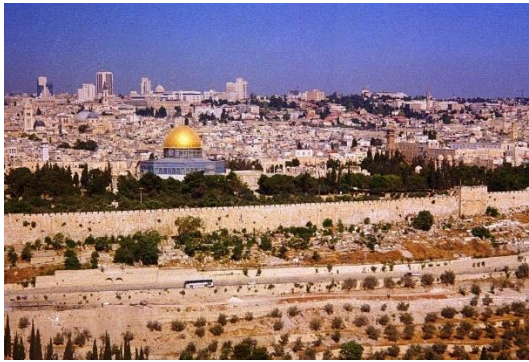


**Written for The Walton and Weybridge Pastorate by  
Reverend Michael Hodgson  
& kindly shared with Fleet URC**

**Lent 2022**



**The journey to  
Jerusalem**

## Introduction

This booklet is very much intended for private use, for personal devotion and reflection.

I am following the Sunday lectionary readings and allowing them to set a topic for each week. There is something for each day and you'll find that this takes the form of a mixture of reflections, Bible notes, hymn verses and prayers.

I hope that you will find it a helpful booklet as we work our way through Lent, towards the sorrow of Passiontide and to the joy of Easter.

### **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March- Ash Wednesday**

Let's get the sequence of events in our minds. From any infancy or childhood stories Luke tells us that the adult Jesus re-appears when he was about 30. He was baptized by John in the River Jordan and immediately went into the desert, being tempted for 40 days before Luke tells us that "the devil ended every temptation and departed from him until an opportune time (Lk 4.12)

From there Jesus returned to Galilee where his earthy ministry began in earnest as he "taught in their synagogues being glorified by all" (Lk 4 14). Given our situation in the pastorate at the moment it therefore seems appropriate this year to think of Lent as being a time of preparation and of going forward.

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;

Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,  
For we have no help but thee;  
Yet possessing every blessing  
If our God our Father be.



James Edmeston (R&S 543)

### Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March

A number of the Victorian Lenten hymns were somewhat robust in their fervour. "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin, each victory will help you some other to win" (CH3 482) "Courage, brother, do not stumble though thy path be dark as night." (CH3 484/CP 513). When I was at college there was an annual football match against the ordinands from Northern Baptist College. Since they had no grounds it was always played at "our" college and tradition dictated that we sang a certain Lenten hymn in chapel on the morning of the match.

Christian! Dost thou see them  
On the holy ground  
How the powers of darkness  
Compass thee around?  
Christian! Up and smite them,  
Counting gain but loss;  
Smite them by the merit  
Of the holy cross\* (CP 484)

James Manson Neale.

(\* original final couplet was "Smite them by the merit of the Lenten fast".) Neale attributes it as an early hymn of the Greek church but no copy of it has ever been found by anyone else. In Congregationalism it was generally sung to a robust tune by Josiah Booth (not of Salvation Army fame but Organist of Park Chapel, Crouch End and involved in the editorial work of both Congregational Church Hymnal and Congregational Hymnary).

Badly dated these days it nonetheless encourages us, urging us,  
"never be downcast"

and reminds us that when we are struggling, Jesus is with us,  
Well I know thy trouble, ... I was weary too.

### **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March**

I suspect that a number of us are very familiar with the Collect for Ash Wednesday. Those brought up in the Anglican tradition will know that it is set to be said every day from Ash Wednesday until Maundy Thursday and I can't help thinking that this prayer's language has a certain timelessness about it. People have been praying it for nearly 400 years.

*Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou has made and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, and we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

### **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Today we return to James Edmeston's hymn, in preparation for the theme of the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent- The Temptations in the Wilderness.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;  
All our weakness thou dost know,  
Thou didst tread this earth before us,  
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
Lone and dreary, fain and weary,  
through the desert thou didst do.  
(R&S 543)

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent**

This year the lectionary (table of readings) draws principally on Luke's Gospel. Luke, writing to Theophilus tells the story this way: (Luke 4 verses 1-13)

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"*

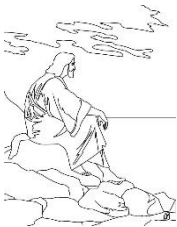
*Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written,*

*'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"*

*Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,*

*'He will command his angels concerning you,  
to protect you,'  
and*

*'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a  
stone.'"*



*Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

## Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March

Something I detect about Lenten customs today is that they appear to have become more positive. The old “church” way was to make everything very “heavy”; dark colours, no flowers in church and, as a child growing up in the Church of England the communion music my church used in Lent was a setting no one liked – so that was “good”. It was a time to give something pleasurable up. I think that today we see it rather differently- rather more positively, perhaps taking part in a Lent course, or actively studying a subject. Lent is seen as being an opportunity or a focus. Personally, I find this rather more helpful.

Spirit of our God, descending,  
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
Love with every passion blending,  
Pleasure that can never cloy;  
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,  
Nothing can our peace destroy, (R&S 543)

## Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March

Taking yesterday’s thought a little further, I suspect that my God-mother unwittingly made me question what our Lenten customs were all about. One year she decided to encourage me to give up sweets for Lent (not that I ate many as a child). She used herself as an example saying that she gave up sweets for Lent each year – and ate walnuts instead! Even as a child I thought that odd! What good did eating walnuts instead of sweets do anyone? She used to attend an old-style Gospel mission church- a real “naught for your comfort” sort of place and I could wonder if there was a “churchmanship” difference going on between us here (as well as my dislike of walnuts).

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
Melt me! Mould me! Fill me! Use me!  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. (R&S S 308)

## Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March

Another prayer today- this time the one for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent but this time a contemporary version of it.



Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are but did not sin. Give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March

Yesterday's prayer acknowledges that God knows our weakness, which seems to tie in with St Paul's frustration voiced in Romans, *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not so what I want but I do the very thing I hate.* (Romans 7.15)

I suspect that we've all been in that position- and that we've also been in the position of having done our very best but to no avail. We can despair but perhaps there is comfort to be found - God not only knows this, he is at work in that situation. Sometimes we just have to allow time for God's purpose to work out.

As St Teresa of Avila says, "Nothing distress you, nothing affright you, everything passes, God will abide."

## Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March

The Psalm set for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent is a wonderfully comforting one, talking about the security of being in God's presence. It's Psalm 91 which begins:

*You who live in the shelter of the Most High,*

*who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust."*

Later, the Psalmist writes:

*Because you have made the Lord your refuge,  
the Most High your dwelling place no evil shall befall you,  
no scourge come near your tent.*

*For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.  
On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.  
You will tread on the lion and the adder,  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under  
foot.*

*Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.  
When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble,  
I will rescue them and honour them.  
With long life I will satisfy them,  
and show them my salvation.*

## **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March**

After today the lectionary moves to fresh themes so let's conclude our thoughts on Jesus in the wilderness with verses from a very well-known Lenten hymn. Different hymnbook editors have made numerous alterations to the original text so I'll quote the first and last verses as they appear CH3

Forty days and forty nights  
Thou wast fasting in the wild;

Forty days and forty nights  
Tempted still, yet undefiled.

Watching, praying, struggling thus,  
Victory ours at last shall be;  
Angels minister to us  
As they ministered to thee

## Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March- 2nd Sunday in Lent

The Lectionary moves now to the theme of “Jerusalem and the dilemma the city’s behaviour presents.” The text comes from a collection of material which scholars believe Luke and Matthew had access to, but not Mark. Technically it’s known as “Q” (from German: Quelle, - "source"). The existence of “Q” has never been proved but is thought to be the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but not in Mark. Scholars also think that if “Q” did exist then Luke more often preserves the text’s original order than Matthew.

Let’s read the passage for today (Luke 13. 31-35) and reflect on it during the coming week. Jesus is making his way to Jerusalem, preaching and teaching in the synagogues as he journeys. As he does so ...



*At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until*



*the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

## **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March**

Jerusalem may be the location of the Temple but the city had a long history of rebelling against God. Ezekiel even maintained that the city's attitude had led to God abandoning the Temple, thus leaving the city to its fate. (Ez 10-11). In a vision, Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord departing from Jerusalem. (Ez 11.22-23)

Why, what hath my Lord done?

What makes this rage and spite?

He made the lame to run

He gave the blind their sight.

Sweet injuries!

Yet they at these

Themselves displease,

and 'gainst him rise.

(Samuel Crossman (R&S 207)

## **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March**

Do you remember the Beatrix Potter story, "The tale of Jemimah Puddleduck? If you do then you'll know that Jemima searches for a place away from the farm where she can hatch her eggs. This is because the farmer's wife considers her to be a poor sitter and so takes her eggs away from her. Naively Jemimah shares her woes with "a certain foxy gentleman who invites her to nest in a shed at his home. Jemima is only saved when Kep, the farm's collie, finds her whereabouts and rescues her just in time.

Jesus is tipped off by a possibly slightly unlikely source that Herod "the fox" wants to kill him. Jesus says that he will not be thwarted by Herod.

A contemporary hymn speaks of Jesus” taking our human form and then giving his very body for our peace.” (CH4-117). Considering the circumstances around Jesus’ arrest, trial, sentencing and crucifixion I’m not sure that one could really say that the fox got him.



### **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March**

Today’s thought picks up the illustration in Sunday’s reading about a hen gathering her brood under her wings to protect them. We’ve all seen a mother duck taking her ducklings to water so that they can swim but I am actually going slightly off track in this one.

Poppy is a friend’s dog and some years ago she had a litter of puppies. Poppy is only a little dog and the litter was quite large. A couple of weeks after they were born I went to see them. Poppy, who always kept herself so neat and spruce, looked exhausted and her coat was in need of a little care. As soon as she saw me, however, she nosed all the pups into line and looked up to me, all perky and with her little tail wagging. She was so proud of her pups. She was showing them off to me- it was just so sweet. I’ve never forgotten it, and how I bent down to pat her and make a fuss of her- and how she then let me look at each of her pups knowing that they were safe; I wasn’t going to harm them. Poppy looked done in, but her pups were her pride and they what mattered to her.

Come, let us seek our God’s protection, Jesus sets us free  
Our foes are gathered all around us  
See fear, despair, and guile enslave us  
Our eyes are tired from too much weeping  
God knows our suffering, sees our trouble  
God is our refuge and defender.  
How wonderful God’s constant love is

CH4 487

(Tom Colvin)

## Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March

Against the threat of Sunday's Gospel reading the lectionary places a Psalm of hope and of affirmation. Psalm 27.

*The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh—  
my adversaries and foes—  
they shall stumble and fall.*

*Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war rise up against me,  
yet I will be confident.*

*One thing I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the Lord,  
and to inquire in his temple.*

*For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will set me high on a rock.*

Martin Luther, in his great hymn, "Ein feste Burg" confidently writes  
And though the world seems full of ill  
With hungry devils prowling,

Christ's victory is with us still,  
We need not fear their howling.  
The tyrants of this age  
Strut briefly on the stage;  
Their sentence has been passed.  
We stand unharmed at last,  
A word from God destroys them.

Martin Luther (R&S 585)



I always find that thought so comforting- and history shows us that it's true.

### **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March**

Back to Sunday's Gospel reading. Jesus doesn't run. Herod may want to kill him- and Herod is a dangerous man- but Jesus doesn't run. According to the historian Josephus, Herod worked as an informer for the Romans and he held his position as ruler of Galilee only whilst because it was expedient to Rome. To retain his position therefore Herod had to "come up with the goods" for Rome. But Jesus doesn't run- quite the reverse.

There is a green hill far away,  
Outside a city wall  
Where the dear Lord was crucified  
Who died to save us all.

### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March**

I come back to that theme from Ash Wednesday of "going forward". Sometimes, we do have knowingly to move forward into difficult times or situations. Avoiding them is simply not possible. They have to be faced and worked through. As we leave last Sunday's Gospel reading we see Jesus in the same position. Later on, in the Garden of Gethsemane, just moments before his arrest, Jesus desperately wondered if his destiny could be avoided- and he knew that it couldn't. Instead it had to be faced.

Jesus in dark Gethsemane,  
In anguish and dismay,  
Keeping your watch alone you weep  
With your disciples fast asleep.

Your only consolation there  
-God's answer to your prayer-  
The strength to rise and make  
your way  
Through deeper gloom to  
Calvary.

Alan Gaunt (R&S 213)

## **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent.**

Our Gospel passage this week is from Luke 13 verses 1-9.

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.

Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"



The theme for this week is that of repentance.

*Prayer. Almighty God, of ourselves we have no power to help ourselves. Keep us outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls. That we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thought which may assault and hurt the soul.*



### **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March**

Perhaps my hymn verse today is partly inspired by my shock on turning to “Rejoice and Sing” and realising that there isn’t a section dedicated specifically to Penitence or Repentance. “Dear Lord and father of mankind” for example is in the “Growing in faith” section. So, let’s pick up a Spiritual

It’s me, it’s me , it’s me, O Lord  
Standin’ in the need of prayer  
Not my mother or my father  
Not my brother or my sister  
Not the stranger or the neighbour ...  
It’s me, O Lord  
Standin’ in the need of prayer. (CH4 493)

### **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

Sunday’s Gospel passage begins with an outrage. The incident isn’t specifically recorded anywhere else but clearly something has happened in the Temple where blood has been mixed. We can speculate as to what happened (possibly a group of Galileans who had gone to the Temple to offer sacrifice were mistaken as an insurrection and killed on the spot by Roman soldiers, under Pilate’s command?) To this day though we can see how, to a Jew, cross-contamination of blood would have caused huge offence

and Luke cites this to Theophilus as an example of how the Jews had been treated. Jesus, however, tells the story partly to reassure people that those “defiled” by this act would not be disadvantaged in the sight of God; and partly as a warning that those who do not repent of their sins will perish.

Not the labours of my hands  
Can fulfil thy law’s demands:  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and thou alone (R&S 365)

### **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March**

Having told Theophilus of an outrage Pilate had committed he tells him of Jesus picking up another, presumably contemporary disaster- a building collapsing resulting in the loss of 18 lives. Jesus says that they were not being picked off by God for being particularly wicked- that’s ridiculous.

Remember when York Minster was damaged by fire following a lightning strike in 1984? Remember that some said that the fire was a sign from God in response to the consecration at the minster three days earlier of the new Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins? Others said that David Jenkins was in Durham and that they felt that God’s aim was better than to miss Durham and hit York instead!

We all fail, and we all need to recognize and confess that, but I suspect that most of us will be familiar with this particular prayer of confession:

Almighty and most merciful Father,  
we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.  
We have followed too much the devices and desires

of our own hearts.  
We have offended against thy holy laws.  
We have left undone those things which we ought to have  
done;  
And we have done those things which we ought not to have  
done;  
and there is no health in us.  
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.  
Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults.  
Restore thou them that are penitent; according to thy  
promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.  
And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may  
hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,  
To the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

### **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March**

The Parable of the Fig Tree is both a caution but also a message of optimism. God is reluctant to wash his hands of us. Charlotte Elliott gives us a message of great hope.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,  
Because thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come.  
Charlotte Elliott (R&S 364)



### **Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March**

The Old Testament reading this week links into the welcome that God wishes to extend to us - and the blessing that awaits us as well.

*Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;*


*and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.  
Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.*

Synesius of Cyrene offers this prayer:

Lord Jesus, think on me, not let me go astray  
Through darkness and perplexity point out the heavenly  
way. (R&S 363)

## **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March**

Back to the parable of the fig tree. We don't know what happened next. Did the manure do the trick? Did the tree bear fruit or did it get cut down? Is there a more glorious sight than a plant in full flower or else laden with fruit? A song by the American singer, songwriter, record producer and broadcaster, Bob Kilpatrick seems to offer a thought not far removed from Jesus' parable.



In My Life Lord, Be Glorified

In my life, Lord, be glorified today.  
(R&S 375)

(Bob Kilpatrick)

## **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**

Using the lectionary in the UK today always presents a problem. Here, it's Mothering Sunday but the lectionary is produced for the

church around the world and so it doesn't pick up on individual country's festivals. This means that the set Bible readings weren't chosen with Mothering Sunday in mind. This year, however, I can pick up that theme in church and use the lectionary reading here.

Actually, there is a choice of stories set today, either the Parable of the Lost Sheep or the Parable of the Prodigal Son. I'll pick up the former- St Luke 15 verses 1-7

*Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

*So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*



In his metrical setting of Psalm 23 Henry Baker writes:

Perverse and foolish of I strayed  
But yet in love he sought me,  
And on his shoulder gently laid,  
And home, rejoicing, brought me. (R&S 552)

## Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March

Sheep considerably outnumber people in the Brecon Beacons and a number of my previous congregation were sheep farmers. This poem spoke to them.

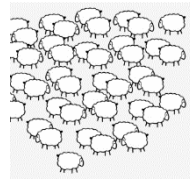
1) Sheep will stray together  
Through bank or stream or  
hollow,  
Just one will find the weakest  
place,  
And all the rest will follow.

2) Sheep will take no tempting,  
No clinging to their master;

4) Lord make me understand  
and keep myself from falling;  
Not to follow other sheep  
But hear the Shepherd calling

Another voice will sound as  
sweet  
And to a sweeter pasture.

3) Sheep are never free from  
danger,  
Always prone to plunder,  
Stolen, lost, or set upon,  
No matter what their number.



(Wilf Ward.)

I also remember one of those shepherds wryly commented that sheep can also think of a million different ways to die on you too.

## Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March

I can't think that the inclusion of today's poem is going to cause any surprise.

Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee  
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.  
By the stream & o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,

Softest clothing woolly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice!  
Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee!  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:

I, a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee.

(William Blake)

### **Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March**

Today I turn to one of those hymns I seem to have known “for ever”. It was written by a mother for her children. Sadly, that mother died when she was only 26 but thanks to her mother publishing it as a tribute, the prayer soon became well known both as a prayer and a hymn

Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me,  
Bless Thy little lamb tonight,  
Through the darkness be Thou near me  
Watch my sleep till morning light.



All this day thy had hath led me  
And I thank thee for thy care  
Thou hast clothed me, warmed and fed me,  
Listen to my evening prayer.

(CP 703/CH3 656)

### **Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March**

In this week's Gospel reading the shepherd is, of course, God who is repeatedly portrayed in the Old Testament as being the shepherd of his people. Here the shepherd's desperation to find the lost sheep is clear. Leaving 99 sheep free to wander off is not a logical thing to do (See Monday's poem)- but in desperation, logic often comes second.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Elizabeth Clephane, a Scot from Edinburgh wrote a hymn which was to become well known, possibly thanks to the tune composed for it by Ira D Sankey. "There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold" (Cong Hymnary 345/RCH 685). It includes this reflection as its 4<sup>th</sup> verse

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way  
That mark out the mountain's track?"

"They were shed for one who had gone astray  
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."

"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"

"They're pierced tonight by many a thorn."

(Elizabeth Clephane)

## Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April



Psalm 23 finds its way into many hymnbooks in all sorts of ways. There are the direct paraphrases, such as "The Lord's my Shepherd" through to hymns inspired by it. Today we read just one line, from one verse, written by Anna Waring- but which brings such comfort, I think:

My shepherd is beside me and nothing can I lack.

Anna Waring (R&S 590)

Today may be April Fool's day but there's nothing foolish about that knowledge.

## Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

After a week reflecting on the Parable of the Lost Sheep we turn to the Psalm set for last Sunday. Psalm 32 verses 1-7. It speaks about the joy of forgiveness- an aspect of the lost sheep being found.

*Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
 whose sin is covered.  
 Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
 and in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
 While I kept silence, my body wasted away  
 through my groaning all day long.  
 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
 my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.  
 Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
 and I did not hide my iniquity;  
 I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
 and you forgave the guilt of my sin.  
 Therefore let all who are faithful  
 offer prayer to you;  
 at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters  
 shall not reach them.  
 You are a hiding place for me;  
 you preserve me from trouble  
 and surround me with glad cries  
 of deliverance.*



## **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**

To me, this is Passion Sunday, when we start focussing specifically on the Passion (suffering) of Jesus. Today we enter that "sub-section" of Lent- Passiontide. My problem with the lectionary is that it comes from a Roman Catholic stable and in 1969 the then Pope abolished Passiontide as a season and moved the emphasis on the Passion forward a week to start with the beginning of Holy Week. For various reasons many traditions find this unhelpful so in Church I'll stick to today being Passion Sunday but here, in this booklet, I'll stick the with lectionary and the Gospel story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus. (St John 12 verses 1-8)

*Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."*



The English Christian worship leader, singer-songwriter and author, Matt Redman writes:

Pouring out the oil of love as my worship to you  
In surrender I must give my every part  
Lord, receive the sacrifice of a broken hearth.

Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring to so faithful a friend,  
So loving a king?  
Saviour what can be said?  
What can be sing as a praise of your name?  
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part  
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.

(CH4 503)

## Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April

What's appropriate? What's not? If we have friends come round for a meal we'd probably not give them beans on toast. Delicious though they be (especially with freshly ground, black pepper and a light sprinkling of sea salt), and although they'd fill the gap, it probably wouldn't be our immediate menu choice, even if they were Heinz beans (picked up by a million housewives every day, or so we're told). In yesterday's Gospel reading Jesus realises what is going on here and he recognizes that what's appropriate in some circumstances what isn't in others. St John tells the story as being a story of a woman believing in Jesus and making her profession of faith. The theme I'm going to pick up this week though is that of faith and worship.

Fairest Lord Jesus  
Lord of all creation  
Son of God and Mary's son.  
You will I cherish,  
You will I honour  
You are my soul's delight and crown.

Anon, trans Lilian Stevenson (R&S 273)

## Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April

Paul Gerhardt's hymn "Wie soll ich dich empfangen" asks that good question, "how should I receive you?". It's not a hymn I've ever chosen in a service although I have used it as a reading. It's in the Christmas section of our hymnbook but it's set to the Passion Chorale- which, beautiful though it is as a tune, seems rather out of keeping with Christmas. The question being asked when Jesus is born though is still as appropriate and, seems to tie in with Mary's devotion.

O Lord, how shall I meet you,  
How welcome you aright?  
Your people long to greet you,

My hope, my heart's delight.  
O kindle, Lord, most holy,  
A lamp within my breast.  
To do in spirit lowly  
All that may please you best.

Paul Gerhardt (R&S 140)

### Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April

Possibly hymns of adoration don't come much simple, or much more sincere than this, possibly written about 1972

Father, we adore you  
Lay our lives before you  
How we love you

Jesus, we adore you  
Lay our lives before you  
How we love you

Spirit, we adore you  
Lay our lives before you  
How we love you

(Terrye Coelho (R&S 29))

### Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April

Following on from yesterday, this hymn, by Donna Adkins also seems to pick up the idea of total submission and total worship from Sunday's Gospel reading.



Father, we love you, we worship and adore you; glorify your name in all the earth.

Jesus, we love you, we worship and adore you; glorify your name in all the earth.

Spirit, we love you, we worship and adore you; glorify your name in all the earth.

(R&S 30)

## Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April

Today's expression of worship reminds us that when we worship we are joined by those who have gone before us, those who have transferred their membership from the church militant to the church triumphant! We are joined by the angels in heaven.

Most gentle, heavenly Lamb,  
Whom hosts of heaven adore,  
With them we set our hearts  
on loving you the more;  
Your costly love, your gifts and grace,  
Fill all the bounds of time and space

(R&S 282)

(William Williams, Pantycelyn, trans Enid Evans and Stephen Orchard.)

## Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April

Our reflection on what's appropriate is very different today. It's a reading I first heard when I was training for ministry when another ordinand read it one morning in chapel. Our Principal was not impressed and told the student off for using it but it's always stuck in my mind and I'm glad I took a copy from her. I can't help thinking that it cuts through piety and is an expression of very sincere worship.

### All glory to God.

If I can't be honest with you, Lord, I can't be honest with anyone. You're the only person I know who can take it - not matter what I say. People are offended if I'm honest. They want to hear nice things, sweet words of happiness, gentle hymns to a gentle God, smiling somewhere on a red, velvet throne. Well, I'm sick of being phony and I don't like to act as if there's nothing wrong with me or my friends, or the world, or you! Sometimes I want to scream at you and let it out. I have a million unanswered prayers stuck in my

throat. I want you to listen when I yell at the sky, and pound my pillow, kick the ground, throw stones at the stars, slam doors, or swear at the world. Perhaps that's not giving all glory to God as others do with folded hands and frozen face - but for me it means I'm paying you the highest respect there is. It means I trust you with the truth – all the truth. (N. Habel)

## **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent- Palm Sunday**

We began this course by noting that having been baptised Jesus journeyed into the wilderness. Give our situation in the pastorate at the moment I suggested that it seemed appropriate this year to think of Lent as being a time of preparation and of going forward. As James Edmeston wrote

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us  
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,  
For we have no help but thee

Jesus' journey is coming to an end now. He and the other pilgrims going to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem have climbed the Mount of Olives and are ready to enter the city. Remember that in so doing they have left the desert that lies between Jerusalem and Jericho. (St Luke 19 verses 28-44)

*Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"*

*Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"*

*They replied, “The Lord needs it.”*



*They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.*

*When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:*

*“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”*

*“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

*As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”*

*(Have a look back to the reading and notes on 13<sup>th</sup> March as well)*

## **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April**

As a final year Ordinand I inadvertently caused considerable offence in my placement church by choosing the hymn “We have

a king who rides a donkey” (R&S 210) I’d chosen it as the children’s hymn (remember those days?!) because I thought (a) they’d know the tune and (b) it picked up the joy in the Palm Sunday story in a way in which 6 verses of “All glory, laud and honour” might not to 5 & 6 yr olds! Certain vocal members of the adult congregation did not see it that way at all, one telling me that this hymn was as low as it could get. My supervising minister, dragged into the incident, suggested that it might be a good idea to avoid this sort of hymn in the future! You can decide for yourselves if I took his advice or not but I’ve always been wary of choosing this particular hymn ever since!

We have a king who rides a donkey- and his name is Jesus.  
Trees are waving a royal welcome for the king called Jesus.  
We have a king who cares for people, and his name is Jesus.

Fred Kaan (R&S 210)

## **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April**

The Palm Sunday hymns I remember well from my childhood were, “All glory, laud and honour”, “Children of Jerusalem” and “Ride on, ride on in majesty! I still like them but I normally have to print out “Ride on” because Rejoice and Sing omits a verse- and it’s the verse which normally is at the heart of the reason why I choose the hymn in the first place. Mind you, I was delighted to read that the author of the Companion to Rejoice and Sing appears to be as baffled by the omission as I am.

Ride on!” ride on in majesty!  
The winged squadrons of the sky  
Look down with sad and wondering eyes  
To see the approaching sacrifice.

It's not that I have ever been a member of the RAF, it's just that this whole hymn moving portrays Jesus facing what awaits him in Jerusalem. In under a week "Hosanna!" will become "Crucify". Jesus knew this. The angels- the "winged squadron" - knew this too and are appalled but there's nothing that can stop it. And Jesus still rode on.

Ride on! Ride on in majesty!

In lowly pomp ride on to die!

Bow thy meek head to mortal pain,

Then take, O God, thy power and reign.

Henry Milman (R&S 209)



### **Wednesday 15th April**

Our Lent Course comes to an end today. We began with Jesus going into the wilderness and being tested by the Devil as he focussed his thought on what his earthly ministry was going to demand of him. In our course we've used the lectionary's Sunday readings and themes to think firstly about Temptation and then about Jerusalem's reputation and how God would not abandon her. Jesus, of course, wept over the city in Luke's account of the Palm Sunday story.

We've thought about an outrage, a tragedy and the Parable of the Fig Tree. We've thought too about the Parable of the Lost Sheep and how God does not give up on us when we go astray but searches for us, wanting to bring us safely home.

Through the story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet with oil and them wiping them in her hair we've thought a bit about worship and "appropriate worship". Then finally, we have walked with Jesus and the crowd of pilgrims into Jerusalem and the start of what we now call, "Holy Week".

Our Services in Holy Week and at Easter:

Please refer to the Fleet URC website: <https://fleet.urc.org.uk/>

So let us close in prayer.



Almighty God, in your great love you gave your only Son to die for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. Help us by your Holy Spirit to worship you with reverence, and to enter with joy into the celebration of those mighty acts whereby you bring us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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R&S- Rejoice and Sing  
CH3 – Church Hymnary (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)  
CH4- Church Hymnary (4<sup>th</sup> edition)  
RCH- Revised Church Hymnary  
CP- Congregational Praise  
Cong H- Congregational Hymnary.