

**HOLY WEEK: 3**

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April – Holy Week** Reflection: 12:30-1pm & 7:30-8pm

**Introduction:**

Holy Week begins with Jesus entering Jerusalem on a humble donkey. He is hailed as King; songs are sung and cloaks and palms are laid in his path as it would be for any ruler or royalty. But little do the people know that Jesus entering Jerusalem, the heart of God's people Israel, would be the culmination of His ministry on earth. Many will now turn away from Him and against Him because of His challenge to change. His teaching becomes stronger, His parables become more challenging. He shines light into darkness and evil hates Him for exposing its corruption. Jesus experiences a dichotomy of reaction to His presence as He reveals Truth by confronting dishonesty, exploitation, wickedness and all manner of wrongdoing. Those who are right with God love Him and follow Him to the end; those not right with God hate Him and are literally 'hell bent' on His destruction. This week follows the path of His final journey with its powerful challenges that charge us to contemplate our personal position. Jesus asks us, as He did those of His time, to look for Truth and make our own choice whether to turn away or follow Him to the end.

**The Lord's Prayer:** *all say together*

**CD 3:** The Best Instrumental Worship Album Ever! **Track 1:** It's Rising Up

**Matthew 25:1-13** *The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids*

<sup>1</sup>"Then the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, 'No! There will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' <sup>12</sup>But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

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**A Women's Perspective**

Some women in the crowd began discussing the parable Jesus had just told. Aphra, turned to her friend's Beulah and Diynah; "I can relate to that parable! When I was a bridesmaid to my cousin I was so fearful that I would run out of oil I took a whole flask extra with me. As it happened I didn't need it but I would have been mortified if I run out!" Diynah nodded knowingly, "I wish I had done that when I was bridesmaid to my sister! I filled my lamp to the brim but the groom had a bit too much wine and the groomsmen had to sort him out before the wedding feast, so he was late!" "Oh dear!" said Beulah, "What happened?" "Well, we daren't put the lamps out because we were told he was on his way and arriving any minute, but eventually, one by one, all our lamps went out." "What did you do" asked Aphra. "There was nothing we could do, it was too late, just as we were thinking of leaving to try and get some more oil, the grooms party came round the corner. My sister was livid!

She said we had dishonoured the family and would not let us in no matter how I pleaded.” Beulah looked sad, “I have never been a bridesmaid so I don’t know how it must feel to be in that position. I bet you were devastated, especially as it was your sister’s wedding?” Diynah began to cry, “Yes I was, I had let them down and it hurt so bad I felt like my heart would shatter into tiny pieces. I didn’t mean to run out of oil, I just didn’t think ahead or plan for the unexpected” she said through sobbing tears. Aphra and Beulah tried to console their friend. “It is easy to think of here and now and not look ahead; perhaps your sister will forgive your mistake if you ask her”, said Aphra, trying to be positive. “Yes” said Beulah, “We will come with you if you want and plead for you to be forgiven”. Diynah continued sobbing, so Aphra tried again to console her friend, “If you are truly sorry, I’m sure your sister will forgive you” she pleaded. Diynah’s sobbing began to ease a little as she looked gratefully at her two friends. “You know”, she said, “This makes me think about what Jesus said in a different way”. “What do you mean?” said Aphra. “Well Jesus concluded His parable by telling us to “Keep awake...because we know neither the day nor the hour” didn’t He?” “That’s right” said Beulah, “What are you thinking He meant?” Diynah wiped her eyes and looked from one to the other a little unsure of sharing what she thought. “Weeell” she began hesitantly, “I think He is trying to tell us that He is going away but one day He will return and sort out all the bad things in this world.” “Wow!” said Aphra, “That’s a tall order, sort out *everything* wrong in the world, I’d settle for what’s wrong with people right now in our town!” Beulah was deep in thought, which worried Diynah, “Do you think I’m just dreaming or being silly?” she asked. “No” Beulah replied thoughtfully, “I think you are absolutely right, this man *is* different and I believe that He can do just that!” “Perhaps, said Aphra, “we should think seriously about the deeper meaning of this parable and stay alert to keep ourselves prepared?” “Yes” said Beulah, make sure we stay right with God so we don’t run out of faith and are ready for the day Jesus returns, whenever that may be”. The three women nodded together in agreement and Diynah thanked her friends for their support and care. They fell into each other’s arms in a warm embrace and prayed together right there and then. **Amen!**

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**Matthew 25:14-30** *The Parable of the Talents*

<sup>14</sup>For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup>to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup>The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup>In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup>But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ <sup>21</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>22</sup>And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ <sup>23</sup>His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>24</sup>Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; <sup>25</sup>so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup>But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave!

You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. <sup>28</sup>So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup>As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

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### **A Banker & A Tax Collector**

A banker called Zechariah was listening closely to the parable Jesus was telling. "He's got that right for sure" he thought to himself. "I would have given a good rate of interest on the one talent if that slave had invested it with me". He had meant to think this in his head but he found, to his astonishment, that he had said it out loud! "What did you say" asked the man next to him. Zechariah recognised him as one of the tax collectors who had his tent at the gate and felt embarrassed! "Oh, hello David", he replied, "I didn't recognise you for a moment, how are you?" he asked, trying to move on from his unintentional outburst. "I'm fine, thank you, but how are you?" asked David, "That was quite an outburst!" "Sorry" replied Zechariah, "I didn't mean to say that out loud. I was reflecting on the Rabbi's parable and thinking how stupid the slave with the one talent was." "Oh" said David, "I thought it was a bit random, I understand now. Yes, it's quite a teaser of a story isn't it?" "It certainly is" replied Zechariah, "but I wonder why he gave a different amount to each slave? I should have asked for references before entrusting my property to anyone, let alone slaves." "I'm sure you would!" David said knowingly, "I bet you would have taken their money soon enough though and opened an account for them." "Absolutely!" retorted Zechariah, "And what's wrong with that? Better than burying it or hiding it under the mattress where it does nothing!" "Now don't get on your high horse, I'm just saying you would have advised them better is all", replied David, trying to placate Zechariah and avoid a scene. Zechariah calmed down, "but it does seem a little unfair, you can only work with what you have, so the more you have the greater the return." "I do agree", said David "but there is always recognition of a person's capability, not everyone has the same potential and no one can be good at everything!" "But surely it's common sense!" said Zechariah. "You might think so", David replied, "but believe you me, I've come across some pretty useless characters when it comes to paying their taxes. Spending their money on unnecessary things they want instead of things they need, then thinking they can win favours from me when they can't pay their taxes!" "Really?" said Zechariah. "Oh yes!" said David, "And then there are those who just laze about and shun work thinking that if they have nothing they can't be expected to give anything." "Goodness, I had no idea" said Zechariah. "I can't abide either of them" said David, "because it's not as if they can't afford it or are unable to work; they just have a selfish attitude as if they are entitled." "I wouldn't dare not pay my taxes, no offence David, but I wouldn't want to face the consequences." "No offence taken", said David, "if only everyone thought ahead like you and used what they have wisely, there would be no trouble at all." "Do you think that's what Jesus means", said Zechariah, "That if we use what we have for the good of God it will be like saving in a bank account?" David thought for a moment, "It's not the analogy I would use but I think Jesus is saying that if we work for the good of God and keep ourselves right with Him we will be okay." "So Jesus is saying that our reward will be the measure of what we have invested in Him" said Zechariah. "I think that's

pretty much it” said David, and they both walked on together, still reflecting on the deeper meaning of the parable.

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**Matthew 25:31-46** *The Judgement of the Nations*

<sup>31</sup>“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and He will put the sheep at His right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those on his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

**CD 3:** The Best Instrumental Worship Album Ever! – *continued...*

**A wake up call for Kings, Rulers, and Leaders!**

“Who is this Son of Man’ Jesus keeps going on about? I’ve heard Him use that title before but I still don’t know who He means”, asked Maximus. He was there with a friend from the senate out of curiosity. Antonius was a visiting dignitary from a foreign senate, there for the Emperor’s joint congress. “Beats me! said Antonius, “I can’t fathom what this man is saying at all, I don’t know whether to thank Him or curse Him!” Maximus frowned, “Well He’s talking about someone very important because He is going to come surrounded by angels and sit on His throne in glory. I for one, would like to keep my position in the senate so I want to be ready to greet this new king in the proper manner.” “I shouldn’t worry” said Antonius, “Kings, Emperors, they come, they go and the world keeps turning. All you have to do is keep to the side-lines, not do anything that gets you noticed and remain popular with those close to you.” “But” said Maximus, “this Jesus is saying we must feed and clothe strangers and visit criminals in prison, we are to treat *them* as if *they* were royalty or else be considered as a goat!” “No, no, no, my friend, you have it all wrong,” exclaimed Antonius, “no self-respecting Roman would consider doing such a thing for those beneath his status! To do that would be political suicide! Better a goat and alive to tell the tale than a sheep that bleats so loud it gets slaughtered for a feast!” “But” Antonius persisted, “that’s just it, He is saying the goats are the ones accursed and they will be thrown into the eternal fire along

with the devil!” “My dear Maximus” soothed Antonius, “You surely don’t believe in such things do you? We have our own gods that rule with power, it is they who will determine our end not some Hebrew superstition!” Maximus was still deeply troubled, “I’m not so sure Antonius, this man’s teaching is different to their usual Rabbi’s and priests, what if He speaks Truth and we ignore it?” Antonius was becoming a little irritated by his colleague’s obsession with this Jesus fellow. He was not signing up to this at all and just wanted to drop the whole subject and get back to the senate where he would be on familiar ground. “Well if you are so enamoured with this chap why don’t you give up your political career and follow Him instead, see where that will get you!” barked Antonius. “But” Maximus argued, “I am sure there is something to this ‘Son of Man’ king He keeps referring to, there is a sign, a message, a warning somehow that I feel I should heed but I can’t quite grasp it.” Antonius had heard enough of his colleagues prattle, “That’s it!” he exploded, “Enough is enough, I am not going to stay here and listen to all this drivel, you’re losing it Maximus; you really are! I have better things to do than listen to a madman” With that Antonius turned and stormed off back toward the council buildings. Maximus stared after him and as he disappeared up the busy street, he thought to himself, “I think that perhaps I am beginning to find it rather than losing it”. He turned back to listen to Jesus once more and as he did, so another thought entered his mind, “Could this Jesus be the ‘Son of Man’? Perhaps He is the King that will one day come with angels to judge us? If this is true then I definitely want to be a sheep! I need to learn how to become righteous and get blessed along with the inheritors of His Kingdom. I certainly don’t want to end up a goat destined for eternal punishment, that’s for sure!” As he listened to the voice of Jesus, he felt a sense of release and became overwhelmed with a kind of peace that he could not explain. There and then he made a decision that would change his life forever, “I will follow this man”, he said, “I believe that He speaks Truth and it gives me hope. The senate can go to hell!”

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**Poem/meditation: Hope Comes!** ©Janice Morgan 2018-December

When Jesus came so long ago the people did not believe  
His wisdom from the very first the teachers could not perceive  
How can a baby born of flesh be the promised Messiah?  
Surely a boy cannot fulfil the promises of One higher?  
Yet from His youth such understanding spoken from His pure heart  
Gave those who heard the hope of salvation and a fresh new start  
Can this be so; a human Saviour and God’s Spirit within?  
The Son of Man and Son of God combined; new life to begin?  
We thought a warrior would appear with flashing sword and crown  
But here we see a tender heart with love and healing renown  
His voice is clear; His message strong; and great power He commands  
Those true to God He gently leads; those found in sin He remands  
Some could not accept His Truth and turned away or against Him  
Yet God was watching and sent His angels and His cherubim  
To protect and strengthen His dear Son to do what He came for  
No one could know or understand His mission, nor ask for more  
Let us beware He will return let us not be found wanting  
Look up! See Your Saviour on the right hand of God is sitting  
He came from heaven and then returned but now hope comes again  
From on a cloud that all will see His Kingdom will fall like rain.

***Silent pause:...***

**CD:** Streams **Track 3:** 'Breathe' *by* Sixpence None the Richer

Take my sorrow and my sin, I will run into Your arms again, Hold me Father.  
Once again my tears are dried, by Your perfect love that's river-wide, Overflowing.

As I stand on its bank with my arms overhead I am overcome;  
As I breathe... The air of heaven, drawing in Your fragrance  
When I breathe... I feel Your fullness come alive inside of me  
You're the breath that I breathe.

Covered by the evening sky I turn my gaze to where Your Kingdom lies, Deep inside me.  
A silent whisper in my mind, sweet surrender to Your love divine, Peace enfolding.

In the stillness I empty my soul and Your healing presence flows;  
As I breathe... The air of heaven, drawing in Your fragrance  
When I breathe... I feel Your fullness come alive inside of me  
You're the breath that I breathe.

Its taking hold; it's second nature when I savour... When I savour... You  
As I breathe.

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***Resources:***

**CD 3:** The Best Instrumental Worship Album ever!

**CD:** Streams **Track 3:** Breathe *by* Sixpence None the Richer

**Copies of:** x7

**Song:** 'Breathe' *by* Sixpence None the Richer