



**Discovering what God calls us to do**

**Sermon Based Curriculum  
for Small Groups**

18<sup>th</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

## **Introduction**

Lent is the time where we stand between Jesus as the sufferer and him as a ruler of the earth. It is an opportunity to move away from making ourselves the centre of ourselves. It gives us an opportunity to move away from making ourselves the most important thing. It is an opportunity for us to become unwired from self centredness. It is a season which shows how Jesus draws us to his way, reminding us that we have to be drawn away from this world and be drawn towards Jesus. Pope Francis tells us that Lent is a new beginning, a path towards continual conversion of heart. We turn away from our sinfulness and recommit ourselves to following Jesus.

Form the season of Lent we move to Good Friday, where we celebrate the historical fact that While we were sinners, Christ died for us. We remember and celebrate how God so loved the world. This journey will not end at death, but at the resurrection of Jesus. I hope this sermon series will renew our commitment to Jesus, and remind us that we will fall, but resurrection is available for us all.

## **Following the Lectionary**

Year 2024 is a year of following the lectionary as we did last year. We plan to produce a sermon-based curriculum for home groups and classes and a solo participation guide for those who are not in a home group. This is the first of five that will be produced this year.

The Lectionary is a three-year cycle in which most of the Bible is covered. We are in Year B of that cycle in 2024.

The Revised Common Lectionary has been running since 1992 and was developed by the ecumenical liturgical body the 'Consultation on Common Texts'. This lectionary is an adaptation of the Common Lectionary that preceded it. The reading of appointed Scriptures throughout the year is a practice that goes all the way back to our Jewish roots.

The Gospel readings each Sunday will follow the important moments in the life of Jesus, mainly from the Gospel according to Mark. The Gospel of Mark is unique for its concise and action-packed narrative, emphasizing Jesus' dynamic ministry, immediate impact, and the urgent call to discipleship. It portrays a vivid and human Jesus, highlighting his authority and the unexpected nature of God's kingdom breaking into the world.

We suggest that in your devotional times you prepare for the coming Sunday by reading the passages that will be read that day. It is best for you to design your own rhythm for doing this, but here is a suggestion:

Monday = <b>Psalm</b>	Thursday = <b>Epistle</b>
Tuesday = <b>Old Testament</b>	Friday = <b>Gospel again</b>
Wednesday = <b>Gospel</b>	Saturday = <b>Psalm again</b>

## **Easy places for you to go to find out more...**

If you would like to 'read up' to help you in your study, or to help you prepare for the Home Group discussion, then here are some resources you could look at:

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/yeara.htm> (this is a central resource that takes you to many resources for preachers, worship leaders, Bible Study leaders, individual study)

[Year B Calendar – Sacredise](#) (This is a South African Methodist Minister, Rev. John VD Laar, who has a brief commentary and hymn and worship song suggestions)

The following are links that use the very helpful Open and Relational, or Process Theology Perspective:

[Year B, 2023-2024 \(processandfaith.org\)](#)

[Living A Holy Adventure - Bruce Epperly \(patheos.com\)](#)

[Lectionary Resources \(billloader.com\)](#) (This is Prof. William Loader's excellent and up to date Biblical Studies Perspective)

[Revised Common Lectionary \(vanderbilt.edu\)](#) (This is a beautiful space for those who want to view art that is linked to the lectionary.)

Purchase the 'Disciplines' book of Daily Devotions for 2024 (available in our Church Office while stocks last)

## Notes for Small Groups

This booklet is laid out so that your gatherings as home-groups each week will follow the four W's rhythm of Welcome, Worship, Word, Works. I hope this helps you and makes the journey meaningful. The times in brackets are a guideline that should help to keep you on track.

### **Welcome** (10 minutes)

This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and 'catch up' with each other.

### **Worship** (10 minutes)

Use the Psalm for the week. Ask one person to read it slowly and prayerfully. As you listen to it allow this to be a moment of worship, love, devotion, adoration, thanksgiving and praise.

You can do your prayers of intercession for each other and society at this time, or at the end of the gathering.

### **Word** (60 minutes)

Here I offer some notes on the reading and the theme for the week. You will then do a Bible Study together and discuss the theme and also the sermon you heard.

It is up to the group leader to decide whether there is enough time for all of the questions – and to select which questions to discuss if there are too many.

### **Intercessory Prayer**

This year the Pastoral Care Portfolio has chosen topics for us to pray for each month. In February we are praying for those suffering loss. In March we will pray for those struggling with unemployment. Perhaps you know of someone in one of these categories that you might pray for and give support.

## **Discovering what God calls us to do**

**Welcome** This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

**Worship** Psalm 25:1-10

**Word** Mark 1:9-15

### **1. Notes on the passage**

It is easy to think that because in January a reading on the baptism of Jesus was part of lectionary readings, there is now no need to include it in Lent. In order for Jesus to discover what God calls him to do, he needed to hear the voice from heaven and see the holy spirit descending. All this happened at his baptism.

Mark uses the occasion to provide intimations of what God will accomplish through this Spirit-endowed Jesus while the other Synoptic Gospels concern themselves with Jesus’ faithfulness in the wilderness.

There is something about Jesus’ experience in the wilderness, out in a boundary setting at the threshold between civilization and untamed places, is supposed to capture our imagination: Jesus is “with the wild beasts” (Mark 1:13), but the wild beasts pose no threat to Jesus. Through Jesus, God will win over powers of chaos and destruction, harmony will come to earth.

At this time, beginning in Mark 1:14, Jesus begins to proclaim the in-breaking of God’s reign (or “kingdom”).

Jesus himself demonstrates what these realities look like through his actions and words.

Jesus will call people to new understandings about what all of life is like.,

The late theologian William Placher put it this way about Mark 1:14-15: “What Jesus is beginning is the transformation of this world. That is why those in charge of this world as it was ended up killing him.

The Old Testament readings for the first three Sundays in Lent give us glimpses of three covenants: God's covenant with Noah, God's covenant with Abraham, and God's covenant with Israel at Sinai. While each covenant is distinct from the others, taken together they testify to God's ongoing desire to be in relationship with humanity.

## **2. Questions related to the passage/s and notes:**

- a. Why was the wilderness part of Jesus' journey?
- b. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- c. Can the Holy Spirit lead us into the wilderness to be tempted? If yes, how?

## **3 Sunday Services**

Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?

Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

## **3. Radical Discipleship Question**

The temptations continue, as we all know, how does getting closer to Jesus make it easier to deal with the temptations?

## **4. Discussion questions**

- The Spirit of God leads us into a forty-day wilderness. Why is it important to welcome these forty days of Lent? What are your hopes for this season?
- When was your spiritual wilderness? When in your life were you fighting hardest to follow Jesus? Are you going through that period right now?

## **5 Close in Prayer**

## **6 This week's Lectionary Readings**

Genesis 9:8-17;

Psalm 25:1-10;

Mark 1:9-15;

1 Peter 3:18-22

## Setting our minds on divine things

**Welcome** This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

**Worship** Psalm 22:23-31

**Word** Mark 8:31-38

### 1. Notes on the passage

A new section begins and centers on three predictions of Jesus’ death. It indicates a geographical shift from Galilee, where most of Jesus’ public ministry reported by Mark took place, to Jerusalem and the closing days of Jesus’ life on earth. In this section, Jesus defines the true meaning of ‘Christ’ as the title applies to him.

In this section we find one of the famous saying of Jesus, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”. This is where this Sunday’s theme comes from, “Setting our minds on divine things”. The picture of taking the cross is of someone already condemned, required to carry the beam of his own cross to the place of crucifixion. Cross-bearing is a willingness to suffer and die for the Lord’s sake. Discipleship may result in the loss of physical life, but that loss is insignificant when compared with gaining eternal life.

Peter’s attempt to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross held the same temptation Satan gave at the outset of Jesus’ ministry, but Jesus rebuked him. Peter sounds like a person who is more concerned about fitting into his own sinful generation than about following and pleasing Jesus. Abraham understood what it means to have faith that is accompanied by obedience.

### 2. Questions related to the passage/s and notes:

- a. Who are the 'them' in verse 31?
- b. What sorts of people is Jesus going to be rejected by?
- c. What do you make of the prediction that Jesus will be 'rejected'?

- d. Why do you think Peter felt so strongly about Jesus' prediction of his suffering and death?

### **3. Sunday Services**

Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?

Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

### **4. Radical Discipleship Question**

How can we as Christ disciples be a beacon of hope for the communities we live in?

### **5. Discussion questions**

- What were Jesus' priorities on earth, and can we make them our priority?
- What did Jesus mean by, Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me?

### **6. Close in Prayer**

### **7. This week's Lectionary Readings**

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalm 22:23-31

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

3<sup>rd</sup> March – Third Sunday in Lent

## **Keeping God as the central figure of my life**

**Welcome** This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

**Worship** Psalm 19

**Word** John 2:13-22

### **1. Notes on the passage**

Matthew, Mark and Luke record a cleansing of the temple toward the end of Jesus’ ministry. Cattle, sheep and doves were required for sacrifices, so Jews who came from distances had to be able to buy sacrificial animals near the temple. The merchants however were selling them in the outer court of the temple itself, the one place where Gentiles could come to pray. Many coins had to be changed into currency acceptable to the temple authorities, which made money changers necessary. They should not however, have been working in the temple itself.

#### **Jews demands a miraculous sign.**

Their focus on earthly things made them blind to what Jesus means by

I. “Turning my Father’s house into a market”.

II. Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”

Jews thought Jesus was referring to the literal temple, but John tells us that Jesus was not. Years later Jesus was accused of saying He would destroy the temple and raise it again. Mockers repeated the charge as Jesus hanged on the cross (Matthew 26:60-61). The temple was the Jews’ central figure, God was not. Their worship was not sincere. It is surprising how Jews, people who were familiar and obsessed with the Old Testament law would forget what Exodus 20:1-17 says.

## **2. Questions related to the passage/s and notes:**

- a. Verse 15: Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple area. In short, Jesus became angry. Was Jesus' anger warranted?
- b. The merchants' stalls were set up in the temple's court reserved for the Gentiles. Why was it important for Jesus that Gentiles are allowed to enter into the inner court and worship with Jews?

## **3. Sunday Services**

Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?  
Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

## **4. Radical Discipleship Question.**

How are believers in Christ supposed to approach worship. In which way have some churches become places of busyness, extortion and a barrier to those who come to the house of the Lord seeking to worship the Lord?

## **5. Discussion question**

Read Exodus 20:1-17 & John 2:13-22 and discuss how these two connect.

## **6. Close in Prayer**

As mentioned in the introduction, this month Trinity will be praying for those who struggle with unemployment.

## **7. This week's Lectionary Readings**

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

**John 2:13-22**

10<sup>th</sup> March – Fourth Sunday in Lent

## God wants life for people

**Welcome** This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

**Worship** Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

**Word** John 3:14-21

### 1. Notes on the passage

The great truth that motivated God’s plan of salvation for the world is, God loves God’s creation. Because of his love for the world God gave his Son. Although believers are also called Sons and Daughters of God, Jesus is uniquely God’s Son. God gave his son because the high quality of life is life in fellowship with God now and forever. That’s what Jesus wanted so say to Nicodemus in the previous verses. Whoever believes in Jesus will not be condemned, that’s the big picture of God’s work in Christ. By believing, John is not writing about momentary beliefs and doubts, but of continued settled faith.

*Jesus is like a serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness*

The term lifted up can also mean exalt. It points to both the physical lifting up of Jesus into the air of the cross, and lifting up in exaltation of Jesus by God. While being up into the cross was a moment of humiliation, it is also a movement of divine agency. The good news is, If Jesus is lifted up, he will draw all people to him. Being drawn to Jesus is to be drawn to light, that light is salvation. All because God loved the world, it’s a divine initiative.

*Rejecting the Son*

Verse 17 says, For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it through him. Then verse 18 goes like: But whoever does not believe stands condemned already. This almost sounds as if Jesus is saying, sinners have no way back to him. That would be contrary to what scriptures say about God’s mercy and kindness. People who are sinners can change and respond. So to reject Jesus is choosing not to have life, but the life Jesus offers has no labels.

## **2. Questions related to the passage/s and notes**

- a. What is the main idea found in John 3:14-21?
- b. Where was Nicodemus' trust before he met Jesus?
- c. What was God's purpose in sending the son into the world?

## **3. Sunday Services**

Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?

Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

## **4. Radical Discipleship Question.**

When was the last time you reflected on whether what you have is right teachings or not? Please find time to reflect on what you believe, and ask God to help you hold fast to what is life-giving.

## **5. Discussion questions**

Lent season calls us out of the misplaced comfort of darkness and into Christ light which exposes our sin but at the same time cleanses us from it.

Which sins are mostly crippling families and society. How can we be freed from them.

Once you have shared answers to the above question, take a minute and pray to God about the darkness in which our society is trapped, and ask God to free us from darkness through Christ Light.

## **6. Close in Prayer**

## **7. This week's Lectionary Readings**

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Ephesians 2:1-10

**John 3:14-21**

17<sup>th</sup> March – Fifth Sunday in Lent

## To serve Jesus is to follow Jesus.

**Welcome** This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

**Worship** Psalm 119:9-16 or Psalm 51:1-12

**Word** John 12:20-33

### 1. Notes on the passage

As the season of Lent continues, it is becoming clearer. Predictions of Jesus’ death keep coming in. What is even becoming obvious is that his death will not only benefit Jews and selected people, but the whole world. John regards the coming of the Greeks (People who were attracted to Judaism by its monotheism and morality, but repelled by its nationalism and requirements such as circumcision) to worship at the feast as important, their coming shows that Jesus would die for the world. The coming of these Gentiles indicate the scope of the effectiveness of Jesus’ approaching crucifixion.

*The hour has come.*

The principle of life through death is seen in the plant world. The kernel must perish as a kernel if there is to be a plant. Supremely this principle is seen in the cross of Jesus. Love for God must be such that all other loves are by comparison hatred-Jesus wanted God to be glorified. His prayer was not for deliverance , but for the Father to be glorified. Jesus refused to pray for God to save him, because the very reason he had come was to draw people to God. That hour had come.

*Reminder:* Lent opens opportunities for us to become unwired from self centredness and remember that serving Jesus means following him.

### 2. Questions related to the passage/s and notes

- a. How does Jesus explain his purpose?
- b. “To follow Jesus is to serve Jesus and to follow is to do the works that Jesus did”. What does this mean to you?

### **3. Sunday Services**

Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?

Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

### **4. Radical Discipleship Question.**

How are you following Christ in your life?

### **5. For reflection**

10 important considerations before you follow Jesus.

1. Be willing to obey and submit.
2. Be prepared to endure hardship.
3. Be ready to see ugliness in your sin.
4. Know that the world will not always accept you.
5. Be willing to step outside your comfort zone.
6. Prepare to be held accountable.
7. Accept Jesus as the Word.
8. Leave things behind.
9. Expect to be humbled.
10. Prepare to love.

Which are you still struggling with. What efforts are you going to make to get it right?

### **6. Close in Prayer**

### **7. This week's Lectionary Readings**

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalms 51:1-12

or Psalm 119:9-16

Hebrews 5:5-10

**John 12:20-33**

## The palms of hope

**Welcome** This is the time of fellowship, mutual concern and ‘catch up’ with each other.

**Worship** Psalm 31:9-16

**Word** John 12:12-16

### 1. Notes on the passage

Crowds -Pilgrims who had come up from the country for the Passover feast. Many of the pilgrims had doubtless seen and heard Jesus in Galilee, now they are welcoming the opportunity to proclaim him as Messiah. Some important features of Palm Sunday:

1. The donkey – Jesus came riding on a donkey, an animal symbolic of humility, peace and Davidic royalty. It was a colt of a donkey- unused animals were regarded as especially suitable for religious purposes (Numbers 19:2)
2. Palm branches – Used in celebration of victory. In Revelation 7:9 John saw a multitude with palm branches in heaven.
3. Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord – Prayer for the Lord to continue to sustain and bless his people. They believed that the one with God would help defeat their enemies like David had done.
4. John adds ‘Blessed is the King of Israel’. – This reflects his special interest in Jesus’ royalty, which he brings out throughout the passion narrative. Matthew also records that people spread their cloaks on the road.

*What is so special about Palm Sunday for us?*

The disciples didn’t understand the meaning of Palm Sunday, but we do. Only after the crucifixion and the coming of the Holy Spirit did the disciples appreciate the meaning of the prophecy and its fulfilment (Zachariah 9:9). The coming of the King was prophesied more than 500 years before it happened.

It marks the beginning of the Holy Week where we reflect Christ's love on the cross. It was a deliberate Messianic action. Jesus' purposefully offered himself as the Messiah, knowing that this will provoke Jewish leaders to take action against him.

There is hope in the promise of the cross.

## **2. Questions related to the passage/s and notes**

- a. What might have been going on in the heart and mind of Jesus with the praise of the crowds and the threats that awaited him in Jerusalem?
- b. How do you think you would have responded to the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem?

## **3. Sunday Services**

Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What was the main point/s of the sermon?

Which part of the message touched you on a personal level?

## **4. Radical Discipleship Question.**

Which areas or people do you think need the visit from our church or your group?

## **5. Task**

Palm Sunday is for an opportunity to bring all we are – our hopes, fears, sadness, uncertainty – to Jesus. Use this time to pray our church Trinity, Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

## **6. This Week's Lectionary Readings**

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

**Mark 14:1 – 15:47**

## Living a faithful life

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 36:5-11; Hebrews 9:11-15; **John 12:1-11**

All four gospels have an account of a woman anointing Jesus. At Bethany Jesus spent a night. The well known thing that happened at Bethany is Mary's costly devotion to Jesus. Mary took pure nard, an expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. This was an unusual act both because Mary poured the oil on Jesus' feet (normally it was poured on the head) and because she used her hair to wipe Jesus' feet (a respectable women did not unbind her hair in public). Further, Mary's act showed humility because it was a servant's work to attend to the feet.

Ponder this:

- Judas Iscariot was unhappy with Mary's act of love to Jesus.
- The Jews had previously spoken of the death of one man (Jesus), but now they wanted another death (Lazarus). Sin grows.

All because of their loyalty to Jesus.

Lessons:

- Discipleship is costly.
- Remain in the love of God.
- Be faithful and believe in Jesus.

### For reflection

How to live a faithful life

- John 15:4 – Remain in me and I will remain in you.
- John 12:5 – If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.

## Call to discipleship

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; **John 12:20-36**

For the third time in this season of Lent we have to read John 12. To avoid repetition, let's focus on the Greeks' request to see Jesus. Jesus' discourse that follows is in part a response to this request.

Any sermon on the Gospel of John has this as its goal, the very real presence of Jesus that needs to be experienced by all our human senses. Here it is less about the function of Jesus' death but more about the possibility of what the disciples will do when Jesus is gone. They will do greater things than these (John 14:12), so much of this last discourse from Jesus is about discipleship.

This would be the last time the world would hear Jesus' words, darkness was going to overtake. Jesus told his disciples and the Jews to believe in the light.

If you want to see Jesus, the time is now.

### For reflection

The I AM statements of Jesus teach us about Jesus' identity and his purpose. Right now, what do you want Jesus to be for you?

- I am the bread of life (**John 6:35**)
- I am the light of the world (**John 8:12**)
- I am the door (**John 10:9**)
- I am the good shepherd (**John 10:11,14**)
- I am the resurrection and the life (**John 11:25**)
- I am the way, the truth and the life (**John 14:6**)
- I am the vine (**John 15:1**)

27<sup>th</sup> March – Holy Week: Wednesday

## Living in God's light

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1-3; **John 13:21-32**

Though Jesus knew long ago before it happened that one of the disciples would betray him, Jesus was grieved by the betrayal of a friend. It is interesting the way it happened, it looks as if other disciples had no clue of what Judas was going to do. The disciples' astonishment shows that Judas had concealed his contacts with the high priests. None of the disciples suspected him, but all seem to have thought that the betrayal would be involuntary (Mark 14:19 says, They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, 'Surely not me'.

I consider the part where Jesus says, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish" the critical moment. Jesus was answering the question, "Lord, who is it?"

He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas. Evidently Judas was near Jesus, possibly in the seat of honour. If giving of the bread to Judas was a mark of honour, it seems to have been a final appeal, which Judas did not accept. This act by Judas, Jesus calls it Satan.

In all this, Jesus shows that he is in control. He says, "What you are about to do, do it quickly." Jesus would die as he directed, not as his opponents determined.

All this happened at night, which might mean there was darkness in Judas' soul.

### For Reflection

Leon Morris, the Australian theologian, said, "Redemption does not only look back to Calvary. It looks forward to the freedom in which the redeemed stand.

How does this statement offer us a new opportunity to repent and live in God's light?

28<sup>th</sup> March – Maundy Thursday

## Replicate Christ

Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;  
**John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

John has by far the longest account of the upper room, though curiously he says nothing about the institution of the Lord's supper. He provides most of our information about what our Lord said to his disciples on that night. One feature of the discourse is Jesus' emphasis on love.

Surrounded by his disciples, including Judas who later betrayed Jesus and Peter who later denied Jesus, Jesus showed control of the situation. Verse 2 proves that Jesus had everything under control, it says "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God. This emphasises the fulfilment of God's plan.

### Replicating Christ

Jesus got up from the meal and began to do a menial task normally performed by a servant, he washed his disciples' feet. On this occasion there was no servant and no one volunteered to do it. Jesus' action was during the meal, not upon arrival, done deliberately to emphasise a point. It was a lesson of humility, but it also set forth the principle of selfless service that was to soon be exemplified in the cross.

### Looking beyond foot washing

For Peter, this symbolized cleansing from sin, he needed spiritual washing. For us this Christ provides an example of humble service. Christians should be willing to perform menial services for one another, that's a new command. See what Leviticus 19:18 says, "The man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there". So the new command to love one another is in a sense an old one, but for Christ's disciples it was new because it was a mark of brotherhood, created by Christ's great love for them. Love is the distinguishing mark of Christ's followers.

### For Reflection

How do the events of Maundy Thursday appear from your point of view? What do you see, hear, feel?

## Active and self-giving love

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25 or  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; **John 18:1 – 19:42**

One of the most debated questions is, Why did Jesus die or, who killed Jesus? It is important to understand that Jesus knew all that was going to happen to him, he was not taken by surprise. Twice Jesus had made the arresting party say plainly that he was the one they wanted. The cup of suffering was, according to Jesus, given to him by his Father, God was in control. None of the chief priests were on Jesus' side, so John hints that a fair trial could not be expected from Caiphas who had already said that putting Jesus to death was expedient. As if that was not enough, Peter didn't make it easier for Jesus, he denied him. Peter would have been conspicuous if he had stayed away from the fire. Three times he said no instead of Yes. Jews had no charge to lay on Jesus, there was also no Roman charge, Roman trial or any right to persecute anyone. They were looking for an execution, not a fair trial. Pilate also didn't find bases for a charge against Jesus, so he took Jesus and had him flogged. He hoped flogging would satisfy the Jews and enable him to free Jesus. Through it all, there was no fault found in Jesus. Pilate tried to set Jesus free but the friends of Caesar wanted him crucified. Pilate also called Jesus a King, although he did not mean the expression seriously, but John did.

- Who carried the cross of Jesus? – **It's Jesus**
- Was Jesus alone when he was crucified? – **No, there were two other men crucified with him.**
- Did Jesus have power to save himself from being killed? – **Yes**

You see, Jesus had power to opt out, but he didn't. There is no greater love than this.

### For Reflection

1. How can I unite my suffering with Christ's sacrifice on the cross?
2. In what ways can I offer up my struggles as a sacrifice for the sake of others?
3. What emotions do you associate with Good Friday, and why?
4. How do you feel when you reflect on the events of Jesus' crucifixion?

## The power of Easter

Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24;  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43 **Mark 16:1-8**

Sabbath was over. No purchases were possible on the Sabbath. Embalming was not practised by the Jews, the spices were brought as an act of devotion and love, but these women had no expectation of Jesus' resurrection.

Big challenge for Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome- Setting the large stone in place was relatively easy task, but once it had slipped into the groove cut in bedrock in front of the entrance, it was very difficult to remove.

Answer to their question-He has risen

In his resurrection, Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power. Compassion of Jesus- In view of Peter's confident boasting and subsequent denials, Jesus will meet him in Galilee.

Jesus' story did not end in hopelessness, It reflected a syntax of hope in which people face life with a defiance of hopelessness.

The authorities killed Jesus. That should have been the end, but now the stone has been rolled away. There is no Jesus in the tomb. He has risen!

The resurrection paradigm is a response to injustice, defeat, failure, brokenness, and death. It does not seek peace by denying the almost crushing realities of pain and injustice in our world, but reaches its conclusion having passed through those shadows of death or at least having taken them seriously.

It is not a naive optimism, but ultimately a decision to live and not die.

### *Images of future hope*

Christian faith has at its heart a defiance of hopelessness, symbolised by the story of Easter. As God raised Jesus, as Jesus' future is in God's being, so also faith asserts the sufficiency of the one detail of the future beyond death to which it can hold fast: God, the God of compassion. This is the God also who makes the journey with us when

we dare to face the realities of pain and suffering and dare to share that compassion and God's life in the world. Christians are baptised into this story so that with regard to resurrection and hope his story is our story, and what we believe about his future we believe about our own and vice versa - whatever that may be. But we are more than joined in hope: we are joined also in a shared life, which, when allowed to have its way, generates hope and reproduces the composition of the story in the here and now.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does the resurrection of Jesus generate new hope for you?
2. Does the resurrection of Jesus tell you something about yourself and the purpose of your life?