

Prayer of Thanks for the Bible

Thank you, Father God, for sending your son, Jesus. Thank you for Mark, who first recorded the life of Jesus and all that we have read in his Gospel account this month. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession

As politicians speak of 'levelling up' and compete for voter affections, we are reminded of how Jesus turned the table on power and put the least first. As we conclude the reading of the Gospel may we too be conduits for justice, advocates for action, role models of just living, fairness and freedoms.

We remember in prayer today all who are forgotten, 'beneath the radar', unwanted or unknown. The lonely, the isolated, the ill and the uneducated. The homeless and the refugee. The unpaid and the exploited. Shine your light and show us how to call out against the injustices you highlight for us today. Shake our complacency into action for the sake of your kingdom.

We pray for your world. For countries still ravaged by pandemic. For those seeking to offer relief and protection. For countries devastated by the effects of climate change. For areas where war and argument prevent peaceful living. God grant us compassion and care for your world. May we take a small step today to bring your kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

Our Father, who art in heaven... Amen

Closing Hymn: H&P 188 / StF 294 **All you that seek the Lord who died... now let all your grief be o'er.**

In July our worship sheets will focus on the Methodist Way of Life.

Acknowledgements: Inspiration for this service was taken from the Bible Month study guide written by Kent Brower <https://www.preachweb.org/biblemonth> .

Worship at Home Darlington District

Bible Month week 4 – Passion Week



Hymn: StF 263 **Hosanna, hosanna in the highest!**

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9: 9

We join together in prayer

Jesus you are Christ, the King. You are my sovereign, Son of God.

I proclaim your majesty, your greatness. Even your humility.
I wonder at your dignity on a donkey.
You turn the tables of my expectations.
The least becomes important,
the mighty are overtaken by the overlooked.

When I give attention to the loud voices, the rich and famous and forget the poor, the marginalised and the excluded,
forgive me and overturn my priorities once more.

Jesus shows us a new way. A way of humility. The way to the cross.

Jesus, your way is challenging and uncomfortable. Give me courage, perseverance and faith to stick by you even when things are tough. **Amen**

Today we reach the climax of the Gospel account. Often we read the Passion Week accounts in short sections. What do you notice if you read Mark's passion narrative all the way through?

Reading: [Mark 11: 1 – 16: 8](#)¹

Reflection: It can seem strange to read these chapters outside the Easter season. The betrayal. The broken promises. The denials. The mockery. The agony of crucifixion. We too may want to turn away, to reach the end. To find hope.

These chapters are brimming with action, events, challenge. Mark narrates how Jesus comes into conflict with the authorities as he challenges the way religious life has developed. The fig tree in chapter 11 is a metaphor for life and activities in the temple. The religious leaders continue to challenge Jesus into chapter 12, seeking to trip him up with their questions.

The parable of the vineyard ends by quoting Psalm 118: 22-23: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." The leaders realise (Mark 12: 12) that Jesus is calling them out, but they fear the crowd who are enjoying his teaching.

If this scenario was mirrored today who might we be most like?

Jesus compares the powerful with the poor widow who gives all she has. Why is someone so poor found alongside the magnificence of the temple? Where is the justice in this scene? Where are the injustices in our own context?

Pause for thought:

What might Jesus confront in our time?

Jesus quotes from another Psalm (110) in verse 36 when he offers them a riddle. The Psalm is written by King David and 'Son of David'

is the title which Bartimaeus called out to Jesus in chapter 10. Mark is continuing to paint the picture of who Jesus is and grounding his identity in familiar Old Testament scriptures

The remaining chapters introduce a series of contrasts:

- The anointing with oil, an expression of devotion, is met with anger;
- In the Passover celebratory meal, Jesus predicts his betrayal;
- The blessing of the bread and wine speaks of life and death;
- Jesus predicts the desertion of the disciples, Peter and the others roundly reject this forecast;
- The disciples who have been told to watch (Mark 13: 32, 37; 14: 34), fall asleep;
- Jesus is agonised as he faces death in Gethsemane, yet Jesus gives himself to his Father's will;
- Judas actively brings a crowd to arrest Jesus, the other disciples sleep and do nothing;
- Jesus is silent and dignified in the face of accusations, in the courtyard outside Peter noisily denies knowing him;
- Pilate offers to release Jesus, the crowd bawl for Barabbas;
- The mockery in the trial unwittingly proclaims the truth, this is indeed the King of the Jews;
- As darkness falls and the curtain of the temple is torn in two, Jesus appears to have been abandoned and hope seems to die, yet in that moment of death hope is fulfilled;
- In the devastation of death, Jesus' identity is proclaimed by the most unlikely of observers – a Roman centurion.

The final contrast comes as death leads to new life. The faithful women find the tomb open and are told 'He has been raised, he is not here.' Do they rejoice? No they flee in terror, apparently saying nothing. But we are still passing their story on today...

¹ If you have internet access you can listen to recordings of chapters 11 to 16 on the Great 50 Days website. <https://thegreat50days.org.uk/mark11111/>