

starters for Sunday

Tuesday of Holy Week

22 March 2016

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones, Minister of Beulah URC Cardiff, soon to be Secretary for Mission Development with the Council for World Mission in Singapore, and member of Christian Aid's Worship and Theology collective, for his thoughts on Tuesday of Holy Week.

Contents

Isaiah 49: 1-7	2
Psalms 71: 1-14	3
1 Corinthians 1: 18-31.....	3
John 12: 20-36.....	4
Some questions to consider from the texts and the time:	4
Prayers.....	5
Musical Suggestions	9
Additional Resources.....	10



Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

Holy Tuesday

Seeing hope's presence in the hidden

Let's ground these texts in the drama of this week, rather than the lectionary layout. Having arrived in the City by popular acclamation, provoked violent reactions from the Temple authorities and unrealistic expectations in the crowd, Jesus now becomes coy. People seek him out to know more and he hides himself from them, ([John 12: 36](#)). The time seems to have come for a public show of strength, yet Jesus seeks to hide and ally himself with the hopes that are hidden, siding with a Spirit who moves in a different direction to us.

Hidden hope in a pregnant world

[Isaiah 49: 1-7](#)

Isaiah's vision of hope is embodied in the Servant, whose life is imagined against the backdrop of Israel's exile, her loss of land and temple, heart and hope. A loss that could only be filled by a fresh embodiment of the spirit of Life, who herself roams freely obscured by, yet in, through and beneath and beyond Israel's predicament. This Spirit was hidden to a people full of despair who could not see their context as rich with hope. To them the hiddenness of God in the exile was sign of their failure and quite possibly God's. Yet in this dark setting hope has grown in secret and her intention intensified. The hope that emerges from the loss of exile is not just light for Israel, but for all the world. This new life of hope is signalled as a pregnancy and as a godsend - but whose edge and point is sharp and pressing.

Reading this in Holy Week where sword and spear point will have their moment is uncomfortable. Hearing the godsend servant admit fear and disillusionment is poignant. Hearing that the powerful will bow down to a servant is radical. All signs of the cost and hope of



a world awaited, glimpsed in one who eludes our questions to point to deeper realities we have yet to discern or embrace, who is the shelter for those who hope for and work for a world transformed in his image.

The hiding place in/is hope

[Psalm 71: 1-14](#)

Here again hiddenness emerges, and with it a fear of abandonment. We read it mindful of Jesus in these confrontational days of Holy Week. Jesus has set up a collision course between him and the authorities that can only be taken through threat, danger and violence. These are days where we see Jesus living between boldness and fear. Like those before him and since, who have challenged injustice and oppression, questioned the powerful and provoked the cruel, Jesus yearns for and must find a refuge. The Psalm is full of heart-breaking parallels for Jesus' predicament. He is one about to be held captive in the hand of the wicked and unjust, by those who have plotted his capture. He is the one who indeed leaned upon God from birth but will not make old age. Across this falls the further shadow of abandonment, here God's hiddenness leaves the Psalmist vulnerable, exposed, deserted. And the Psalmist, like Jesus, finds a refuge that gives hope, and is hope. It is a defiant hope. It defies the manifest power of the cruel. It defies the apparent hiddenness of God. It defies the urge to save oneself. A deep hope, a powerful hope, or a kind of reckless foolishness?

Hidden wisdom: an alternative way

[1 Corinthians 1: 18-31](#)

The scorn and mockery Jesus met for the path he took continued for those who followed after him. Paul, as a Jew and a Roman citizen, saw how the way of Christ led him away from these twin tracks he had followed and prided himself in. The cross was a scandalous sign, and Paul is really being rather offensive speaking so highly of the cross when crucifixion was a routine occurrence and the followers of Jesus were beginning to be persecuted. Christians were beginning to be seen as a hidden threat because they refused to worship the Emperor and to serve in his legions. No one seriously believed there was an alternative to the Pax Romana and the good news of the Kingdom of Caesar. Who of Pauls' peers would believe that Christianity



would subvert an entire Empire and offer a vision of civilisation and salvation rooted in love not conquest? This contra-intuitive claim was rooted in one who fascinated and repelled those he walked amongst, whose absurd hope was turning upside down ruler, religion, system and Caesar.

Emerging transformation

[John 12: 20-36](#)

The Gospel plays with ironic images focusing on the fleeting, the hidden and the revealed. Jesus speaks opaquely of all that light reveals, and how he hides from those who seek him out. It is all gathered up in a dynamic of transformation that Jesus embodies: death and new life. In the darkness of the earth, or of the hour, there is still hope in light and life and fruitfulness. In the cacophony of voices, claims and fears we are witnesses to hope. In the thrall of death we are signs of life's liberation. Christian Aid seeks this, but more especially the partners we work with. Christian Aid is not the good news, but the work of people in poverty working in power to restore life. They do so in the midst of a tremendous struggle and they do so because of a passionate hope that is easily scorned and hidden by the despair and dread injustice can create. But, like Jesus, they are the seeds of a hundredfold hope that yields life if we nurture it.

Some questions to consider from the texts and the time:

'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing'. Isaiah 49: 4

How do we keep going? How do we keep hope alive?

'I have been like a portent to many' Psalm 71: 7

How has your life been a sign of the power and trouble that is hope?

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong 1 Corinthians 1: 27

As you look at the world around you, what is there that the strong should be ashamed of and how do the weak provoke or inspire you?



Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also John 12: 26
Christian Aid believes Jesus is to be found amongst the poorest of the poor. What are the implications of this?

Prayers

You Lord are the source of all light:

Because of your light we see the light

Lord of light

Your radiant life shines.

It shines with newness

It shines with power

It shines with defiance.

In your light

we are uplifted

we are warmed

we are brightened

and your hidden presence is revealed

so we bless you

For you are the source of all light:

Because of your light we see the light

Lord of light

Your revealing life

Confronts and comforts us

In your company

We face our own failings and shortcomings

The hardness of our hearts and attitudes

Is all too clear in the light of your love.

You see what we hide

Yet still you seek us.



And thus your company
Charms and encourages us,
Feels for us and forgives us,
Revives and recharges us.
We cannot come into your companionable light
And then go to spread darkness and bitterness
For you are the source of all light:

Because of your light we see the light

Lord of light
Your rising life
Calls us to into a new day
Into new ways of following and serving
We give you the little light of our lives
Reveal yourself in us and others
Kindle in us your love and life
That it might renew those we
Accompany and those we comfort
That we might be ready in
Difficult and dark times
To shine with signs of your life
Remembering
You are the source of all light:

Because of your light we see the light

Marked by Christ as his followers
we say the prayer he taught his followers to say.



Prayers for others and our world

Using a sung response: Lord have mercy upon us

We turn to you Lord
From a world where pain and sorrow are real
And hope is often hidden
A world where we know what is right
And we know what is good
And fail to act justly or lovingly.

Because you are the one to confront us
And convert us we pray:

Lord have mercy upon us

So we pray
For the many hurting places of our world
Conflicts fanned by human hatred
Political desire and religious intolerance
Lands spoiled by
Economic greed and human carelessness
But rooted all in our broken ways of living

We turn to you broken as we are
Convert us through your compassion

Lord have mercy upon us

So we pray
For those whose lives feel broken
Overshadowed by grief
Burdened by poverty
Sickened by worry



Lost with you

Lost without you

All in need of a patient enduring presence

We turn to you overshadowed as we are

Comfort us with your compassion

Lord have mercy upon us

So we pray

In the midst of the lives we lead

And the week we face

Anxious about some people

Indifferent about others

As we sense you

As we ignore you

Let our lives never reach beyond

The grasp of your grace.

That we might be signs of

The change and transformation you bring

Personal prayer

May I see God's light on the path ahead

When the road I walk is dark.

May I always hear,

Even in my hour of sorrow,

The gentle singing of the lark.

When times are hard may hardness

Not turn my heart to stone,

And may I always remember

I do not walk alone.





In addition to the above prayers, prepared by our contributor, other prayers may be found in *Living Stones* which is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2015. *Living Stones* is available from [St Andrew Press](#)

Musical Suggestions

CH4 347	Unless a single grain of wheat
CH4 349	In our lives plant seeds of hope
CH4 401	Tree of life and awesome mystery
CH4 386	Lifted high on your cross
CH4 543	Chris be our light
CH4 691	Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Living Stones](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

