



This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### Call to Worship

The Lord invites us to follow him  
**we take up our cross, help us to follow you,  
Lord.**

The Lord invites us to grow in our relationship  
with him  
**we are his disciples, help us, Lord, to grow in  
faith.**

The Lord invites us to answer the question, "Who  
do you say that I am?"  
**We say, you are the One who meets us here, the  
Lord, our God.**

### Hymn

Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,  
tender and true;  
out of the heart of the Father above,  
streaming to me and to you:  
wonderful love  
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,  
joyfully came;  
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,  
sharing their sorrow and shame;  
seeking the lost,  
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;  
Why do they roam?  
Love only waits to forgive and forget;  
Home! weary wanderers, home!  
Wonderful love  
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O Thou wonderful love,  
come and abide,  
lifting my heart till it rises above  
envy and falsehood and pride:  
seeking to be  
lowly and humble, a learner of Thee.

*Robert Walmsley*

### Prayer

Dear God, a year ago, I didn't know what we were  
all about to lose.

All those Sundays last February that I chose to  
skip church, I did not know that I would go so  
long without Holy Communion.

I did not know that hug I gave my parents, that  
meal out with friends, that concert ticket I passed  
on, would be the last one for a year or more.

Forgive me for complaining about my hectic  
schedule in 2019. I was busy taking my entire life  
for granted.

God, why didn't I appreciate then what I long to  
have back now?

I like to think that when the things I long for  
return to me, that I will appreciate them more  
this time. But you and I both know that's not  
likely. So today I am asking you to help me  
practice. Help me practice appreciating today  
what I may long to have back once the pandemic  
ends:

- Slowness
- So much time for cooking new soup  
recipes
- Mornings spent, not in one more traffic  
jam, but with the people I love
- My daily walk catching up with the birds

Help me savour now what I will miss when it's  
gone. Help me practice being the person today I  
regret not being in the past.

Amen.

*Adapted from Nadia Bolz Weber*

## Mark 8:31-38

### Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

### Reflection

It can be tempting to spend Lent wishing the days away and only looking forward to Easter and the joy of the resurrection. But Lent can provide the opportunity to reflect on our own mortality. I wonder if you have ever given serious thought to your own funeral for example? Many have a superstitious reticence to do this, concerned that simply thinking or talking about their own existence will somehow hasten its end, and decry these thoughts as morbid.

Jesus frequently reflected on his own death. He was someone who shattered taboos, including the taboo of death and forced those around him to come face to face with mortality. Peter couldn't cope with this. 'Stop talking like this. Of course you're not going to die. We'll protect you. Nothing bad is going to happen. Why so negative? Don't worry, be happy.' I can imagine these platitudes flying from Peter's mouth, eager to shut Jesus up.

Perhaps we have all had enough of death, having been confronted with those grim covid death figures day after relentless day. Or perhaps we haven't even begun reflecting upon these losses

and have become immune to the personal tragedies each number represents.

The death of Jesus didn't take place in a sanitised hospital ward surrounded by kind professionals. It was a brutal excruciating execution. It was the ultimate public torture designed to deter any potential insurrection. When Jesus tells us to take up our crosses, this isn't about embracing suffering with a pious rejection of pleasure or comfort. His non-violent radical approach to religious life made him an enemy of the state, and the cross lay at the end of this inevitable path. Being a follower of Jesus means confronting those taboos in our world which may not win us any popularity contests; challenging the status quo rarely does. But Jesus reminds us we cannot remain neutral in the face of injustice if we commit ourselves to following his way.

Walter Brueggemann said, "The Gospel is a very dangerous idea. Jesus did not get crucified because he was a nice man." Jesus had a radical approach to the value of human life, a healthy suspicion of authority and the inability to remain politely quiet when confronted with injustice. He spoke out; he noticed. Lepers, tax collectors, menstruating women; they were all given attention and respect. The way of the cross is the non-violent resistance against those structures which ensure some people are prevented from fulfilling the humanity God intends, such as those systems which ensure some are kept in poverty. Jesus subverts power, questioning those with wealth or authority and making them confront the perpetuation of poverty and marginalisation. No wonder those with political and religious power didn't like Jesus!

This passage helps us to confront the taboo of death; to ask probing questions about why certain groups of people are at a higher risk of an untimely death than others. As Christians we should be asking questions about why areas of deprivation have a lower average life expectancy than affluent ones, or why BAME people are at higher risk of dying from covid, or why suicide rates among men remain stubbornly high. The gospel expects no-one to be left behind, because we cannot enjoy the good news of salvation when others continue to be oppressed. Our salvation is not an individual or private matter. Our life and our death is not individual or private because we are bound together. It is when we name death and abuse and suffering and when we take a stand against these things that we

choose the gospel because we are choosing life itself.

### Prayer

Loving God,  
it feels so tempting to walk away from tough choices,  
to see our own individual needs as most important.  
Like Peter, our focus is on what suits us best.

Yet you desire more for us,  
you long for something deeper from us.

The way of the cross, denying ourselves;  
and giving up that which makes us feel safe on our own  
and protected from others, is what brings life.

You turn our worlds upside down  
and invite us to choose differently;  
in losing our lives we gain them.

Loving God,  
help us lean on you when the tough choices come,  
so that our lives may reflect the way of the cross.  
Amen

*Nadene Snyman*

### Hymn

Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
not for ease that prayer shall be,  
but for strength that we may ever  
live our lives courageously.

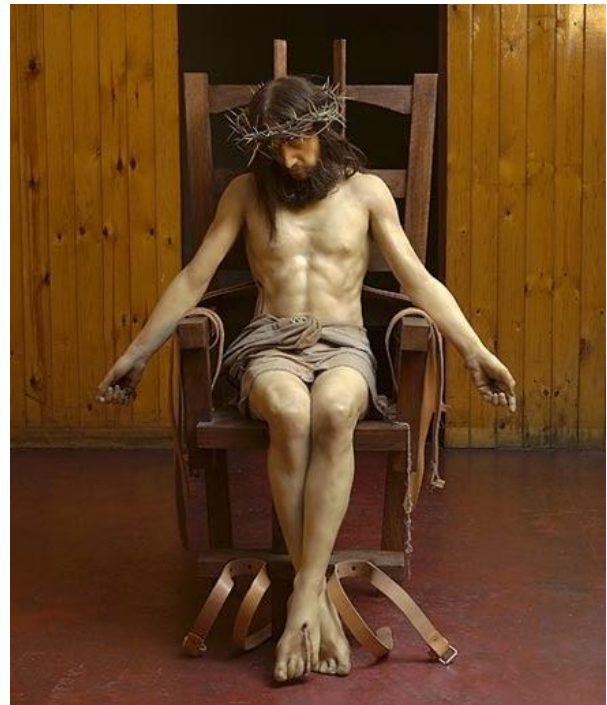
Not forever in green pastures  
do we ask our way to be;  
but the steep and rugged pathway  
may we tread rejoicingly.

Not forever by still waters  
would we idly rest and stay;  
but would strike the living fountains  
from the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,  
in our wanderings be our guide;  
through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Father, be there at our side.

*Love Maria Willis*

### Prayers of Intercession



*The image above is by the artist Paul Fryer that caused great controversy when it was displayed in the cathedral of Gap in France. The artist wanted to reclaim some of the scandal of the execution of Jesus, reminding us that today the chosen method might be the electric chair rather than the cross. As you reflect on this image, I invite you to pray:*

Holy God,

Am I really prepared to take up the cross? What does this mean for me? Life can already be pretty tough; do I really want to subject myself to any more suffering?

And yet...I hear stories of poverty, of hungry children, of families in inadequate cramped housing. Show me where I can help, where I can care, where I can love, even if this means being a bit less comfortable myself.

...I hear stories of prisoners, whose mental health was fragile before incarceration, of not seeing their loved ones for years, of torture. Show me where I can help, where I can care, where I can love, even if this means being a bit less comfortable myself.

...I hear stories of people experiencing abuse, physical and mental battering's from people who should love them, of discrimination, of being told to stay in their lane. Show me where I can help, where I can care, where I can love, even if this means being a bit less comfortable myself.

...I hear stories of extreme weather, of flooding, of danger to life, of fires and storms. Show me where I can help, where I can care, where I can love, even if this means being a bit less comfortable myself.

Holy God, you came into a world desperate for love, and you showed you loved so much it took you to the cross. Our world continues to need that love. Give me courage to be your instrument. Amen

### **Central American's Lord's Prayer**

Our Father,  
who is in us here on earth,  
holy is your name  
in the hungry  
who share their bread and their song.  
Your kingdom come,  
which is a generous land  
which flows with milk and honey.  
Let us do your will,  
standing up when all are sitting down,  
and raising our voice  
when all are silent.  
You are giving us our daily bread  
in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn.  
Forgive us  
for keeping silent in the face of injustice,  
and for burying our dreams,  
for not sharing bread and wine,  
love and the land.,  
among us, now.  
Don't let us fall into the temptation  
of shutting the door through fear;  
of resigning ourselves to hunger and injustice;  
of taking up the same arms as the enemy.  
But deliver us from evil.  
Give us the perseverance and the solidarity  
to look for love,  
even if the path has not yet been trodden,  
even if we fall;  
so we shall have known your kingdom  
which is being built for ever and ever.  
Amen

*Bread of Tomorrow (ed. Janet Morley)*

### **Hymn**

Come with me, come wander, welcome the world  
where strangers might smile or where stones  
may be hurled;  
come leave what you cling to, lay down what you  
clutch  
and find, with hands empty, that hearts can hold  
much.

*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools!  
Sing hey for the Pharisees leaving their rules!  
Sing hey for the fishermen leaving they nets!  
Sing hey for the people who leave the regrets!*

Come walk in my company, come sleep by my  
side,  
come savour a lifestyle with nothing to hide,  
come sit at my table and eat with my friends,  
discovering that love which the world never ends.

Come share in my laughter, come close to my  
fears,  
come find yourself washed with the kiss of my  
tears;  
come stand close at hand while I suffer and die  
and kind in three days how I never will lie.

Come leave your possessions, come share our  
your treasure,  
come give and receive without method or  
measure;  
come loose every bond that's resisting the Spirit,  
enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.

*John Bell*

### **Sending**

We go from here  
walking the Way of Christ,  
sharing the Messiah's good news,  
prepared to take up our crosses,  
and to be God's people.  
We go to serve,  
to live in love,  
and to act with grace.