

Service for Sunday 30 August Revd Pauline Crispin

God calls us to worship in spirit and in truth,
with both deep sadness and indescribable hope,
as we reflect on all that Jesus went through for us,
and praise God who goes beyond all expectations. Amen.

Lord, the disciples gathered around you,
trying so hard to answer your questions,
and to cope with difficult news.
We come before you now and ask your blessing,
as we seek to understand more of your story –
your tough and challenging,
but so good story! Amen.

Sing or read:

- 1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*
- 2 There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear ;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.
- 3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.
- 4 So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Matthew 16:21-28

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will

lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Reflection on the reading

This Gospel reading follows on from last week's reading. Last week was Peter's high moment, when he recognized Jesus as messiah and received extravagant praise and approval from Jesus. That reading ended with an unexpected command by Jesus not to tell people that he was the messiah. Jesus then goes on to speak of his coming suffering and death and his resurrection. According to the gospel records he had not done this before, and this is what makes Peter's confession such a watershed moment. Clearly this surprised the disciples and it throws some light on Jesus' reluctance to let the term 'messiah' be bandied about, since suffering and death were quite contrary with any ideas of what sort of messiah the Jews were expecting at the time. Jesus did not reject the title 'messiah' when Peter offered it, but Jesus wants to interpret it in a significantly new way. When Peter resists this Jesus gets angry with Peter and calls him 'Satan'. This suggests that to take a different way from the way of suffering was for Jesus a very real temptation.

Jesus goes on to make it clear that the call of self-denial, suffering and death is one which he embraces not only for himself, but for his followers. Crucifixions were common in Israel under the Romans and very public. Everyone would be horribly aware of what such a death involved. For us, 'taking up one's cross' has become a cliché. It was no cliché then. When Jesus invited his disciples to 'take up their cross', therefore, even if they heard it as a metaphor, it was a metaphor with a terrifying edge.

Yet with the demand goes a promise, that to give up one's life for God and for his Christ is to find it. To keep one's life and hoard it as one's own property is in fact, says Jesus, a sure recipe for losing it. To read these verses of our lection, and to take them even half seriously is to realise what an incredibly watered-down thing Christianity has become for some people.

The other day I was watching a program on iPlayer about the city of Pompeii. Richard and I have visited this city about three times and still there are parts of it that we have not seen. Therefore, I was interested to watch the program. I am sure that many of you are aware. In 1863, an ingenious Italian archaeologist named Giuseppe Fiorelli noticed cavities in the hardened layer of once-powdery ash that covered Pompeii. By filling the holes with plaster, he created disturbingly lifelike casts of this long-departed Pompeiians family in their final horrifying moments. One of these casts are of a couple clinging together. In the middle of them was another shape that they were clutching hold off. Was it a child? A beloved pet? A holy item? No, it was a box of coins. At this desperate moment in the final moment of their lives, this was their priority! How sad. Earthly values. How do you take up your cross? What are your values?

Let us pray

Lord God,

you reproached Peter because he had only human concerns;
but Peter just wanted to protect the one he loved.

We pray for people the world over

who find themselves in difficult situations.

We pray that they would all have someone
to care for them, and we lift them before you.
Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are persecuted for their faith:
for all who are misunderstood,
for asylum seekers who flee real danger in their homeland.
We pray for those who work tirelessly to address wrongs.
Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for people whose lives don't always work out right,
through their fault, or through no fault of their own.
Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people in our lives
who need your protection, Lord,
that we will always be faithful in prayer for them.
Merciful God, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

**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.
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 for ever. Amen.**

Read or Sing

- 1 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you ;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.
- 2 We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road ;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.
- 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear ;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.
- 4 I will weep when you are weeping ;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you ;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

- 5 When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together

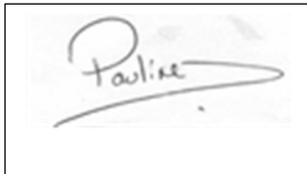
of Christ's love and agony.
- 6 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you ;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

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**Lord Jesus, give us the wisdom to follow you,
the strength to carry our cross,
and the hope of your coming kingdom.
Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen



Charles Gabriel.
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I STAND AMAZED IN THE PRESENCE

Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.

*How marvellous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvellous! How wonderful!
Is my Saviour's love for me!*

For me it was in the garden He prayed,
'Not My will, but Thine':
He had no tears for His own griefs,
But sweat drops of blood for mine.

In pity angels beheld Him,
And came from the world of light
To comfort Him in the sorrows
He bore for my soul that night.

He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden of Calvary,
And suffered and died alone.

When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of His love for me.

A Songs of Fellowship Worship Resource