

 Worship for the Week beginning SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2020

**Opening prayer and confession.**

Almighty God, you know our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you. We pray that as we rest in your Word this morning, we may know the peace that comes from your eternal presence.

Loving God, we confess before you our own sin, the sin of the Church and the sin of the world in which we share. We have not loved you with our whole being; we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves. In your mercy, forgive us and release us from the sins of the past. Remake us so that we walk in your ways; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Assurance of forgiveness**

The Lord says, “If anyone wants to become my follower, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” May the God of all mercy forgive you all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness, and fill you anew in the power of his Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Song: King of kings, majesty,**

God of heaven living in me.

Gentle Saviour, closest Friend,

Strong Deliverer, Beginning and End:

All within me falls at Your throne.

 Your majesty, I can but bow;

I lay my all before You now.

In royal robes I don't deserve,

I live to serve Your majesty.

Earth and heaven worship You,

Love eternal, faithful and true,

Who bought the nations, ransomed souls,

Brought this sinner near to Your throne:

All within me cries out in praise.

**Reading: Matthew 27:45-54**

**45**From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. **46**About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *“Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?”* (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3A45-54&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24176b)]

**47**When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

**48**Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. **49**The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

**50**And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

**51**At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split **52**and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. **53**They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+27%3A45-54&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24183c)] went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

**54**When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

**Time to reflect**

WORDS FROM THE CROSS (4)

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

We have gone from limitation to lockdown in just a few days to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Confined to our homes for the most part, some may feel isolated, alone and even abandoned. Well, this morning if that’s how you are feeling… on the cross Jesus was also isolated, alone and abandoned.

**JESUS: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (v46)**

This cry is taken from the opening words of Psalm 22. Jesus was forsaken on the cross, rejected for our sake so that we can be accepted by God. This is the great transaction where our sins, yours and mine, were placed on Jesus, and where we were made righteous before God our Father through the death of his Son Jesus.

But there is a secondary benefit to Jesus’ being forsaken. Not only are we made righteous before God, when we are feeling abandoned, God hears our cry. Jesus has been abandoned by God so you don’t have to be.

When you are going through tough times, remember the words of Jesus in that he was forsaken for you, and remember the promise of scripture –“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” God promises never to forsake us because of the cross of Christ. So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

**CENTURION AND THOSE WITH HIM: “Surely he was the Son of God!” (v54)**

Jesus’ death did have an effect on the Roman soldiers. Even though they don’t have a carefully formed faith, these soldiers sense something of God present in Jesus and in the event of Jesus’ death. God was here, God was in Jesus.

Just as Gentile visitors from the east came at his birth, so Gentile visitors from the west were there at his death. Life would never be the same for these men now they have been in the presence of the one true God. Their lives were shaken as much as the rocks around them.

When your life is shaken, when your world splits apart, where do you turn? For us as Christians it is natural and right for us to turn to Christ. He is the one who was forsaken for us, the one who gave his life so that we could live. We can be shaken by all kinds of troubles in life, but looking to Jesus gives us hope in the place of despair. How might you do this?

1. Turn to Scripture and read his living Word.
2. Pray knowing you are accepted by the living God.
3. Reach out to others and tell them that they are accepted by God in Christ. Maybe while in self-isolation you could write a letter that shares your faith or tells your story of following Jesus, or post something on your Facebook page or whatever other social media you possess.

Christ’s cry of dereliction came as he stormed the gates of hell to open the way for us to enter eternal life. May his cry be your joy.

Let’s pray.

**Prayers of intercession**

Loving God, just as Jesus knew what it was like to be utterly forsaken, we pray for the world at this time, especially for those who are alone and afraid. We pray for those who are unwell with the virus, for those treating them, for the government as it tries to contain the virus, and for everyone’s response, that we might all think of others at this time.

We pray for our family and friends whom we are unable to be with. Bless them with confidence in you.

We pray for our church community, scattered into our own homes. Yet we thank you that we are one in Christ Jesus, joined in partnership with each other by the power of the Holy Spirit. We look forward not only to that day when we will be able to gather for worship and church life, but we also look forward to that day when we gather in your presence, face to face in your eternal kingdom.

All these things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and we pray the prayer which he taught us.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done

on earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those

who trespass against us

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil

For the kingdom, the power

and the glory are yours

now and for ever.

Amen.

**How deep the Father’s love for us**,

how vast beyond all measure,

that He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.

How great the pain of searing loss –

the Father turns His face away,

As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders;

Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.

It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished;

His dying breath has brought me life –

I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom;

But I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.

Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer;

But this I know with all my heart –

His wounds have paid my ransom.

**Closing Prayer**

Merciful Father,

We thank you for your Son Jesus Christ, for his sacrificial death for our sake. Lead us by your Spirit as we walk in the light of his