



## Weekly Worship Resource for Gladsmuir and Longniddry

Available in printed form and online at:  
[www.longniddrychurch.org.uk](http://www.longniddrychurch.org.uk)

Issue 36: Sunday 15th November 2020

### Today's readings

#### **Isaiah 50: 4–6 (“The servant’s humiliation and vindication”)**

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens— wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards.

I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. Amen. (NRSV)

#### **Mark 14: 32–42 (“Jesus prays in Gethsemane”)**

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.’ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.’ He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.’ Amen. (NRSV)

### Today's hymns

*Eternal Father, strong to save* (CH: 260)

*Who would true valour see, let him come hither* (CH: 535)

*The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he with majesty most bright* (CH: 57)

*We turn to God when we are sorely pressed* (CH: 393)

*Glory be to God the Father, glory be to God the Son* (CH: 110)

# In the Name of the Father and of

*My name is Lydia, and I am a resident of Jerusalem privileged to live by a peaceful garden. All year round there is colour to be enjoyed in tree and shrub, flower and blossom. A place of retreat on glorious springtime days. And those cooling breezes in the heat of summer. But that night my Gethsemane became a very different place: a wintry place of confusion and fear.*

*For him, there was 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. With night creeping in, the darkness that engulfed him filled his soul, as shadows drew across his face. He had come to a place of solitude, but found space only for snatches of anguished prayer.*

*And his friends? They would witness the cruel spectacle of one of their own committing the ultimate act of betrayal – treachery sealed with a kiss.*

*Faced by a gathering crowd, these disciples would throw off their slumbers in a panic of wakefulness, and run for their lives.*

**W**hen you heard our reading this morning, I imagine that you would already have been familiar with the story of Gethsemane, that famous garden where Jesus went to pray immediately before his arrest. But I wonder how many times over the years you might have heard this reading in church. You may well be surprised to learn that it really doesn't come up very often. And here's why ...

This is a reading for the Thursday of Holy Week, so if you only come to church Sunday by Sunday during Lent, you would miss it. The Sunday before Maundy Thursday is Palm Sunday with donkeys and hosannas. Meanwhile, the Sunday after that Thursday is Easter Day, with the stone rolled away and the empty tomb. Going to church on Sundays alone means you're rarely if ever going to coincide with Gethsemane.

But there's more: the Thursday of Holy Week is an incredibly busy day with the deep theology of the Last Supper and the foot washing. There's Judas's betrayal, the arrest, the trials and Peter's denial. So even if you do go to church on Maundy Thursday every year, the chances are that this little story will only featuring one year in every five.

All of this is a long way round to saying how important it is for us to read our Bibles at home, so that we can engage not just with edited highlights as chosen by the minister. Each week as church members we make a vow to read our Bibles, and as Christians more generally, it's our job to keep coming back to the pages of Scripture, through which God is still speaking. I hope that both our year of Mark and our three Bible study groups may have helped you in your spiritual discipline, especially in the dark days of 2020. And as we look ahead to 2021, maybe one of your new year's resolutions might be to find your own way to read the Bible, bit by bit, day by day. I'll leave that thought with you for just now.

Today, let's focus on this garden in the city of Jerusalem where Jesus has come with his disciples. This reading is significant in Mark's gospel because it effectively leads us to the final stage of the story. It is nothing less than the beginning of the end for Jesus, and as we read across Mark chapter 14, we see for ourselves that he knows this to be the case.

# the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .

One of the great strengths of Mark as a gospel writer is his courage in telling the story of Jesus in a profoundly human way. If you contrast this book with John's gospel, you quickly find some big differences. For the writer of the fourth gospel, the man from Nazareth is a heavenly visitor, sharing in the divinity of God the Father. That is really the point that John is trying to make. Not so Mark. Jesus is seen by Mark as Son of God and Son of Man, but Mark's emphasis is much more on the earthy humanity of Jesus. And that is precisely what we discover here in a poignant and truthful depiction of someone who is looking death in the eye. It follows that as we examine that lonely figure so deeply distraught in the garden on a dark and threatening Thursday night, we find ourselves staring at one of us: *He ... began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.*

To be human is to share in a great spectrum of human emotions and traits, from joy to sorrow, calm to fury, placid contentment to burning ambition. And here we see Jesus at a horrible point on that spectrum of life, where distress and agitation and grief and deep-seated fear all collide in a hideous way. And perhaps you have been there yourself, because (like Jesus) you and I are human, and we cannot hide from the realities of life and of death any more than Jesus could.

Over this year we have travelled with Jesus from the beginning to where we are now, so we can associate ourselves with the journey of Jesus. There's something big for us to consider here. If Jesus were simply divine and nothing else, he would surely have seen death as an inconvenience that he would pass through on his journey back to heaven. But the truth is that Jesus is not super-human. He's human. Just like you me. And so we are entitled to marvel – indeed, to quake – at the words that we read as the one we have come to know as God the Son addresses God the Father in these most human of terms: *'Abba, Father ... [Daddy] ... for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'*

This is the plea of someone who knows deep foreboding in the very core of his being; someone who can see what terrible thing is lying just out of sight. In the hours to come he will endure so much hurt and humiliation. And this just from his friends. From his enemies will come arrest, prosecution and torture, before the agony of his execution.

Think of the cost. Think of the terrible, terrible cost to Jesus in taking flesh, becoming one of us, with us, for us, all the way from birth to death.

The great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book entitled, *The Cost of Discipleship*. In it, he put forward the idea that the grace which God holds out through Christ is never cheap. The ultimate price is paid by Jesus, with absolutely no concessions made to his status. Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted this of our singular lack of understanding: *"[t]he essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing."*

Not so. The cost of discipleship for Bonhoeffer was Nazi execution, just days before the liberation of Germany.

Looking in on the garden of Gethsemane, what do *we* see. How do *we* react to the sight of Jesus wrestling with such a costly day ahead? Amen.

# Praying for others

God of Gethsemane,

That night in the garden you saw your Son in fear and distress,  
troubled by a grief that was all too human.

He longed for respite from all the fear and menace that were his that terrible night,  
yet he trusted in you to know the best way forward.

In this world of suffering there are many who find their challenges so hard to face:  
the single parent unable to feed her family;  
the adult child unable to cope with an aged relative;  
children of war-torn lands who know violence yet have no way of dealing with it.

Into this world of sin and strife, bring your grace:  
a grace that is costly for you, yet more than sufficient for us.

As followers of your Son, may we look to Jesus,  
the man of sorrows there in a garden by night.

And may we see in him a love that is greater than we could ever imagine:  
a love which is for us and for all  
in every twist and turn of life's pathway.

Be with your children now, we ask.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

## Advent and Christmas services ...

*To book a place at services in our buildings ring 07718 612546 (Longniddry services) or 07443 858983 (Gladsmuir services), Thursday–Saturday, 4–6pm. All are welcome!*

<b>Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November:</b> Advent Sunday	9.45am: Joint service (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: no service 6.30pm: evening service, Longniddry (booking line)
<b>Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December:</b>	9.45am: Joint service (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: Gladsmuir service (booking line)
<b>Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December:</b> Christmas jumper service	9.45am: Joint service (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: Longniddry service (booking line)
<b>Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December:</b>	9.45am: Joint Lessons and Carols (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: Gladsmuir service (booking line) 7pm: "Longest Night" service, Longniddry (booking line)
<b>Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December:</b> Christmas Eve	7pm: Longniddry family service (Zoom/YouTube) 9.30pm: Gladsmuir service (Zoom/YouTube)
<b>Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December:</b> Christmas Day	10.30am: Joint Christmas celebration (Zoom/YouTube)
<b>Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December</b>	9.45am: Joint "Poetry of Christmas" service (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: no service
<b>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January:</b> Epiphany	9.45am: Joint service (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: Gladsmuir service (booking line)
<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January:</b> "Souper Sunday"	9.45am service (Zoom/YouTube) 11am: Longniddry service (booking line)