Sunday, the day we celebrate and mark Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, on the back of a donkey. You might like to sing along to one or more of these Palm Sunday hymns to help you reflect on what this day in Jesus' ministry might mean.

265 STF – Ride on, ride on in majesty!

44 STF – Come on and celebrate

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the King

Responding in prayer

This Holy Week is a time to turn again to prayer, to listen for the still small voice of God in your own life, as you make space.

Spend some time in stillness, simply reflecting on imagining Jesus in the midst of your town or community, and then again in the corridors of power in our society.

What speaks to you? Reflect with God about what you are noticing.

[Give yourself space to notice].

Think about what seem to be the biggest issues about society at the moment? What is bothering you?

Spend some time in prayerful contemplation asking: are you being influenced by empire or God's way?

[Give yourself space to reflect].

At some point this week, find a time to pray with someone – either in person or on the phone. Share your prayers from these prayer prompts or other things that are on your heart, and you might like to pray for each other's prayer points and concerns.

Close with this prayer:

Lord, you hear all of our prayers – and you know the situations and concerns we have named, here in our own communities and lives, and in the wider world. We offer all our prayers – spoken and unspoken – to you. Amen.

Blessing

Today, you will have the opportunity to share something of God's love – may you seize it.

Today, you will find a glimpse of the glory of heaven, on earth – may you notice it.

Today, you will be presented with the possibility of challenging injustice around you or in the world – may you have the courage to take it.

Today, the Spirit of God will go with you – may you welcome Her.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 25th March

Look at the palm of your hand. Consider the story of Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey before his crucifixion and the crowds welcomed him. Think of five ways, one for each finger, that you welcome Jesus into your life?

Tuesday 26th March

Pour a glass of water. Think about the things you do that get in the way of your relationship with God. You might think it muddies the water of your life, but God forgives us for all these things, and offers us living water. Drink some of the water and give thanks for the way God reaches out to you with love and forgiveness.

Wednesday 27th March

You are loved. Just as you are, and completely.

Today, spend time trying to accept this fundamental and important truth: God loves you.

Thursday 28th March

God of all creation, I worship you.

You know me - what I need, what I rejoice in, what I'm nervous about.

You see me – as the unique individual you created with all my little habits and characteristics.

You hear me – when I pray aloud or silently.

You meet me – here and now and I am content. Amen

Wonder to yourself if you are really able to say the words. Imagine what it would be like to hear someone else say them for you. Notice how you feel as you read them. Take time to tell God what you've discovered.

Friday 29th March

God of the whole earth,

Today I pray for refugees and exiles all around the world,

Those who are living in fear and have fled the place they call home.

Show me how to show love to those in need,

To be a place of sanctuary to all who encounter me,

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Saturday 30th March

Think about the fruits of the spirit. Pick one of them that you don't feel you are very good at, or that needs some intentional work. Spend some time praying about this, and then practice it for a whole day in all you do.