

A Service of worship for Holy Week

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Notes: There are times when churches can only gather once during Holy Week, usually for the Easter day service, particularly in remote areas. But Holy Week is a journey with Jesus, and without that journey through Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday in his company the meaning of the Resurrection is diminished, and cannot be truly appreciated and celebrated well.

This service offers a way to explore that journey and its important stages along the way.

Each person is given a palm branch, a small towel, a nail and a candle as they enter the church.

Also, if possible, percussion instruments and streamers for the children for the last hymn.

A bowl containing sand is placed either on or before the altar.

Leader: In this service we will follow Jesus through the four major events in the last week of his life: celebrations of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day. Each item you have been given - palm branch, towel, nail and candle - represents each step of the journey.

Gathering Prayer:

Lord Jesus,
as we begin our journey to the cross with you,
give us eyes to see,
ears to hear,
and hearts to embrace you with every step.
Your life is in ours, and ours in yours;
Your journey is ours, and ours yours.

Lord Jesus, we will share the burdens and joys with you, as you share our burdens and joys each day. Amen.

Palm Sunday:

Reading:

A few days before the Passover Festival, a large crowd gathered in Jerusalem to see Jesus, because his fame has spread. So he sent his disciples to fetch a donkey. They placed their cloaks over the donkey's back and on the path before him. As he rode into Jerusalem the crowd waved palm branches and cried out, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Reflection:

We begin our journey through Holy Week with Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem in triumph. He is fully aware of what awaits him, and that many of the crowd crying 'Hosannah!' will soon be baying for his blood, because he doesn't turn out to be the kind of Messiah they expected or wanted. And yet he doesn't berate them. He calmly rides on, into the thick of it.



There are times in our walk with Jesus when we celebrate his being with us, and other times when we get bogged down in disappointment and pain, and in our anger, turn our backs on him.

In all this, Jesus accepts our welcome with love, even if our motives are wrong, and continues to prove his own love and forgiveness through all our mistreatment of him.

All of this is yet to be played out during the following events of Holy Week.

(Silence)

Hymn: *Ride on, ride on (John Bell: Enemy of Apathy p.24 - Iona Community)*

1. Ride on, ride on, the time is right;
 The roadside crowds scream with delight;
 Palm branches mark the pilgrim way
 Where beggars squat and children play.
2. Ride on, ride on, your critics wait,
 Intrigue and rumour circulate;
 New lies abound in word and jest,
 And truth becomes a suspect guest.
3. Ride on, ride on, while well aware
 That those who shout and wave and stare
 Are mortals who, with common breath
 Can crave for life and lust for death.
4. Ride on, ride on, though blind with tears,
 Though dumb to speak and deaf to jeers.
 Your path is clear, though few can tell
 Their garments pave the road to Hell.
5. Ride on, ride on, the room is let,
 The wine matured, the saw is whet;
 And dice your death-throes shall attend
 Though faith, not fate, dictates your end.
6. Ride on, ride on, God's love demands.
 Justice and peace lie in your hands.
 Evil and angel voices rhyme:
 This is the man and this the time.

Confession:

One day, we are crying to God, "Save us!"
The next we are turning our backs on God and walking away.
Despite our fickle nature, God is steadfast in loving us
and constant in forgiving us.

Let us confess to our God, as we pray;

**With joy in our hearts,
we welcome your servant, O God,
only to reject him
when he picks up a cross instead of a crown.
Like cloaks laid on the ground before Jesus,**

**we pick up our faith, dust it off,
and put it back in the closet until we need it.**

**We can be as stubborn and rebellious
as the city that cheers your name.**

**Save us, redeeming God, save us!
May we lay our doubts, our fears, our worries,
and our weariness at your feet,
trusting and believing
that you will forgive what is sinful,
make whole our brokenness,
and welcome us as sisters and brothers
of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

(Silence)

Hosanna to David's Son!
Blessed is the One who comes in God's name,
not to judge us, but to save us.

**We humble ourselves in gratitude to God,
and in service to others,
even as Christ did.
Hosanna in the highest! Amen.**

Thom Shuman: 'Lectionary Worship aids' p.88

Maundy Thursday:

Reading:

Jesus gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal in an upstairs room. During the meal he took off his outer garments, tied a towel around his waist, poured water into a bowl, and began to wash their feet.

They were astonished, because this was the job of a servant or slave. Jesus said, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me 'Teacher,' and 'Lord,' and that's what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, that's what you should do, wash each other's feet..... Tonight I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you."



Reflection:

Here is yet another example of Jesus' love in the face of betrayal. He knows of the weaknesses of his friends, particularly Judas. And yet he continues to call them 'friends', and to break bread with them.

He knows that they will betray and desert him, but he does the only thing that will possibly break this cycle of weakness and sin - he serves them as a slave.

In this world of selfish sin, are we able to serve likewise - 'wash the feet' of those around us, even if we know they might betray us, even though their sins are so obvious to us? That's what Jesus begs us to do.

(Silence)

Hymn: *Kneels at the feet of his friends (TIS 640)*

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends,
 silently washes their feet:
 Master who acts as a slave to them.

*Yesu, Yesu,
fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you*

2. Neighbours are wealthy and poor,
 varied in colour and race,
 neighbours are near us and far away.

Yesu, Yesu,

3. These are the ones we should serve,
 these are the ones we should love;
 all these are neighbours to us and you.

Yesu, Yesu,

4. Loving puts us on our knees,
 silently washing their feet,
 this is the way we should live with you.

Yesu, Yesu,

Prayer:

Loving Jesus, our feet may become soiled on our journey, but with our hands we touch our creation, express love and receive your body and blood.

Help us to reach out to love and serve as you serve us. Help us to learn off by heart your commandment to love. Amen.

Good Friday:

Reading:

When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, his disciples all fled. They took him to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where he was tried and convicted of blasphemy, because he had claimed that he was a king. Then they took him to Pilate, who handed him over to the soldiers.

From there he was taken to Golgotha, a hill outside Jerusalem, to be crucified.

There the soldiers laid him on a cross, drove nails through his hands and feet, and set the cross upright, between two thieves who



were also being crucified. The soldiers tossed dice for his clothing, and the crowd jeered at him. He said,

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

At about three in the afternoon he died. They took him down, and laid him in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Aramathea.

Reflection:

And now we are shown the ultimate price of loving unconditionally.

This is not just a magnificent gesture of love on the part of Jesus - it is a work of cosmic magnitude. This act of self giving is the ultimate weapon against evil, when it is shown up for what it is. The tiger's teeth have been broken.

To follow Jesus to this cross is not easy. It requires great strength, and faith in the deep importance of what we are doing in breaking the cycle of sin and death.

But because Jesus accompanies us every step of our journey, we are given strength to accomplish this task.

This is our salvation.

The question is, do we want to take up our cross, having faith that Jesus will make possible his call on our lives, or will we settle for safety over salvation?

(Silence)

Hymn: *Jesus, remember me (TIS 730)*

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

(Repeat ad lib)

Prayer:

Saviour of the world,
what have you done to deserve this?
And what have we done to deserve you?

Strung up between criminals,
cursed and spat upon,
you wait for death,
and look for us,
for us whose sin has crucified you.

To the mystery of undeserved suffering
you bring a deeper mystery of unmerited love.

**Forgive us for not knowing what we have done;
Open our eyes to what we are doing now,
as, through wood and nails,
you disempower our depravity
and transform us by your grace.
Amen.**

Iona: 'Stages on the way' p.143

Easter day:

Reading:

Early on the Sunday morning, before dawn, Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus, came with some women to the tomb to complete Jesus' anointing. It couldn't be done on the Friday because Passover began at sunset, and nothing could be done on the Sabbath.

When they got to the tomb, they found that the stone had been rolled away and that it was empty. Mary thought someone had stolen the body, and was very frightened. She began to weep. Just then, Jesus stood before her and said, "Why are you weeping?" She thought he was the gardener, and answered, "Someone has taken the body. Please tell me where they have laid him." Jesus said softly, "Mary." and then she recognised him, and said "Rabbouni!", which means 'teacher.'

Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, but go to the others and tell them what you have seen." Mary went to the disciples and said, "I have seen the Lord!" and told them all that had happened.

Reflection:

Here is the culmination of our journey. We have come to the tomb, expecting to find the remnants of our dead hopes and dreams, and give them a decent anointing.

But we find the tomb empty. At first we feel cheated, and we grieve that we are unable offer the only thing we have left to give. But even that grief is a sign of our love and need for our beloved friend. And it is that love that makes us able to hear our name being called.

Our lives are changed irrevocably by this resurrection. Not only do we have renewed hope, but the promise of new life. We are called to offer this life to others, however far fetched it may seem to them.

Are we able to take this good news into the world? Are we able to lay hold of this new resurrection life for ourselves, the ones who are called by name?

We can only do it by remembering that we are in the constant companionship of Jesus, who died to show us the immense possibilities of his love, compassion and forgiveness.

That love will see us through.

(Silence)

Prayer:

Jesus Christ, we greet you!
Your hands still have holes in them,
your feet are wet from the dew;
and with the memory of our names
undimmed by three days of death
you meet us,
risen from the grave.

We fail to understand how,
we puzzle at the reason why.



But you have come,
not to answer our questions
but to show us your face.

**You are alive
and the world can rejoice again.
Halleluia! Amen.**

Iona: 'Stages on the way' p.188

Hymn for the offertory:

I know that my redeemer lives (TIS 376)

1. I know that my redeemer lives -
what joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
he lives, my everlasting Head.
2. He lives, to bless me with his love:
he lives, to plead for me above;
he lives my hungry soul to feed;
he lives to help in time of need.
3. He lives, and grants me daily breath;
he lives, and I shall conquer death;
he lives, my mansion to prepare;
he lives, to lead me safely there.
4. He lives, all glory to his name;
he lives, my Saviour, still the same;
what joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my redeemer lives!

*(The offering, Palm branches, towels and nails are brought forward and laid on or before the altar.
The candles are also brought, ready to be lit after the blessing of the offerings.)*

Please come forward with your palm branches, towels and nails, as well as your candle, and gather around the altar.

Blessing of the offerings:

We offer these gifts, O Lord, as tokens of our humanity:
Palm branches, as we welcome you with joy;
towels for our desire to serve, in obedience to your call;
nails for the times we have turned and cried, 'Crucify!'
**All the best and worst of us we bring,
for your redeeming, healing touch, O Lord.**

(Each person lights their candle and places it in the bowl of sand)

The Great Thanksgiving: *(New Patterns for worship pp. 352-354)*

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right to praise you, Father, Lord of all creation;
in your love you made us for yourself.

When we turned away
you did not reject us,
but came to meet us in your Son.

**You embrace us as your children
and welcome us to sit and eat with you.**

In Christ you shared our life
that we might live in him and he in us.

**He opened his arms of love upon the cross
and made for all the perfect sacrifice for sin.**

On the night he was betrayed,
at supper with his friends
he took bread, and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to them, saying:
'Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.'

**Father, we do this in remembrance of him;
his body is the bread of life.**

At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine,
he gave you thanks, and said:
'Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins:
do this in remembrance of me.

**Father, we do this in remembrance of him:
his blood is shed for all.**

As we proclaim his death and celebrate his rising in glory,
send your Holy Spirit that this bread and this wine
may be to us the body and blood of your dear Son.

**As we eat and drink these holy gifts
make us one in Christ, our risen Lord.**

With your whole Church throughout the world
we offer you this sacrifice of praise
and lift our voice to join the eternal song of heaven.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

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,
and forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

The breaking of bread and the Communion:

Every time we eat this bread
and drink this cup,
**we proclaim the Lord's death
until he comes.**

Jesus, Lamb of God,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us your peace.

God's holy gifts for God's holy people.
**Jesus Christ is holy,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Thanksgiving after Communion:

We thank you, God of compassion,
that you have nourished us
with the bread of life and the wine of hope.
As in Christ your love flowed out to those around him,
so let your love flow through us to others.
As in Christ your life was broken,
so let your life meet us in our brokenness
and release hope in us and others,
through Christ our hope and our life. **Amen.**

Blessing and dismissal:

Go in peace to love and serve the risen Christ.
**In the name of Christ.
Amen.**

And may the God of hope be your light,
the God of love be your company,
and the Spirit God rise in truth before you.

Amen.

Please blow out your candles and take up an instrument or streamers.

Hymn as we exit the church:

Halle, halle!

Halle, halle, halleluia! Halle, halle, halleluia!

Halle, halle, halleluia! Halle, halle, halleluia!

(Repeat ad lib)

C F C

Hal - le, hal - le, Hal - le - lu - lia!

3 C F G C

Hal - le, hal - le, Hal-le-lu - lia! ___ Hal - le, hel - le,

6 F C C G7 C

Hal - le-lu - ia! Hal - le, hal - le, Hal-le-lu - lia! ___