

## A Podcast for 29 March 2021, the Monday in Holy Week

[Hello! Welcome to this podcast from Erica and Bill Young. This episode is a contribution to worship for Holy Week 2021.

We are making use of the scripture prescribed for today in the Revised Common Lectionary and we are using the New International Version of the Bible.

This material was prepared for online Zoom worship in Coventry. Details of music and sources are in the online transcript. ]

In this space between whatever the day has held for each of us and whatever is waiting for us, we gather together and gather our thoughts.

This is the music for a setting by John Bell of words based on Psalm 46, verse 10. It's a simple tune, and they are simple words:

*Be still, and know that I am God and there is none beside me.*

**Music:**\* *Be still, and know* (instrumental) by John Bell, from the album *There is one among us*, the Wild Goose Worship Group of the Iona Community

### **Scripture:**<sup>†</sup>                      **Isaiah 42.1-7**

Here are words from the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 42, verses 1 to 7:

'Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen one in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him,  
and he will bring justice to the nations.

<sup>2</sup>He will not shout or cry out,  
or raise his voice in the streets.  
<sup>3</sup>A bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.  
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;  
<sup>4</sup>he will not falter or be discouraged  
till he establishes justice on earth.  
In his teaching the islands will put their hope.'

<sup>5</sup>This is what God the Lord says –  
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,  
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,  
who gives breath to its people,  
and life to those who walk on it:

<sup>6</sup>'I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;  
I will take hold of your hand.  
I will keep you and will make you  
to be a covenant for the people  
and a light for the Gentiles,  
<sup>7</sup>to open eyes that are blind,  
to free captives from prison  
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

## **Prayer:**

A prayer, as we gather. Join in or simply read the words of response: to the words

*Lord God, receive our sacrifice of worship, please respond  
**and reveal your love to us through Jesus.***

We gather, yet again divided by distance but linked through whatever technology we can deploy. We gather, on the edge of the end of one more phase of pandemic management. Not so much released as on national probation, dipping toes in the water of rules relaxed.

While so many cares and concerns distract us, help us to focus on you this Holy Week. While the media concentrate on national news, help us to see ourselves as part of a worldwide family.

While so many look after themselves, help us to look after each other.

*Lord God, receive our sacrifice of worship  
**and reveal your love to us through Jesus.***

Lord, we approach Easter through revisiting words of scripture. So few of them new to us and yet each offering a new insight, if we take the time to look and reflect.

Where familiarity blunts your message, help us to make it fresh once again.

Where knowledge of the dramatic Easter morning story dominates our thinking, help us to pace our journey through this week.

Where we have become merely observers, help us to participate.

*Lord God, receive our sacrifice of worship  
**and reveal your love to us through Jesus.***

Lord, we look back across the two millenia that have passed since the first Holy Week with its sequence of human action and reaction. Its jeopardy, drama, pain, doubt, threat, injustice, death.

Where we doubt that such injustice can have survived, may we look with honest eyes at the world.

Where we claim we would have been among the faithful, help us to admit we would have freed Barabbas.

When we hear Jesus forgive those who looked on his suffering, help us to know that he is also talking to us.

*Lord God, receive our sacrifice of worship  
**and reveal your love to us through Jesus.***

And as he taught us, so we pray together:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father, who art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

[Responsive Psalm: those with first names from A-M first, N-Z second (italics)]

**Responsive Psalm: Psalm 146**

Praise God! Praise God, O my soul!  
As long as I live I'll sing praise to my Maker.

*Do not put your trust in human leaders,  
in mortals who cannot save you.*

When they stop breathing, they return to the earth;  
on that day their plans perish.

*Those whose joy knows no bounds  
find their help and their hope in God.*

God made the heavens and the earth,  
the seas and all they contain.

*God keeps faith, deals out justice,  
and gives food to the hungry.*

God sets the prisoners free  
and opens the eyes that are blind.

*God lifts up those who have fallen  
and loves those who practise goodness.*

God cares deeply for the stranger,  
supports the widowed and orphaned,  
and ruins the schemes of the wicked.

*Praise God who rules for ever,  
from generation to generation.*

[Thanks to Janet for reading for us]

**Scripture: John 12.1-11**

A reading from the Gospel of John, in chapter 12, verses 1 to 11.

<sup>1</sup>Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup>Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

<sup>4</sup>But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, <sup>5</sup>'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' <sup>6</sup>He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

<sup>7</sup>'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.' <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'

<sup>9</sup>Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So the chief

priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, <sup>11</sup>for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

**Music reprise:** – *Be still and know that I am God (one verse)*

## Reflection

We began to prepare this evening's material early last week, just on the anniversary of the beginning of the first lockdown. *That* time was just after we had flung together a website and a podcast for the weekend of 22 March, when we were all missing from our churches for the first time. And following on its heels soon came our Holy Week podcast pilgrimage. And the scripture offered us for the Monday of Holy Week **last** year was... the same as this year.

Which made me think, not just what to say that's different but also – why is this passage from John's Gospel a part of preparation for Easter?

It is a complex little vignette of a story – punctuation along the way as Jesus insists, against his disciples' advice, on heading for Jerusalem to die. It has a number of points to make and speaks of a number of people. It speaks of Martha and Mary, their roles once again seemingly split between the practical one, Martha, with the household job to do and the spiritual one Mary, though this time Martha doesn't have a moan about it to Jesus.

It speaks of their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus had brought back from the dead, and of the chief priests who wanted – literally – to bury the evidence of that. It's the last time we hear about this man, so presumably nothing so dramatic or deadly actually happened to him that the New Testament writers felt they should chronicle.

Our passage speaks of Judas, always the villain of the piece for John the Evangelist, who takes the opportunity to give his reputation another good kicking.

But this passage also speaks of Jesus, and I reckon that's the point. How does it speak about Jesus, you might ask, since all he really does is sit there while this lady pours a crazy amount of expensive perfume on his feet?

The reason that it speaks about Jesus is the reason that it is so appropriate for Holy Week. Because when we come together in worship, we are recapturing the spirit in which the followers of Jesus, the disciples and the onlookers and the hangers-on and even the chief priests and the Pharisees listened to him, questioned him and waited to see what he would say and do next. We are, like them, trying to find out what he is like, and what God is like. Who Jesus is, and how this whole interaction between the Father in heaven and his Son on earth works out.

Even with the benefit of Easter hindsight. Even when our words link Jesus, with the Spirit, to the Father. Even when Isaiah had spoken of God's fairness and justice and yearning to help the poor, support the marginalised and encourage love between neighbours.

The sacrifice of this perfume – the waste of perfume and of money, some said. The sacrifice was of something **special** by someone **ordinary** who wanted to do this special thing for someone **unique**. Jesus was not into bigging himself up – he died a common criminal's death after wiping his own disciples' feet. But here he needed to say to those looking on: actually, yes, this is appropriate. Value me while you have me. I am worth it. Mary gets it, has seen who I am. I like to think that, if Martha had once again moaned to

Jesus about Mary not helping with the washing up, he might have said to her *Martha, be still, and know that I am God, and there is none beside me.*

Few who have taken the time to look at these words from John's Gospel today actually need to be told. Jesus is Special. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is God. But we do well to remember that and commemorate it. This Holy Week, this Easter. In fact, every day.

**Music reprise:** – *Be still and know that I am God (one verse)*

### **Prayers – Intercessions**

We turn to God in prayer once again. A traditional hymn that will have featured in yesterday's worship across the land includes this verse:

*Ride on! ride on in majesty! The angel-armies of the sky  
look down with sad and wondering eyes to see the approaching sacrifice.*

Mindful of the sacrifice of Jesus, we pray:

Jesus you gave yourself. You prepared to give yourself. You allowed more and more of your true nature to be seen, to the point where some of those closest to you saw the truth.

They could not help but see in you the Son of God, that others did not believe could possibly be among them. They could not help but worship you.

And then you set out on that last journey, to and into Jerusalem. Despite the outcome you knew would be. Despite the prospect of pain, the certainty of death.

And all of this so that you could bridge for us the gap that had opened up between humankind's vision of God and the reality. God so loved **us** that he sent **you** – not to condemn us but to save us.

As we explore how that can be, this Holy Week; as we walk behind you into and through all of its experiences, give us a fresh insight and in the end a fresh resolve to deserve what you have given, to show and share your love.

The world today needs a sharing of love. Be with those who are still in peril during this emergency; be with those who are still falling ill, who still suffer and those who care for them, those who have been bereaved, those who are anxious and those who keep society going, those trying to make the right decisions today and every day.

And may these decisions be about more than individual, political, national self-interest. In a world that needs vaccination in every country, relief from long-standing famine and conflict as well as pandemic, may our country not be found wanting in justice and fairness.

May we see you in each other, throughout the human family. May we share where we are able, through our giving of our time, our money, even just part of our supermarket shopping.

In all of this may we obey the two rules that Jesus picked out of many, that we love you and our neighbours.

We worship you, God and Son of God, and we offer our prayers to you in your name.  
Amen

We have prayed for justice in the world, and fair shares. This song speaks of the difference between the way some would see Christian faith as a journey to another better place while in fact there is a just and fair work to be done here and now.

**Hymn**            *Heaven shall not wait* by John L Bell and Graham Maule  
                         sung by the Wild Goose Worship Group  
                         from their album *Heaven shall not wait*

[Unfortunately our licensing arrangements don't permit the reproduction of the words of this song in this transcript.]

### **Blessing, Grace**

We ask God to bless us through the days of Holy Week and through all our days, and we bless each other in the words of the Grace:

*May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.  
Amen*

[podcast only]

**Closing Music:**        *Palladio*, written and played by Karl Jenkins  
                                 from the album *Karl Jenkins: Piano*.

### **Credits**

Thank you for listening to this podcast. And our thanks to Janet for reading for us. At present we expect our next episode to correspond to our next engagement to lead worship, which is at Rugby United Reformed Church in early June.

*Be still, and know* (instrumental) by John Bell, is from the album *There is one among us*, from the Wild Goose Worship Group of the Iona Community

*Heaven shall not wait* by John Bell and Graham Maule was sung by the Wild Goose Worship Group and comes from their album *Heaven shall not wait*

*Palladio*, written and played by Karl Jenkins was taken from the album *Karl Jenkins: Piano*.

---

\* All music included in this podcast is made available for download under the terms of the PRS for Music Limited Online Music Licence number LE-0019067

† Bible quotations are all taken from the New International Version, Anglicised Edition