



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

## HOLY WEEK

29 March to 3 April 2021

### INTRODUCTION

For Holy Week we have daily Bible passages describing events in the few days leading up to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion on Good Friday (these readings are not those set for Morning Prayer). This year the readings are mainly from Mark's Gospel.

### 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 do we react to things we know to be wrong?*

### TUESDAY - The parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1-12)

<sup>1</sup> Jesus began to speak to the chief priests, teachers of the law and elders in parables: 'A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watch-tower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>2</sup> When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup> But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup> And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. <sup>5</sup> Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. <sup>6</sup> He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, "They will respect my son." <sup>7</sup> But those tenants said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." <sup>8</sup> So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. <sup>9</sup> What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup> Have you not read this scripture: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; <sup>11</sup> this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes"?'

<sup>12</sup> When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

#### ***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 leaders, we now hear Jesus telling a parable that clearly identifies the Jewish religious leaders as those who reject God and mislead the people. In today's reading 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 himself and the new tenants who are brought in to replace the old tenants are the Gentiles. The chief priests and others 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, like Jesus, we are called to stand up for the truth in the face of power. It is never an easy thing to challenge authorities but sometimes it is necessary. It can be risky too - think of democracy protestors in Myanmar now.*

## **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***

*Throughout the pandemic we have often been surprised by the kindness of others, shown in so many different ways. 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** (Mark 14:12-25)

<sup>12</sup> On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to Jesus, 'Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?' <sup>13</sup> So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, <sup>14</sup> and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' <sup>15</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.' <sup>16</sup> So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>17</sup> When it was evening, he came with the twelve. <sup>18</sup> And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' <sup>19</sup> They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?' <sup>20</sup> He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> For 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>22</sup> While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' <sup>23</sup> Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. <sup>24</sup> He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup> Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

### ***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 intimate preparation for the public drama 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 (Mark 14:32-50)**

<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' <sup>33</sup> He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. <sup>34</sup> And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' <sup>35</sup> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.' <sup>37</sup> He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? <sup>38</sup> Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' <sup>39</sup> And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. <sup>40</sup> And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. <sup>41</sup> He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

<sup>43</sup> Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. <sup>44</sup> Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' <sup>45</sup> So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. <sup>46</sup> Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. <sup>47</sup> But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. <sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? <sup>49</sup> Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.' <sup>50</sup> All of them deserted him and fled.

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

*Jesus' final act, before control passes to those who would do him harm, is to come close to God in prayer. Though his words are words of submission and acceptance, we are surely meant to understand that he spent a long time 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 have been scared or worried during the pandemic; perhaps we have forgotten 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 (Mark 15:33-41)**

<sup>33</sup> When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' <sup>35</sup> When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' <sup>36</sup> And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' <sup>37</sup> Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son.' <sup>40</sup> There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup> These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

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

*Jesus' treatment after his arrest was brutal and the judicial processes rushed. Mark's account of his last hours on the cross is the bleakest of all the Gospels, as the torture of crucifixion finally brought his ordeal to an end. As the centurion rightly declared, 'Truly this man was God's Son.' Jesus didn't have to endure this horror, but he did so because he was convinced it was God's will. And he did it for all our sakes. In the end this is all we need to know - not just today, but every day of our lives.*

## **SATURDAY (Mark 15:42-47)**

<sup>42</sup> When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

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

*Holy Saturday or Easter Eve is a strange 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 of the evening before. Joseph of Arimathea had offered his tomb for Jesus' body while the women looked on. Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath day so there was little to be done: the body could not be anointed until the following day and his followers and friends had no option but to wait.*

*Today is still a day of waiting, a day spent in anticipation of the change that we now know with certainty is to come. In a way, after our experience of the last year, we should be good at waiting; but of course most of us aren't. Perhaps today then we should spend time trying to understand what the first Easter Eve would have been like for the disciples, some who had fled (the men), some who had been steadfast (the women). 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 realise what the Easter story should mean for you. And be ready for the greatest day of the year...*