

Lent and Easter

the world's worst week

AIM

Some bible and prayer material to help you to reflect on the beginning of Holy Week

INTRODUCTION

We are entering what is one of the most difficult, darkest periods of the church year.

We know that at the end of this week we will have cause for celebration – but we also know that our celebration will be empty and just about meaningless unless we first walk with Jesus through the fear and the betrayal and the pain of Holy Week.

And Palm Sunday itself, properly has a hollow ring to it because it introduces us to some of the most unacceptable aspects of human behaviour, to which, when we're being honest with ourselves, we know we are all only too prone. Perhaps our weakness and our failure, our fear and maybe even our cowardice, is not cast in such strong colours nor in such stark relief as that of the religious authorities of Jesus day nor of his deserting disciples.

Nevertheless, within ourselves, it's not too difficult to discover, even to our horror, shadows and reflections of such behaviour.

Bible Reflection

Bible: Read and reflect on the following sections of Mark's gospel: Mark 11¹⁻¹¹, Mark 14¹⁻⁸, Psalm 31⁹⁻¹⁶

All the gospel writers say that Jesus knows what's going to happen towards the end of the week;

- that he knows Judas will betray him, that all the disciples will run away, that only one or two will be left looking on helplessly as he suffers and dies – and he knows that it's not only a physical death that he faces but that his very spirit will be rent in two, even like the veil in the temple.

How can anyone face up to such heartbreak?

You know as well as I do, the pain when friends hurt you, when life just seems so tough and unfair and the demands being made on you just cascade down and down and down and you wonder if you're ever going to be able to stand up and walk freely ever again. Imagine, then, how Jesus must have felt as he enters this week:

- how his heart must have hung heavy the sickness in his stomach, the sleepless nights and anxious days – he was a human being just as given to all the human emotions that the rest of us have.

It's very easy to make Jesus into some kind of superhero who tackles everything like some kind of divine Arnold Swarzenheger – but he wasn't like that.

Lent and Easter

the world's worst week

When he came to earth he gave up many of his divine privileges in order to experience life as we do – with all its glory and all its frustration and limitation –

so he was a real person going to the cross –
he really felt everything that was happening to him:

- he knew the heartache of being deserted by friends and the physical pain of brutality and the fear of dereliction.
How could he know that all this was going to happen and still keep on his chosen course?

It's said that love kept him on the cross, love for me and love for you.

Love was his motivation.

Whatever he did was done for a love that knew no bounds.

He could find the courage to face the horror because he knew God, he trusted God; like the Psalmist, throughout his life he had developed a relationship with God that could take him through the worst the earth and hell had to offer him.

He had taken time to get to know God,
to know intimately what God was like,
how God is likely to act in every aspect of his life.

He'd learnt to live with God day by day and moment by moment
and in the living with him he'd learnt that he could trust him, so that now,
faced with the biggest crisis of his whole life he could face up to it,
even when he believed on the cross that God, like his disciples, had also deserted him and left him hanging there, broken and defeated.

If we can develop that kind of understanding of God, that kind of intimacy with God,
that kind of trust in God that Jesus pioneered and won for us,
then we too can face up to anything that life can throw at us
and we can live in resurrection light and joy and peace.

Poem

This is the week:
the week of cheers
that turn to mocking and jeers
and then to silence
that storms out of twisted streets
to stand at crossroads
in the troubled places of our world;
the half-remembered week
where guttering flames
and a few lined faces
keep this vigil, still;
the week that takes us further
than any other
and always ends in tears.

Lent and Easter

the world's worst week

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more material for Lent and Easter, including Holy Week, please revisit the website.

Acknowledgements

The biblical reflection is by Ruth Sermon and the poem by Janet Lees. They have agreed this material can be used in the Vision4life process.

HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk