



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

3 - 8 AUGUST 2020

## INTRODUCTION

The NT readings reach the end of Luke's Gospel this week with Jesus' condemnation to death, crucifixion, resurrection, appearances and ascension. Each day's thought is based mainly on the parts of the readings in bold type.

### MONDAY - Luke 23:13-25

<sup>13</sup> Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, <sup>14</sup> and said to them, **"You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. <sup>15</sup> Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."** <sup>18</sup> But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man. Release Barabbas to us." <sup>19</sup> (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

<sup>20</sup> Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. <sup>21</sup> But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" <sup>22</sup> For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him." <sup>23</sup> But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. <sup>24</sup> So Pilate decided to grant their demand. <sup>25</sup> He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

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

*For Christians the trial of Jesus by Pilate has always been of great significance, though the shifting of the blame for Jesus' condemnation to death from the Roman governor to the Jewish hierarchy has had disastrous consequences throughout history. For Pilate himself this was probably little more than a trivial incident, and his principal aim to avoid riot and unrest. Clearly he is under no illusion as to the reality of the situation (v13-16), but he soon gives in to the crowd's demand (v24). Political expediency (often coupled with cultural norms) remains a persistent enemy of truth and justice, as campaigners so often discover.*

### TUESDAY - Luke 23:26-43

<sup>26</sup> As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. <sup>27</sup> A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. <sup>28</sup> Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup> For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never

nursed!' <sup>30</sup> Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us." and to the hills, "Cover us."  
<sup>31</sup> For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

<sup>32</sup> Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> **Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

<sup>35</sup> The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." <sup>36</sup> The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar <sup>37</sup> and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." <sup>38</sup> There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" <sup>40</sup> But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." <sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, **"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."**

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

*All three of Jesus' brief 'words from the cross' in Luke's account are unique. The first two (v34 & 43) emphasise his calmness and compassion as he slowly dies in agony. Few of those crucified are likely to have blessed their executioners with their forgiveness, or to have given hope to a dying criminal. As in his life, so at the time of his death Jesus gives us an example, which many of us might aspire to but few achieve.*

## **WEDNESDAY - Luke 23:44-56**

<sup>44</sup> It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, <sup>45</sup> for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Jesus called out with a loud voice, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."** When he had said this, he breathed his last.

<sup>47</sup> The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." <sup>48</sup> When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. <sup>49</sup> But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

<sup>50</sup> Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, <sup>51</sup> who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. <sup>52</sup> Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>54</sup> It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

<sup>55</sup> The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. <sup>56</sup> Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

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

*Jesus' last words are his self-commendation to God his Father, bringing his holy life to a holy end. The centurion offers another reason for excusing the Romans in relation to Jesus' death - his recognition of his righteousness, meaning perhaps more than his guiltlessness. Then Joseph puts his own faith on the line by requesting Jesus' burial, identifying himself to the Romans as an associate of the man they had just executed. These brief vignettes of different reactions are completed by the women's constancy, preparation and patience.*

## **THURSDAY - Luke 24:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: <sup>7</sup> 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " <sup>8</sup> Then they remembered his words.

<sup>9</sup> When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. <sup>10</sup> It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> **But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. <sup>12</sup> Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.**

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

*The disciples seem to have forgotten Jesus' teaching about his suffering, death and raising to life. When he spoke those words perhaps they assumed he was exaggerating, or simply ignored what he was saying. Now they could not believe the women, who in every account take centre-stage on Easter morning, not because they were women but because what they said made no sense - dead bodies do not come back to life (v11). For some reason Peter's intuition (not always a reliable guide) suggested he go to the tomb, but even then he is not convinced (v12), though tomorrow's reading says that he met Jesus before anyone else (v34).*

## **FRIDAY - Luke 24:13-35**

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

<sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

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

*The risen Jesus is still a teacher, patiently explaining to the two companions how everything that had happened was consistent with and had been foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures (v27). Even in their depressed state of mind the two travellers were inspired by what he said (v32), but still they did not recognise him. That recognition came only in the breaking and sharing of the bread (v30-31). Services of Holy Communion follow the same pattern of Biblical exposition and shared sacrament: sometimes we may be moved to a closer relationship with God through Jesus by one part, sometimes the other, sometimes both. It doesn't matter - the important thing is that we are open to God speaking to us in the way that is most effective.*

### **SATURDAY - Luke 24:36-53**

<sup>36</sup> While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>37</sup> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

<sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence. <sup>44</sup> He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

**<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.**

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

*As on the road to Emmaus, Jesus uses the Bible to explain to his disciples all that has happened (v44-47). The proclamation of the truth about Jesus is for them (and for us) in the power of the Holy Spirit (v49). His instructions and his blessing were met with worship, joy and waiting. These are interesting characteristics, not necessarily the first ones that come to mind when we think of what it's like to follow Jesus in our own lives in 2020.*