

The journey of Holy Week through the Lenten Cross at home

sent out on 1st April - but this is no joke.

Things you will need:

You will need to find some simple things for this Holy Week Journey so prepare in the next couple of days.

- A Wooden Cross- either one you already have or tie two bits of wood/branch together in the shape of a cross
- A Palm cross – you probably have one somewhere in your house from a previous year or simply make a paper cross, or a palm leaf from an indoor plant or whatever you can find.
- Stones
- Red Ribbon, red wool or something similar
- Some Coins
- A bowl, soap and flannel/towel
- Some nails and hammer, and a sign “Jesus, King of the Jews” –(make your own)
- For Easter Day you will need some fresh flowers from your garden if you have one.

If you cannot find what you need make something or get a picture – be imaginative – you may have the time this year like never before.

Perhaps a camera to record your week.

Palm Sunday - What kind of King is this

Take your wooden cross and place the palm cross or a palm branch by it.

Mark 11: 8-10

Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,
"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Everybody seems to want to be a “somebody,” they want their 15 minutes of fame and

more besides if they can get it. You can become a celebrity by becoming a celebrity; by doing nothing other than winning a ‘Reality’ TV contest like Big Brother, The Apprentice and many others besides, which I have not watched

“Pointless Celebrities” is one of my favourite programme titles; when I watch it, I also, alongside Richard ask questions – mine would be “who is that?” for I recognise so few of these celebrities

Jesus did not have social media for self-promotion; his fame came through word of mouth as people told and retold what he had said and done.

On this day of entry into Jerusalem the Temptation is there to accept the wild adulation of the crowd. With its’ backing could he attempt an over-throw of the Roman forces? It might not have been on his mind but it was likely to be in the mind of some onlookers.

We shall look tomorrow at the time of temptation Jesus endured at the start of his ministry and our temptation.

Everybody wants to be “a somebody”! Do you? Did you?

Perhaps at school when you played for a school sports team you wanted the shouts of adulation for scoring the winning goal, try, run or whatever; to get mentioned in School Assembly and get called to the front of the hall.

What kind of King was Jesus? Power seeking? Fame seeking? Riches Seeking?

No. What kind of King was Jesus? He was The Servant King kind, but more of that on Thursday.

As we begin this Holy Week journey without the corporate worship of previous years let us make space to be still and reflect all the more on the acts of Love and Grace expressed by our God.

Prayer

In this most holy of weeks help us to stay close to Jesus that we may recognize the unfolding work of God. In this week when we are thinking of others, alongside and separated from self, may we remember that Jesus was thinking of us as he went the

way of the cross. As we remember the way of the cross may we never lose sight of your amazing love.

Amen

Monday - Stones

On this Monday of Holy Week place the stones at the cross reminding us of the temptation Jesus endured.

Mark 1:11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Matthew 4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’

“Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

During these last few weeks people have faced the temptations to put self before others whilst the message has been think of others.

Many have been buying more than they needed for fear there would not be any when they needed it. The problem with that approach is that it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We have been tempted to criticise and focus on the negative.

In 38 years of preaching during the season of Lent (I started really young) I have so often focused upon the first part of the passage; today it is those last 6 words that I want you to focus upon as you pray and reflect.

“And angels came and attended him.’

Those same angels that would not let him strike a foot against a stone ministered to him.

In these last difficult days and weeks there have been many stories of neighbour looking after neighbour. “And angels came and attended him.’

In time of need and difficulty the angels are there; you might have been one; dropping that little gift on a doorstep that brought a smile to a face; the phone call, email or note dropped through the door that said “not forgotten”. “And angels came and attended him.’

In your times of need an angel may have come and visited you without you

knowing. “And angels came and attended him.’

As Paul wrote to the **Philippians, 4:8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Prayer

God of covenant help us not so much to focus on what we have been called to give up in our normal pattern of living but on how much we ‘give in’ to your ways. May we remember that “angels came and attended him” and they do to us also. Amen

Tuesday - Red ribbon

Mark 8 v34 & 35

If anyone wants to follow me he must first forget about himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever is willing to lose his life for my sake and the Gospel will be saved. On the second day of Holy Week place a red ribbon round the Lenten Cross. For those who are used to a

Christingle Service the red ribbon will you remind you of the one placed around the orange symbolising the blood of Christ shed for the whole world.

In this time of Social Distancing and isolation many have been tempted not to pay the price and in so doing put other lives at risk.

On Mothering Sunday Anita and I were thinking about going for a walk. We thought of many places we could go one of which was a walk along the canal towpath a gentle flat and calming place to stroll. We then realised there would be a problem if we met somebody walking the other way – two metres of separation would have put someone in the canal. We did not walk the canal towpath. The easy path was not the way to go.

Jesus would not put Kingdom life at risk by choosing an easy way either he went the way of the cross.

We remember that the call upon Jesus, which he then passed on to his followers, and upon us is not an easy one – it is costly and often counter cultural. To “forget

about self, take up your cross and follow Jesus” is the call to all disciples; it is the call of love.

It is the call of all who find their sins forgiven by the grace, mercy and love of God expressed in the life of Jesus and emphasised in the last week of “his earthly, bodily life”.

Isaiah 1:18-19

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord.

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land;

Psalms 51 :1-13

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and

blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Prayer

Most holy God, give us the desire to reject the easy path of evil and selfishness no matter how profitable or popular it appears and to

seek to do the right thing even though it may cost us dearly in this life but not in your Kingdom. Amen

Wednesday - Coins

Matthew 21 Jesus at the Temple

¹² Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³ “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,”^[a] but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’^[b]”

On this third day of Holy Week we scatter coins at the foot of the cross to remember the cleansing of the temple and the money given to Judas as betrayal money; money he threw away.

On Maundy Thursday for nearly 70 years Queen Elizabeth II has given Maundy money to people; as I write this I do not know what will happen this year. Tomorrow we shall perhaps find out.

What have you spent money

on these last few weeks? What have you not purchased? Have you missed it? In gratitude to God what can we offer to him in this season?

So often money becomes an issue in families and communities. Money can split a family after bereavement: it can cause issues when someone is so determined to leave a legacy to their children that they fail to have the care they need for themselves.

Money is not inherently bad as some people who misquote the Scriptures 1 Tim 6:10 seem to perceive it.

“For the **love of money** is a root **of** all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

When we spend money we make a difference to so many people in the money chain of transfer. In these recent days we may have spent less money as we have not gone out and socialised but the one whom normally we purchase from is cut off from income. The government are seeking to support people by

helping a number of businesses. We in turn will help them as in due course we shall bear some of that cost.

During this day pray for those with whom you have not spent money these last few weeks.

During this day pray for those who are struggling with many issues one of which is financial

During this day pray that god would guide you how you can use the resources you have to help others in time of need.

Prayer

Help us God to love you and your ways: to respect the wisdom of our elders, protect the lives of those around us, cherish the relationship entrusted to us, and learn the value of enough. In Jesus name. Amen

Thursday - Maundy Thursday

On Maundy Thursday we place a bowl, a towel and some soap at the foot of the Lenten Cross – God come among us to serve. How can we do anything less? The soap is not normally put by the Lenten Cross but this last

few weeks we have been reminded to wash our hands with soap and water; place it there.

For Maundy Thursday the reflection will be in two parts; you might like to find two times to do it.

John 13 v 4 & 5

Jesus rose from the table, took off his outer garments and tied a towel round his waist. Then he poured some water into a bowl and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel.

Prayer

God of mystery and mercy grant us new life with you as we draw near in remembrance during this journey of Holy Week. Amen
We begin with the servant attitude of Jesus.

When Anita and I were at Cliff College some 35 years ago all students had to undertake some manual duties around the college. Some worked outside in the grounds others indoors on differing tasks. The task were allocated and not chosen. The loudest student in the first couple of days was given the task of

cleaning the college toilets. There was a sense across the community of students "he deserved it".

At the end of the first term we could apply for a change of task; Nick kept cleaning the toilets, by choice for he had learnt a lot by doing such a task about service to others.

As one who has the privilege of ministry from the front I am grateful for those who it unseen and unnoticed until for some reason until job is not done. When I worked in Newport, South Wales there was a complaint one week that the brass had not been polished. I asked the question, "Do you know who does it?" "No" was the reply. It was an elderly gentleman who on a Tuesday evening drove his wife to the ladies fellowship. Whilst she was in the Fellowship he went into the Church and cleaned the brass. He developed Parkinson's disease and could no longer do it. Years of service unnoticed.

Think and pray for those who do the unseen jobs around the Church and the Community; who do things

you perhaps had never thought about them being undertaken..

Ask of God if there a servant task you can do in the Church or the Community?

Part Two.

Perhaps you can reflect upon this part around your evening meal.

Matthew 26

⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

²³ Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the ^[b] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

At the end of your meal take a piece of bread and think about all those who enabled it to be in your hand. Give thanks for them. Eat it; slowly, chew it, taste it and remember Jesus the Bread of Life. Be still and reflect upon all he has done for you.

Take a glass of wine – or some other drink if you prefer – Give thanks for all those

involved in its journey to you. Drink it, slowly, taste it, savour it; be still with it and remember Jesus who said I am the vine and my Father is the vinedresser, abide in me.

After supper find space on your own. Be still and wait, perhaps in a darkened room; Watch and Pray. Remember the journey in faith you made this week with Jesus.

A prayer

Lord God, in thanksgiving I pause, in thanksgiving I am still, in thanksgiving may I go forward day by day. Amen

Good Friday - Hammer and Nails

On Good Friday we bring nails and we attach a sign naming Jesus as 'King of the Jews'. – and another stating "My King"

John 19:17-20

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It

read: Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

There are some people who have a regular routine everyday or a pattern of the week that gives us focus and help us know where we are, who we are and what we are. In the last few weeks that pattern has changed for many.

Easter season has a pattern around it in Church life. When I was a teenager growing up on Good Friday morning it was the walk of witness through the town; a packed lunch in the Church, a walk with the Young People's Fellowship to a country chapel who celebrated their anniversary on Good Friday, an anniversary tea, a celebration service and the

walk home if you couldn't beg a lift home.

The story is similar in other communities. When I was in Cleveleys each church had a morning service then we walked from that church into the centre of town for an outdoor service in the centre of town at Noon.

This year all is different. In Stourbridge no walk, in Kinver no walk to the Edge. In houses people will hopefully be pausing and praying Perhaps the removal of the pattern will cause us to be more aware of the story through doing the unfamiliar.

If you can make time to read the Good Friday events from the four different Gospels; do so, read slowly spot the differences; you might ask "Why?" you might find your own answer.

As you read of that Friday which part resonates with you? With which character would you most identify?

And a simple prayer for today,

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy. Amen.

Saturday – Sit and pray reflecting on the week just gone – Christ's week and your week.

Perhaps photograph your Lent cross and share with others.

I give you no other guidance for once the body was in the tomb they all wondered "What do we do now?".

Easter Sunday -Jesus Has Risen

Matthew 28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he

has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

On this Easter Sunday take away everything else and bring fresh flowers, perhaps from your garden and place them on the cross.

We transform this cross into something that speaks of life, the beauty of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross stands empty to the skies!

But pause; we know the story. That first Easter morning was not so much one of celebration but of mystery.

It was not until later that Jesus appeared to them – "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." John 20:20 my favourite understatement of all time!

Our Easter Hymns ring with Hallelujahs – depending on who you are and where you live, cry out or sing Hallelujahs to our God.

Death is conquered by love; hope restored, light overcomes darkness.

We need good news and this is the day of Good News, God News.

Get out your hymnbooks. Read the Easter Hymns, sing them if you can immerse yourself in the message of life, hope, light and opportunity.

Christ is risen - He is risen indeed!

Alleluia !!