



Weekly worship resource for Gladsmuir and Longniddry

Available in printed form and online at:
www.longniddrychurch.org.uk
and
www.weethought.com

Issue number 4: Friday 10th April 2020

Good Friday worship from home

The day of Christ's execution is a crucial moment in our year, focusing as it does, not only on a death but on a coming redemption. Without Good Friday there can be no Easter.

Over the last few months I had been planning a big event for Good Friday, combining the story of Jesus' journey to Calvary with dramatic narrations and live music performed by members of the Heart & Soul Swing Band. This is called "The Blues Passion" but, as you can imagine, the Covid-19 pandemic means our Holy Week suite will have to wait for another year.

Modern technology has come to our aid in the form of a video for those who have internet access (just type in "Gladsmuir Longniddry" into the Youtube site and you will find it there). Many people, however, do not use the internet, so this one-off issue of *The Friday Focus* offers readers an opportunity to take in the readings and edited narrations, along with some fine hymns.

As we travel along a particularly rough road in 2020, let's remember in our prayers all who are finding life particularly hard this Good Friday, whether in isolation or in hospital.

Inside you will see a cut-down script of the "The Blues Passion". Look up the listed Bible readings and hymns; then you will be able to follow the flow of Holy Week from beginning to end. And I do hope, at this time, that your faith gains something from the journey which has inspired the Church for centuries: Christ's *via dolorosa*: the sorrowful way of the Cross.

A poem: "Jesus walks among us"

These verses form part of "The Blues Passion", focusing on Christ's walk to Golgotha.

*Faithful one, you walk among us
through the city's noise and heat
with a mission and a purpose
sent from God, to make complete.*

*Walk for us in deepest courage,
as you honour God's own call.
Walk for us in true conviction:
never falter, never fall.*

*Come to rob the grave of triumph,
Christ, whose presence casts out fear.
Rend the earth, then walk upon it.
In dawn's early light, draw near.*

The Passion of Christ ...

Today, we recall a journey. In word and music let our imaginations take us to Jerusalem, where we witness an unfolding drama which will change the world. The Passover is near, the pilgrims have arrived in their hoards, and one visitor is occupying the attention of everyone, whether in imperial palace or Temple or city street. His name is Jesus.

CH367: *Hosanna, loud, hosanna, the little children sang*

Reading: Mark 11: 1–11 (“The triumphant entry into Jerusalem”)

Nathaniel speaks:

I am an attendant serving in the Temple. It was to be quite a week. First we saw the arrival of a strange Galilean at the gate to the city. He wanted to make a grand entrance, no doubt meant for the Romans as well as for my bosses. But that would only be the beginning. There was a scene in our precincts when the money-changers found their tables turned. Who knew what it was all about? Total lawlessness in the place where the Law was held most dear. What could it mean? All so ominous. All so troubling.

CH502: *Take my life, Lord, let it be consecrated, glad and free*

Reading: Mark 14: 1–9 (“Jesus is anointed at Bethany”)

Rachael speaks:

I am housekeeper in the home of Simon. I had never set eyes on the woman before, and I knew nothing about her. One thing was certain though: she had faith: the kind of faith that shows itself in love. If you ask me, she did what she could for someone who meant so much to her. I would go so far as saying she invested her money, and herself, in the man who was about to give his all. This woman trusted in something beyond the understanding of other folk: that soon there would be an outpouring of love set to cost so, so much more.

CH510: *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

Reading: Mark 14: 10–31 (“Jesus eats the Passover meal with his disciples”)

Benjamin speaks:

I am a property owner who lets out houses in the city. There in an upper room, reclining at a table big enough for everyone, this man told his friends to remember. Remember the body that will be broken. Remember the blood about to be shed. Bread and wine: simple staples soon to take on a new meaning, like poetry unfolding in the mind. Remember. Keep remembering. Don’t ever forget all that would unfold. ... And so they left, the bread and wine within them, slowly seeping into their souls.

CH378: *Praise to the Holiest in the height, and in the depth be praise*

Reading: Mark 14: 32–52 (“Jesus is arrested”)

Lydia speaks:

I am a local resident privileged to live by a peaceful garden. But that night my Gethsemane became a place of confusion. For him, there would be the prospect of suffering, the realisation that those who had sworn to stay close by would fail, unable to fight off sleep, far less enemies. And for his friends, there would be the terrible spectacle of one of their own indulging in the ultimate act of betrayal, his treachery sealed with a kiss. Faced by the crowd those disciples would throw off their sleep in a panic of wakefulness, and run for their lives.

... from St Mark's gospel

CH9: *O God, my refuge, keep me safe: on you my good depends*

Reading: **Mark 14: 53–72 (“Jesus before the Council”)**

Susanna speaks:

I am a cook in the residence of the High Priest. Inside that grand house, the leaders kept arriving and the fuss grew bigger and bigger. Who was this man? Just a carpenter's boy? Surely more than that. But who could say? Only the prisoner. To one single question he gave his answer: “I am.” And so he was condemned: just another common criminal ready to pick up his cross. One among so many he would die at the hands of Rome, while outside in the courtyard another wept bitter tears of remorse.

CH374: *From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled*

Reading: **Mark 15: 1–32 (“The Crucifixion”)**

Cyrus speaks:

I am an officer of the Roman Army. So many times I've been here. So many times. Of course, it's never easy overseeing an execution, what with all the hammers and nails, but I just say to the boys on duty: “This is the way to build an empire.” Take a common rebel and show them who's boss. And it certainly sets a good example for anyone else who might have ideas. And so I play my small part: a cog of civilisation in ignorant outposts so far from home. This time was different though. Truly, this man was more than just different.

CH382: *O Sacred Head! sore wounded, with grief and shame bowed down!*

Reading: **Mark 15: 33–47 (“The Death of Jesus”)**

Jacob speaks:

I am a digger out at the city dump. That fellow who had caused such a fuss in the Temple, well he was paying the price for his troubles now. They say he had friends, special friends, but I never saw them – no doubt scattered and in hiding. Anyone would in that situation. But there were others there that day: those women whose tears showed their love. Poor souls, they'd been with him all the way through to the bitter end. Risky, I thought, brave of them to be there so near at hand at a time such as this.

CH406: *They crucified my Saviour and nailed him to the tree*

Reading: **Mark 16: 1–8 (“The Resurrection”)**

Mary speaks:

I am a friend of Jesus. We had been on the road for such a long time, slowly making our way to Jerusalem. Just why, it's hard to tell. Being in his company, following in his way, was enough of a goal for us. But Friday? No, that terrible Friday none of us had seen coming. And after the Sabbath, what were we to do? Mary, Salome and I knew the grim task that would be ours. Not a duty, not a chore: in fact, we saw it as a privilege. Only, Sunday would bring something to petrify each one of us: shock, confusion; an impossible possibility.

CH418: *Away with gloom, away with doubt! With all the morning stars we sing*

The Lord is Risen! He is Risen indeed. Alleluiah!

Praying for others



A cross of light, Longniddry, summer 2019

Mysterious God, eternal and wise,
we come to you confused and uncertain
on this troubling Good Friday.

We stand at the foot of the cross
where your Son dies a lonely painful death,
a death that reveals the depth of your love for us.

We come today to remember:
that this love overcomes death;
that this love is greater than our hatred;
that this love is for us and for all.

Forgive us, O God, for those times when we have forsaken you,
when we have turned away from
the trials and terrors endured by you, in love of us.

Forgive us, O God, when we have ignored the needs
of those around us and chosen instead the easy path of complacency.

God of grace and God of mercy,
forgive us and make us new,
granting us strength and courage to bear our cross.
May we die to self so that you might live through us.

In the name of him who gave his all, we pray.
Amen.