

Palm Sunday

To

Easter

A Time of Reflection



~ Jesus in the Garden, Gethsemene Grotto
Photo: Deborah Mitchell, St. Thomas Episcopal

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

~Deuteronomy 6:6

God, whose Word has broken into the world,
you are always with me
to hear what I have to say.
Quiet my mind so that I can
hear your Holy Word

Prepare my heart to hear our stories
of call and return,
failure and mercy,
hurt and healing,
peril and safety.

Stories of when we have turned away,
Stories of your steadfast love.

And more than hearing your Word,
Write them on my heart,
Give me the grace to know and live them.
Amen.

~Call On Me, A Prayer Book for Young People

Palm Sunday to Easter

Liturgically, Holy Week is a time to tug on the heart strings. Jesus, the man, entered Jerusalem with celebration; Jesus, the master and teacher became the servant; Jesus, the savior, hung upon the cross, died, was buried, descended to the dead, and rose in resurrection. We are an Easter people for it is the resurrection which makes Christianity different than other religions. However, resurrection comes with a cost – death. Jesus suffered a mortal death at the end but one could consider his baptism by John a symbol of resurrection, death to the man he was before to become the teacher, healer, savior after his time in the wilderness.

When have you experienced resurrection, new life, new beginnings?

An Invitation to Meditation and Prayer

Meditation, as defined by Webster, is a devotional exercise of or leading to contemplation. Education for Ministry students from St. Stephen's and St. Philip's Episcopal Churches invite you to explore the practice of meditation via their offerings on the readings assigned for Holy Week, Year C.

Prayer, as defined by Webster, has two meanings. A reverent petition made to God; an act of communion with God such as in devotion, confession, praise, or thanksgiving. A good friend of mine refers to prayer as that which God calls from us, our realization on what we should focus. Prayer can involve words of petition, it can involve motion or silence. Silence is the hard part; yet, it is in silence that we can hear that "still small voice of God."

I invite you to meditation, to prayer of words, and into a few moments (or more) of silence, as a practice for this final week of Lent. Remember to finish the book on Easter day as there is a wonderful reflection and something of celebration. And on that day we all shall proclaim, "The Lord is Risen, The Lord is Risen Indeed."

May the words of our writings and the meditations of our hearts lead you into a deeper relationship with the one that calls us all. Amen.

~Krisan Lamberti

Here am I, Lord,
I've come to do Your will.
Here am I, Lord,
In Your presence I am still.

~Celtic Daily Prayer

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Palm Sunday

Liturgy of the Palms

Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29

Luke 19:28-40

Liturgy of the Word

Psalms 11:9-16

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14-23:56 or 23:1-49



On Palm Sunday we start our worship service in the St. Philip's courtyard, waving our palm fronds and singing a song of praise and joy. We move to the sanctuary and the service begins with a reading of the Passion of St. John. Members of the congregation read the words of the participants in the story. We, like the people who were in Jerusalem during that fateful time, start by praising and glorifying Christ and end by calling for his death.

Christ knew that His time was at hand. He knew that the chief priests and scribes were looking for a way to kill Him ever since He raised Lazarus from the dead. What was this poor, low born, humble man thinking as he rode His donkey through the streets of Jerusalem? Was He angry at the people for failing to see who He really was? Was He contemptuous of their hypocrisy? He had preached salvation and eternal life to these people; healed their sick and deranged; fed them with bread and fish. He loved them. And He knew, on the day that the multitudes in Jerusalem were proclaiming Him, that in five days time these same people would be calling for Him to die a shameful, humiliating death. How could He bear this? How could He accept that this was His Father's will? And yet, He did.



~Kay Seibert



Invitation to Silence



Dearest Lord in Heaven, who died on the cross for our sins. May we always remember that fame and success as the world measures it are fleeting and unsubstantial. May we be reminded that the people cheering us today may be calling for our death in just a few days time. Our treasure must lie in heaven. May we be prepared to walk past the temptations of this earth and be reconciled to the knowledge that eternal life comes only through death. Amen.



Prayer of Awareness

It is in the depths of life that we find you
At the heart of this moment
At the center of our soul
Deep in the earth and its eternal stirrings.
You are the Ground of all being
The Well-Spring of time
Womb of the earth
The Seed-Force of stars.
And so this day
we wait
not for blessings from afar
but for You
the very Soil of our soul
the first Breath of day.

~John Philip Newell
Praying with the Earth
Adapted

Monday

Psalms 36:5-11

Isaiah 42:1-9

Hebrews 9:11-15

John 12:1-11

When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

~Hebrews 9:11-14



Instead of the sacrificial offerings of goats, calves, and bulls for sins and sinful behavior, Jesus was intended to become the last sacrificial offering for all time to be killed for atonement purposes.

Jesus' crucifixion was intended to end sacrifices of innocent animals and more for all eternity - to atone for human failings.

As a modern people then, how do we atone? How should we atone? Sacrifice? In light of the sacrifices we read about in the Bible, I'm ashamed of my superficial and tiny Lenten sacrifice. Stopping and reflecting on the Bible and history it makes me realize just how small I really am. And I honestly question what more I can do, other than offer more of myself to others. Which is all one really has, when it comes right down to it.

~Chris Faiella



Invitation to Silence



God leads the humble in what is right.

Psalms 25:9

Silence

The Son of Humankind came not to be served but to serve.

Matthew 20:28

Silence

God has brought you forth from the earth like a plant

And to the earth God will restore you.

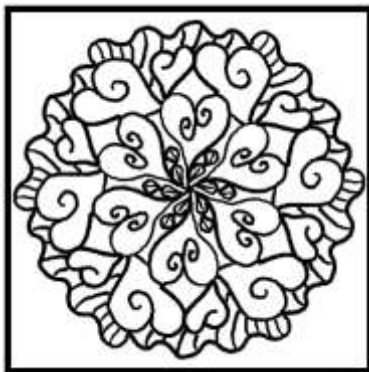
Quran – Noah 71:17-18

Silence

Enrich, Lord, heart,
hands, mouth in me
with faith, with hope
and charity,
that I may run, rise,
rest in Thee.

~John Philip Newell, *Praying with the Earth*

~George Herbert, *Celtic Daily Prayer*



Tuesday

Psalms 71:1-14

Isaiah 49:1-7

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' But I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God.'

~Isaiah 49:1-4



How wonderfully comforting, and also more than a little frightening to read these verses. *From my birth, and even before, I was known by God, made for a reason, and given an assigned purpose.*

How could God know that this odd miraculous being that is me would be able to carry out such work? Even I myself do not realize what I am to do.

My doubts are not important. God shows what is to be done. God knows the outcome. It is not for me to know, or even see the finish.

I praise God despite my doubts.

*I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the Lord,
and my reward with my God.*

~Chris Steinmetz



Invitation to Silence



May I be equal to Your hope of me.
If I am weak,
I ask that You send only what I can bear.
If I am strong,
May I shrink from no testing
that shall yield increase of strength
or win security for my spirit.

I trust in Thee, O Lord.
I say, 'Thou art my God.
My times are in Thy hand,
My times are in Thy hand.'
Amen.

~Celtic Daily Prayer



Wednesday

Psalms 70

Hebrews 12:1-3

Isaiah 50:4-9a

John 13:21-32

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 awakens—awakens 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? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

~Isaiah 50:4-9a

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.' The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.' Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival'; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

~John 13:21-32



In Isaiah, the prophet says that God wakens his ears to listen; that God opens his ears and he has not turned away or been rebellious. Because of God's words, he has offered his back to those who beat him. He does not hide his face from those who mock him or spit on him. Because God helped him, he will not be disgraced. Because it is the Lord who helps him, he will not be put to shame. The God who vindicates is near. It is the Sovereign Lord who helps. Who will accuse him? Who will condemn him?

In the Gospel of John, during the Passover meal, Jesus is troubled because one of the twelve apostles will betray him. Peter asked who would do such a thing? Jesus responds by announcing that He would give a piece of bread, dipped in a dish to the betrayer. When Jesus gave the piece of bread to Judas Iscariot, Satan entered Judas and he left the dinner and went into the night. The other apostles did not understand what was happening.

The juxtaposition of these two readings is jarring. On the one hand, Isaiah says that his strength comes from the words God whispers to him. Because he listens to God, he will not be disgraced. He will suffer beatings, mocking, disgrace, and shame but he will prevail. On the other hand, Judas, who has been a part of Christ's ministry from the beginning, will betray Jesus to the Pharisees and will cause Jesus' suffering and death. Peter will go on to deny Jesus three times that same night.

Are we like the prophet Isaiah, strengthened by the words whispered by God into our ears and able to suffer all? Or, are we like Judas, corrupted by Satan, ready to betray Jesus for a few pieces of silver?

The fact is, while few of us will betray Jesus in the dramatic actions of Judas, we all betray or deny Jesus in small, everyday ways. We do not love others as Jesus commands us to do. We glorify worldly, material things. We remain silent in the face of injustice. We are arrogant and we are rebellious. We put our faith in ourselves, and not in our Lord. We do not listen to the words whispered in our ears.

Now is the time to stop and really hear what God is saying to us. Now is the time for recommitment to live our lives in the way of the Lord. Now is the time to say boldly that we are followers of Christ.

God is whispering in our ears. Are we listening? Are you listening?

~Kay Seibert



Invitation to Silence



Lord, may your Holy Spirit dwell within us and among us that we might remember to hope in your word, to heed your instruction, and so delight in your statutes. Grant us humility to obey everything you have commanded us. Amen.

Lord, we know that you often answer our prayers in mysterious and stunning ways. Make us sensitive to your Spirit that we might recognize your gentle nudge. And help us cultivate lives that are always ready to respond to your call. Form us into people who are truly ready to become the change we want to see. Amen.

~Common Prayer
A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals



~Jesus in the Garden
Grotto, Garden of Gethsemane
Photo: Deborah Mitchell, St. Thomas

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

~John 13:1-17, 31b-35



Imagine the bewilderment of the disciples when Jesus gets up from the table, removes his robe, and grabs a towel and basin. Before their eyes he

transforms from leader to servant and they are aghast. It seems our God delights in turning human expectations on its head: the small boy David kills the Giant; Moses, a stuttering orphan leads the people out of bondage; Sarah in her old age conceives a nation; the Messiah born to a simple family. Nothing seems according to our understanding of power and "how the world works." And here is Jesus, washing the feet of those who served him, and here are the disciples perplexed, again. *"You do not understand now, but later you will."*

I am struck by the tenderness of this passage. Jesus calls the disciples "little children" not in a condescending way but as a dying parent might actually speak to a child. "Children, take care of each other because I won't be here to take care of you. I won't stop you fighting and I will not be here to help you make the right choices. So love each other and remember how I have loved you." Jesus prepares the disciples for his departure as he calls them to their new roll.

In the Exodus reading we are told of the preparations the people must make for the first Passover. Among the other things the people are told to put blood on the *"two doorposts and the lintel of the houses"* (12:7) so that their homes will be passed over. God says *"the blood shall be a sign,"* that is, God will know to who his people are by this sign. And here, on this new Passover Jesus gives us a new sign by which all will know to whom we belong: that we love one another as he has loved us. Again we are faced with an unexpected twist. Love replaces blood as the New Sign. It is *"by this everyone will know that you are my disciples."*

~Laura Collins



Invitation to Silence



Lord Jesus, wash my feet. Let me know your Love in this loving, cleansing act. Though I might not always understand why, direct my heart, that my actions will be a sign to the world that I am yours. Amen





God, you never fail to dazzle us with your grace and mercy. We pray for the boldness to await the fulfillment of life that you promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

~Common Prayer
A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals



Call/Response

What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.

Psalms 116: 12, 17

Good Friday

Psalms 22

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9

John 18:1–19:42

So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, 'For whom are you looking?' They answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus replied, 'I am he.' Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard. The woman said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing round it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them.

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world.' When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?'

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, 'You are not also one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with him?' Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?' They answered, 'If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.'

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My

kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, 'I find no case against him. You have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' They shouted in reply, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas was a bandit.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face.

Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.' The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.' Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever.

He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.'

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.' Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier.

They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.'

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

~John 18:3-5a, 10-11, 13, 15a, 17-18, 19-20a, 22-23, 25-27,
28a, 29-30, 33, 35b-40, 19:1-9, 12-18, 23-24a, 25, 28-30



In reading John's gospel account visions of "Jesus Christ Superstar" paraded through my head. Sadness, aloneness, great sorrow, abandonment, entrapment, disbelief, fear, utter grief, suffering, forgiveness, absolution, and obedience all jumped for attention and blended together. It is an eerie almost surreal thought that these emotions can blend together both separately among the players and within the man Jesus. Yet in this reading of the passion, that great musical of salvation, they do.

I wonder, where are you in this story?

~Debbie Roncallo



Lord, help us to show kindness and unrivaled hospitality as the natural extension of our commitment to you. Use us to bring hope and comfort to the abandoned and forsaken corners of your creation. Amen.

~Common Prayer
A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals



Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications,

with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

~Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9



Hebrews shares another reality of the cross and the life of Jesus: one of passion, of service, and of obedience. It reminds us that Jesus the Messiah came as one on a mission, the biggest mission trip EVER conceived. There was a job to do and Jesus did it, completely. He lived as we live, knows the pangs of the body and of emotions. Jesus calls us forward through all of our thoughts, feelings, triumphs, and disappointments to remember that we have been served and we now must be servants. He set the example we are to follow.

How? How are you, or I, to serve God? Thankfully we each have different gifts, we are born with natural talents. We, unlike Jesus, do not have to do it all – we just have to do our part. So if you are good at talking, greet others in Christ; if you are good at home-making, the altar guild, bakers, or hospitality committee could use you; if you are good at sharing your thoughts prayerfully and coming up with fresh ideas maybe you should teach, lead a small group, or consider ordination. There is lots to be done in the kingdom.

Where does your passion lie? Because there lies your call to serve one another as you have been served.

~Krisan Lamberti



Invitation to Silence



Lord, in our efforts to serve, help us be true to who we are in you. Make us see and understand the gifts and talents you have given us, and give us courage to use them for the building up of your kingdom. Amen.

~Common Prayer

A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals

Holy Saturday

Psalms 31:1-4, 15-16

Job 14:1-14 or Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

1 Peter 4:1-8

Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

~The Great Vigil. *BCP*, Page 291, Prayer



"...and that all things are being brought to perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

What this verse in our *BCP* says to me is that from the beginning, humankind and the human concept of God and His creation have been in a process of "*being brought to perfection*". Where we are now on the continuum is unknown, and where we will be 10,000 years from now is known only by God. We do know that as we moved through the centuries of the Old Testament, our "understanding" of God evolved, but often in ways that left us bewildered by the many Faces of God that we encountered. We saw God as the God of Creation, of Laws, of Patience, of Vengeance, of Deliverance, of Punishment, of Jealousy, of Forgiveness, of Harshness, of War, of Tenderness, of Atrocity, of Holiness, of Mystery — a God so Awesome and Fearsome that it was only safe to access him through priests and in the sanctity of the Temple.

Perhaps the God that Hebrew Scripture writers and prophets were describing was not their revelations of the "face and character of God", but their own reflection in a mirror — the "face and character of humans" attempting to describe God through their own sinful perspective. Humans, who were capable of all the harsh characteristics we attributed to God. We concluded that since we were made in His image, He must be like us. What egos we humans have! We, less than an atomic spec on the Body of God. We made Him in our image!

God saw that we were getting it wrong, and He came in the body of Christ, to change that — bringing us toward a more perfect understanding of God and our relationship to Him. Jesus revealed that He is a God of love, and that there are only two things we have to do as we "*are being brought to perfection*": Love God and Love Each Other. Jesus also taught that we do not need an intercessor in terms of a priest or a "temple" to approach God. God wants a personal relationship with us. We can call on God directly in our prayers and God will always be there, patiently waiting and listening for us.

Jesus revealed a God who sheds tears when we are in pain, forgives when we are undeserving, enjoys our love for Him, wants us to be good stewards of His creation, expects us to care for our poor and disadvantaged, sees into our hearts, lacks patience with our hypocrisy. He taught us to pray for *His Will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*. He sent a Comforter in the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, "*to bring us to perfection.*" Look around today's world and it is obvious that we are currently a long way from that "perfection" state of being, but I confidently believe that God has set us on that course, and that mankind will one day arrive there by the Grace of God—1,000, 10,000, 100,000, or a million years from now. God is patient. We will be perfected. He will come again. And there will be no space between Heaven and Earth.

~Randy Litten



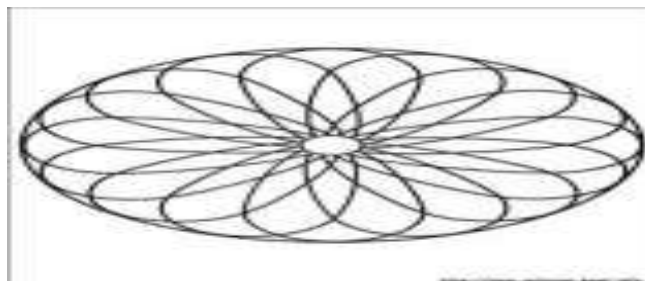
Invitation to Silence



Gracious God, by your Son, Jesus Christ, you call us forth from sin and into the baptism of new life. Help us work out our salvation with the fear and trembling necessary for any genuine disciple. Forgive us when we imagine that you are done with your re-creative work in us. Amen.

~Common Prayer

A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals



Easter Day

Principal Service

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

John 20:1-18 *or* Luke 24:1-12

Acts 10:34-43 *or* Isaiah 65:17-25

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 *or* Acts 10:34-43

Evening Service

Psalm 114

Isaiah 25:6-9

1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

Luke 24:13-49



Easter Is Love

We have all heard in so many sermons, and from so many preachers and ministers that "God is Love". But lets flip that phrase. Love Is God.

So, let us consider this.

We all have friends we love. We all have hurt as a result of love. We all have loved so much it brought us to great joy or, brought us to our knees. Have you ever feared for love? Have you ever loved so much it brought you to tears of pain or grief? Have you ever had the heartbreaking, empty, vacant, lost feeling of a deceased loved one? Have you ever had the confused, empty, vacant feeling of a love lost? Have you ever tried to convince someone of your love? Have you ever tried to convince a world of people of your love?

Deeply loving, dearly loving, loving to the very core of your being. Love strong enough to offer up your only son to horrible pain, suffering, and death.

Love really is an incredibly powerful force. It has given mothers incredible physical strength. It has given men incredible emotional strength. Of course this is not exclusive to either gender. It just gives all people incredible purpose and motivation. Can we even imagine how it drove Jesus?

Love has given all kinds of people incredible motivation and energy. So now, imagine it as a collective force. Imagine, with that collective force of love energy what we could accomplish for every living person.

What has love moved each of us to do? How has it motivated us? Changed us? Energized us? How has it made us better people? Imagine it as a whole world moved in the same direction. It starts with one person.

Love IS God. Love IS Jesus. And it can only be said that loving is Godly. Easter is Love.

~Chris Faiella



Invitation to Silence



Love's redeeming work is done,
fought the fight, the battle won.
Death in vain forbids him rise;
Christ has opened paradise.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King;
where, O death is now thy sting?
Once he died our souls to save,
where thy victory, O Grave?
Alleluia, alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led,
following our exalted Head;
made like him, like him we rise,
ours the cross, the grave, the skies.
Alleluia, alleluia!

~ The Hymnal 1982,
according to the use of The Episcopal Church,
The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1985,
The Church Pension Fund

He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said.

~Matthew 28:6a



Alleluia! You have been risen! Alleluia!

It is a mystery.

You were nailed on a cross.

You died.

They put you in a tomb and sealed the door.

It is a mystery.

The tomb is now empty.

You are alive.

Death is nothing to you.

It is a mystery.

You have opened a door for me.

Continue to show me the way to God.

Help me remember the joy of this day.

Alleluia! You have risen. Alleluia!

~Call On Me, A Prayer Book for Young People



~Chakra-vyuha Labyrinth
India