



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

## HOLY WEEK

6-11 APRIL 2020

### INTRODUCTION

For Holy Week we have daily Bible passages describing events in the few days leading up to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, with Thoughts for each day from the Ministry Team. There is separate material for Good Friday and, coming later, Easter Day.

### MONDAY - Cleansing the Temple (Mark 11:15-18)

<sup>15</sup> Then Jesus and his disciples returned to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; <sup>16</sup> and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. <sup>17</sup> He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers.'

<sup>18</sup> And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

### ***Thought for the day***

*In the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which we celebrated yesterday on Palm Sunday, and the cleansing of the Temple we find Jesus acting out his destiny. For those with eyes to see he is claiming to be God's Messiah (yesterday) and still speaking truth to power as the OT prophets did (today). The chief priests reacted so violently to his actions in the Temple because it was the focus of their power base. The Church and we as individual Christians are still called to follow Jesus' example. His way is the way of the cross. How ready are we to react to things we know to be wrong?*

### TUESDAY - The parable of the tenants (Matthew 21:33-44)

Jesus continued his teaching, <sup>33</sup> 'Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup> But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." <sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." <sup>39</sup> So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup> Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' <sup>41</sup> They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.'

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes"?' <sup>43</sup> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup> The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'

### **Thought for the day**

*Yesterday we read about Jesus turning over the tables of the money changers in the Temple. If this was not enough to annoy the religious establishment we then see Jesus embark on a series of teachings that clearly identify the Jewish religious leaders as those who reject God and mislead the people. In our reading today the landowner is God, the vineyard is Israel, the tenants are the Jewish religious leaders and the landowner's slaves are the prophets and priests who remain faithful to God and preach the truth to Israel. The landowner's son whom the tenants kill is Jesus and the new tenants who are brought in to replace the old tenants are the Gentiles. The chief priest and Pharisees who were listening that day knew that Jesus was referring to them as the ones who killed the prophets and who would ultimately kill God's own son. Sometimes we like Jesus are called to stand up for the truth in the face of sophistry. It is never an easy thing to challenge people but sometimes it is necessary. This week I have been thinking about the brave doctors in China who first revealed that a major pandemic was upon us. This was a very courageous thing to do as the Chinese government was attempting a cover up. Sadly, some of these doctors have 'disappeared' and have not been heard of since. May we, when it is our turn, stand up for the truth as they did.*

### **WEDNESDAY - Jesus anointed (Mark 14:3-11)**

<sup>3</sup> While Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. <sup>4</sup> But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way?' <sup>5</sup> For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. <sup>6</sup> But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>7</sup> For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup> She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. <sup>9</sup> Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

<sup>10</sup> Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. <sup>11</sup> When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

### **Thought for the day**

*Sometimes we can all be surprised by the kindness of others, as at the moment so many are offering their time, their skills, their food and money to those in need. Here Jesus is confronted by an act of absurd generosity and accepts it with warmth and graciousness. It's the only incident in Holy Week, until his arrest, which is outside his control. It's the only time also that anyone is kind to him. Even so some onlookers grumble and, as Mark presents it, Judas is provoked to initiate his act of betrayal.*

*How good are we at being generous in the lavish way the woman was? How easy do we find it to accept what family, friends or strangers offer us? Do we look for the best in others, or the worst?*

## **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

### **The Last Supper** (Matthew 26:17-29)

<sup>17</sup> On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' <sup>18</sup> He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples."' <sup>19</sup> So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>20</sup> When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; <sup>21</sup> and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.' <sup>22</sup> And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?' <sup>23</sup> He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. <sup>24</sup> The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' <sup>25</sup> Judas, who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so.'

<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' <sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

### ***Thought for the day (1)***

*Jesus remains in control - of the place, of the conversation, of the actions. It seems that the disciples understand little of what is going on. We understand, both because we know the story and its sequels well. and because we recreate something precious from the Supper every time we celebrate Holy Communion. Every eucharistic prayer contains the words, 'On the night before he died...' and the Supper is the climax of Maundy Thursday before the climax of Good Friday. The reality of Jesus' original action remains in the reality of our sharing communion together, even when, as now, we are separated from one another, and our communion has to be spiritual not physical.*

### **Footwashing** (John 13:1-11)

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' <sup>10</sup> 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.' <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

### ***Thought for the day (2)***

*In John's account, the Last Supper is implied rather than described, and the focus is on the footwashing and the conversation surrounding it. This is not to downplay the importance of the Church's remembrance of the supper, but to supplement it. Like the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the Temple, this was a prophetic act, showing how the way of Jesus*

*Christ is the way of service - service that the world would think of as humiliating. Even greater humiliation lay ahead of Jesus, and his acceptance of it, as of a Lamb led to slaughter, reminds us of what we, his latter-day disciples, should expect as we take up our cross to follow him. How far are we prepared to be humiliated for Jesus?*

## **Gethsemane** (Matthew 26:36-46)

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'<sup>37</sup> He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.'<sup>39</sup> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'<sup>40</sup> Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?<sup>41</sup> Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'<sup>42</sup> Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.'<sup>43</sup> Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.<sup>44</sup> So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.<sup>45</sup> Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.<sup>46</sup> Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

## ***Thought for the day (3)***

*Jesus' final act, before he loses control to those who would do him harm, is to come close to God in prayer. Though the words Matthew gives him are words of submission and acceptance, we are surely meant to understand that a long time (one hour, three hours?) was spent in wrestling with his conflicting emotions in the presence of his Abba, Father. Why were the three disciples there? Certainly not as any kind of support or sharers in the moment of final decision. Perhaps then as witnesses to his anguish, as they were earlier to his transfiguration? Or to learn from his example how to confront even the hardest of human perplexity, by placing it into God's hands? Many of us are scared now of what might happen as the epidemic intensifies; and we forget how easy it is simply to turn to God and tell him of our worries. He has already turned more than half-way towards us to be ready for us, whatever we want to say to him. His hand is stretched out ready to comfort and support us.*

## **GOOD FRIDAY- At the Cross**

*See special devotional material.*

## **SATURDAY** (Matthew 27:57-61)

<sup>57</sup> When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus.<sup>58</sup> He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.<sup>59</sup> So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth<sup>60</sup> and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.<sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

## ***Thought for the day***

*Holy Saturday or Easter Eve is a difficult day in some ways. Jesus' earthly life has ended but his resurrection is yet to take place. There is no drama to this day. There is no story to be told other than to remember the few simple actions we have here in Matthew's gospel. Joseph of Arimathea generously offers up his own tomb for Jesus to be put to rest in whilst*

*the women look on. Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath day so there was little to be done: Jesus' body cannot be anointed until the following day and so all his followers and friends would have had to wait.*

*Today is a day waiting, a day spent in anticipation of the change that is to come. Today of all of the Holy Week days might capture the feelings of a nation under lock down best. The sense of needing to fill time until something changes... Perhaps today you can spend some time trying to understand what the first Easter Eve would have been like for the disciples. We rest safe in the knowledge of what is coming but they would not have known. Try to find some space today to pray, to ask God to help you remember what the Easter story means for you. If you have the capacity to spend some time in vigil this evening then spend it reflecting on God's story of hope through all of scripture reading your favourite passages.*

## **EASTER DAY - At the Empty Tomb**

**Easter Week** (Monday 13th to Saturday 18th)

*Special material will be included in next week's mailing.*

JRE / 2.4.20