



Weekly Worship Resource for Gladsmuir and Longniddry

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Today's reading

Mark 14: 12–26 (“The Last Supper”)

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.’ So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.’ They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, ‘Surely, not I?’ He said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.’

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’ Amen. (NRSV)

Today's hymns

God is our refuge and our strength (CH: 36)

Give thanks for life (CH: 736)

I have a dream (CH: 710)

Bring to the Lord a glad new song (CH: 106)

God save our gracious Queen (CH: 703)



In the Name of the Father and of

You might imagine that 100 years and more of history would have taught us how to look back on the Great War with crystal clarity, to see for ourselves what went wrong in 1914. You might think we would be able to say: We know full well what happened. We have truly learned from the mistakes of that generation and now we make this solemn oath to this and future generations: it will never, never happen again.

Promises such as this need to start early. Children in nurseries and in schools need to understand what peace is and how they can build and maintain it in their own relations with others: family members, friends, teachers, neighbours. The youngest in our society need to be brought up with a sense that hands held open are so much better than fists tightly clenched.

And this is happening! It's a great thing, for example, that so many schools describe themselves as "rights respecting schools", in which everyone, pupils and teachers alike, are encouraged to focus on the rights that need to be honoured across the school community and beyond. Start them young, and hopefully some of that respect for rights and respect for others will stick and will grow with a child, into adult life.

Meanwhile, adults need to grasp the fact that peace is fragile and needs to be protected and reinforced rather than scorned and torn down. We, right here in the UK, are the ones who need to promote the necessity of the rule of law and of international law. We are the ones who need to take responsibility for the maintenance of peace in our world: real peace, that is nurtured, not fake peace that is imposed through might and force of arms.

Thinking back to how the Great War came about, we can see that proud, competing empires did their best to promote their own power and possession. Three cousins, Georgie, Nicky and Willy, ruled over the empires of the United Kingdom, Russia and Germany. These three boys had grown up together, they had holidayed and partied together, they had even made each other honorary generals of their various armies.

But human pride intervened to turn these friendly cousins into rivals and enemies. By 1918, one was in a constitutional monarchy, one was in exile and one was in the grave. (As, of course, were millions of others in a world that had changed so very much over the space of a decade.)

We might look at the mighty rulers of the world to see how power can corrupt so easily. We would also do well to recall that we too can be beguiled by the power we might hold over others in everyday life: our colleagues; our neighbours; even other family members. How do we distort our relationships for cheap, personal gain, or to make us feel superior? It is up to each of us to think that through and come to conclusions we might not like to consider.

Just imagine: what would our society be like if people decided not to flaunt their power but rather to invest their power in making this country – this world – more whole, more united, more open, more sustainable for all? A challenge! Yet that was very much the kind of challenge Jesus of Nazareth faced up to in his life and in his ministry. At the start of Mark's gospel we are reminded that Jesus was tempted, yet he overcame those temptations (to personal power, to greed, to celebrity).

the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .

Then, very near the end of Mark's gospel, we find Jesus in an upper room in Jerusalem, surrounded by those 12 friends who had proved themselves such bad, power-crazed followers. Those male disciples had felt sure all along that Jesus was all about power: big power; the kind of all-encompassing power that would lead the people to freedom from the iron grip of their Roman masters. If anyone could free them from Caesar, it had to be Jesus.

But Jesus was having none of it. Instead, on Maundy Thursday, the night before his death, there in that upper room he told his friends what his world-changing message was all about: his body about to be broken and his blood about to be poured out upon a cross.

Jesus models for us the way of selfless service: giving up something deeply valued in order to do something big. In his case, what he gave up was his life on a cross. By doing that, the big thing Jesus achieved was to point all humanity to the saving grace of the God of Love.

For us in 2020, at the end of a year that has seen so much death, what can we do to follow in the selfless, sacrificial way of Jesus? We can do our best to build a better future, for us and for those generations which are coming after us.

What message are we to be guided by? What call are we to heed?

Surely, our message must be the message of Christ himself, and our call the loud and clear call of peace, which itself must be louder and clearer than the call of hatred.

And if democracy is itself to be of value, then our democracy must rest on you and on me. Do we dare to be idealistic, do we dare to dream, do we dare to place our cross in the box marked peace? Or do we just want what's best for "us and ours", no matter the cost to the millions of nameless, faceless folk whose rights we so easily push to one side?

This is democracy we're talking about. So choose. You choose.

I will finish today by quoting from a piece written by the Rev Fiona Bennett, a United Reformed Church minister. Back in 2018, at the time of the centenary of the Armistice, she reflected on the costliness of peace. And this is what she wrote:

When the war effort was on, people went to great lengths. Can we find the same urgency for the peace effort? Can we invest all we have in building a world where the vulnerable are supported, [where] the earth is cared for, and where we value the true treasure of life?

When Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God or the Realm of God, he meant this earth run, ruled and shaped as God desired it to be. It would indeed be a world of peace. Not peace meaning apathy or simply a void of violence, but the sort of peace Jesus showed us as he turned his society upside down.

On this day of Remembrance of so many young lives lost, let us pause to reflect on this great truth: our peace is so vital, so central to God's Creation, that we must be ready to follow the Prince of Peace in this world of pain, as with our Risen Lord we too turn society upside down. Amen.



We will remember them.



Praying for others

God of grace,

by Christ's glorious Resurrection, you bring eternal life into view.
Receive, we pray, our thanks for this great victory over the grave.

Now we see that death is dead,
and from our last sleep we wake eternally.

Keep us in everlasting fellowship, O Lord,
with all that wait for you on earth,
and with all that are around you in heaven.

Bless all those who have suffered deeply,
and are suffering still, from war.

May your love reach out to the wounded, the disabled, the distressed,
and those whose faith has been shaken by what they have endured.

Comfort all who mourn the death of loved ones
and all who this day miss the company of friends and comrades.

Bless all who work for peace among the nations,
who strive in dialogue for understanding, mutual respect and charity.

In all that they do, may humanity's shared needs
be satisfied among brothers and sisters the world over.

In Jesus' Name we pray. AMEN.

And finally . . .

Emma Brown, the Connected Communities Manager for Preston, Seton, Gosford in East Lothian Council, considers help in hard times (details for the Council's Fa'side area will follow in a future issue of The Sunday Focus):

A huge thank you for all your support through the Longniddry Care Team during lockdown.

As Covid continues to be a concern in Scotland, many folk are facing financial difficulty through reduced hours of work, furlough or redundancy. At East Lothian Council we are extremely concerned about this and have been setting up local support. In October a new pantry was opened at Longniddry Community Centre. It can be accessed every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9.15am–12.15pm. It stocks dry, tinned and frozen goods.

Very few personal details need be given to use the pantry and if a second party or agency wishes to collect food on someone else's behalf that is absolutely fine. We can also advise on additional help that can be accessed, or refer to other agencies.

We are working to coordinate the delivery of food bags, presents and winter essentials both in the week prior to Christmas and on New Year's Eve to support people facing financial hardship or those who are socially isolated.

We will be seeking donations of items to be added to these bags – more details to follow – but if you have a concern about an individual or family who could be supported you can email Jackie, Centre Head at Longniddry Community Centre on jburton@eastlothian.gov.uk or call her on 01875 852 933.