

# starters for Sunday

## **Good Friday**

**25 March 2016**

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Dr Kathy Galloway, Head of Christian Aid Scotland and member of Christian Aid's Worship and Theology Collective, for her thoughts on Good Friday.

### **Contents**

Seven Words from the Cross .....	2
1. 'Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing'. (Luke 23: 34).....	4
2. 'Today you will be with me in paradise'. (Luke 23: 43) .....	5
3. 'Mother, there is your son... she is your mother'. (John 19: 26-27).....	6
4. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15: 34).....	7
5. 'I am thirsty' (John 19: 28) .....	9
6. 'It is finished' (John 19: 30).....	10
7. 'Into your hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23: 46) .....	11
Additional Resources.....	13



## 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](#)

## Good Friday

### Seven Words from the Cross

[Isaiah 52: 13 - 53: 12](#)

[Psalm 22](#)

[Hebrews 10: 16-25](#) or [Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9](#)

[John 18: 1-19:42](#)

‘Holy Week... comes to gather us around the one true holy place of the Christian religion, Jesus himself, displayed to the world as the public language of our God, placarded on the history of human suffering that stretches along the roadside. This is a week for learning not management, bargaining and rule-keeping, but naked trust in that naked gift.’

(Rowan Williams)

*Travelling the road to freedom,  
Who wants to travel the road with me?  
Feted by noise and branches  
And banners hanging from every tree;  
Cheered on by frenzied people,  
Puzzled by what they hear and see:  
Travelling the road to freedom,  
Who wants to travel the road with me?*



We have travelled on the road to Calvary with Jesus throughout this week. We have followed him on the road to Jerusalem, and the national, political, public debate and conflict it led him into. We have seen how following Jesus required his disciples to take a public stand; they had to expose their faith, their hopes and their failures out in the open. They could not be withdrawn and ascetic like the followers of John the Baptist, nor could they be scholars and theorists like the Pharisees. They had to mix in strange, sometimes disreputable company; Jerusalem was physically and spiritually crowded with people who were suffering, angry, oppressed, excluded. It was often chaotic and frightening. And in the midst, Jesus; teaching, healing, weeping, translating personal encounters into public prophecy. The public language of our God...

*Travelling the road to freedom,  
Who wants to travel the road with me?  
Partnered by staunch supporters  
Who, come the dark, will turn and flee;  
Nourished by faith and patience,  
Neither of which is plain to see:  
Travelling the road to freedom,  
Who wants to travel the road with me?*

We have seen betrayal, arrest, judgment and condemnation. We have seen denial and abandonment, and have fallen silent as we remember our own infidelities. We have followed the Way of the Cross at a distance, as so many have done through the ages in the long history of human suffering. How visible, how public it is, a spectacle to be watched and commented on – as old as the hills and as new as the latest news from Syria or South Sudan. But something different is happening now. This Jesus, ‘in the days of his flesh’ (Hebrews 5: 7), as he is racked on the instrument of his death, distils all that is most human, most personal, most intimate, most loving, and displays it to the world. **This** is the public language of our God.



Travelling the road to freedom,  
 Who wants to travel the road with me?  
 Tipping the scales of justice,  
 Setting both minds and captives free;  
 Suffering and yet forgiving,  
 Even when my friends most disagree:  
 Travelling the road to freedom,  
 Who wants to travel the road with me?

### 1. **'Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing'.** ([Luke 23:34](#))

“When people ran for their safety they thought of three places. One is the humanitarian camp, the UN, which is 3km away from the town. The others are the hospital and the church. So I opened the gate and about 2300 people came in. After that, soldiers came.”

The present conflict in South Sudan erupted nearly two years ago after a political struggle between President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar escalated along ethnic lines and rapidly spread across the country. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, more than 1.6 million have been internally displaced and 600,000 refugees have fled the country to escape the ongoing violence.

The Rev Peter Gai Lual Marrow, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, found himself with a church compound full of civilians sheltering from the fighting. “I was always at the gate because I didn’t want anybody to come in with a gun. Some soldiers wanted to see their family; they were not sure whether they were alive or dead. But others may come inside to look for revenge [against people from rival tribes]. So I took that decision that nobody would come in with a gun.”

“We have hope that one day there will be peace in our country. In the meantime, all we can do as a church is console and comfort the community. At the heart of this crisis are the opposing desires of two people to either gain or keep power, to be the person in charge of our country. But you cannot be a leader if you have no people left to lead.”



**The first word of Jesus from the cross is one of forgiveness.** He looks beyond the offence against his own person, and in the midst of extremity and pain, he identifies the whole messy human story. The lust for power, the self-righteousness, the fear or apathy that leads people to follow orders regardless of their outcome, the belief that the end justifies the means; all of our complicity with evil is recognised, named and forgiven. ‘Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing’.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for all who work for reconciliation, especially those who, following you, make peace with their own bodies.

*Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us*

## 2. ‘Today you will be with me in paradise’. ([Luke 23: 43](#))

Around five million people in Colombia, mostly from rural areas, have had to leave their homes as a result of intimidation by armed gangs, in a conflict driven by economic interests and the drugs trade. Many have lost close relatives and friends to the conflict. All have lost their homes and possessions.

Christian Aid partner, The Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (CIJP), has played a crucial role in setting up humanitarian zones in Colombia. Humanitarian zones are demarcated areas offering a safe refuge to people living in areas of conflict. Anyone bearing arms is denied entry to Las Camelias. Volunteers from Peace Brigades International (PBI), use non-violent methods to accompany and protect human rights defenders. The international support given by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and our partners is what deters armed groups from forcing people off their land once more. The constant presence of those inspiring CIJP workers means that the community has a lifeline in case they’re threatened again.

In Colombia, solidarity is not just a word. Solidarity is everything.



**The second word of Jesus from the cross is one of solidarity.** In his utter powerlessness, Jesus is not alone. Two others, condemned as criminals, hang on either side of him. One taunts Jesus for his powerlessness; the other recognises Jesus' innocence. One mocks Jesus on the basis of the accusations made against him; the other sees in Jesus a king. This is a profound dialogue on the true nature of power. Guilty or innocent, it makes no difference to their situation-all three are helpless victims of this judicial punishment. But they are different in their relationship to their circumstances. One is a cynic, the other is a supplicant. And Jesus- Jesus is not concerned with guilt or innocence. What matters is only that they are victims in their shared plight. On the cross, Jesus identified himself with all victims. This is the nature of solidarity; to go where in strict justice one need not go, to accompany, to be alongside, to choose to share the fate of others. Solidarity is another word for mercy. 'Today you will be with me in paradise'.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for all who are victims of the grindings of life and human indifference, and for those who choose to follow the way of solidarity.

***Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us***

### 3. 'Mother, there is your son... she is your mother'. ([John 19: 26-27](#))

Nadima and her children left Damascus to escape heavy shelling near their home. Like so many refugees, Nadima was forced to leave only with what she could carry. Now living in Lebanon in what was a garage, she and her family have just one bag of clothes between them. They are dressed for summer; yet it is winter in Lebanon.

In times of conflict, everybody is affected by violence. However, women and girls in particular are at greater risk of facing different forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. This is often due to the lack of social protection and lack of safe access to services. While there is wide recognition of sexual violence as a weapon of war, other forms of violence against women during conflict include domestic/family violence, sexual exploitation and early marriage. Many women, girls and boys affected by the crisis are pressured to find work to help cover basic survival needs such as food and rent. Children and adults working in the informal



economy are at risk of abuse and exploitation. In some cases they resort to exploitative transactional sex to survive.

**The third word from the cross of Jesus is one of care for his loved ones.** Here is his mother. Here is his beloved friend. These are intimate personal relationships for Jesus. They are people he loves. And in his extremity, Jesus sees Mary and John standing together near the cross, faithful to the last.

It is part of our human nature at times of threat or extremity that our thoughts turn to those closest to us, and to their wellbeing. In the culture and community that Jesus lived in, women were dependent on the social protection of men. We infer from scripture that by the time of the crucifixion, Mary was a widow. To lose her son would not just be a huge personal loss; it would also be an economic and cultural loss, making her vulnerable to exploitation and poverty, cutting her off from her community. And there are plenty of examples in the Bible of women whose lack of male protection caused them to suffer sexual abuse.

And perhaps Jesus also recognises that in commending his mother to John's care, the deep grief of his friend will find transformation in a new form of kinship, and in the knowledge that there is still something vital that John can do for Jesus. Their shared love of Jesus will bind Mary and John together in mutual care and restoration. 'Mother, there is your son... she is your mother'.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for our loved ones, and for people in all kinds of caring relationships.

***Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us***

## 4. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ([Mark 15: 34](#))

It is not hard to find despair and a sense of abandonment in 2016. We see it in the refugees in flight across the Middle East, in climate-ravaged countries across the world, in all the places where people have lost homes, loved ones, livelihoods and hope. There are so many stories, many of them largely untold, like this one.



In August 2015, the Dominican government began to implement a controversial citizenship policy aimed at Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent. The policy follows a 2013 Dominican court decision that retroactively and unlawfully deprived people of their nationality, namely some 200,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent who were born after 1929, and whose parents have a migratory status. Meanwhile, a parallel government process, the national plan for the regularisation of foreigners, is targeting the country's migrant population, who are predominantly Haitians. Many are long-term residents who have raised families in the Dominican Republic. Several have been forced to leave their wives and children in the country. Some were unable to collect their belongings or tell their families before being removed.

But despair and a sense of abandonment may equally be the experience of the person next door with the devastating diagnosis, or the redundancy notice in a place with few jobs, or the eviction papers. Major loss and bereavement affect everyone, and every deported Haitian or Syrian refugee is a personal tragedy. No one is just a statistic.

**The fourth word of Jesus from the cross is one of abandonment.** The Good Friday reading of Psalm 22, which begins with the same words used here by Jesus, is a reminder of how often people have used the psalms to give voice to their despair, both individually and communally. Psalms of lament are by far the most common type of psalm. In the body of the crucified Jesus is seen all the violence of the world, and his lament contains our profoundest grief. It is a summation of what it means to be human. But in this cry, Jesus is also most intensely and personally a man, needy, lost and alone. Here is the Word made flesh. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for all who feel themselves abandoned, and who despair.

***Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us***



## 5. 'I am thirsty' ([John 19: 28](#))

Ethiopia is currently suffering its worst drought in 30 years. More than 10 million people are at risk. Farmers' harvests have failed, and their livestock are badly affected. Thousands of cows and goats have died. The situation is critical. Effects of the drought are even more acute for women and children. Drought forces families to abandon their homes in search of food and water, meaning many children end up dropping out of school. Women and girls are walking longer distances to fetch water, causing real concerns about increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

For most poor communities living in drought-stricken countries, thirst comes accompanied by hunger. Lack of water also means lack of food for the hundreds of millions who are subsistence farmers, and for their animals. It is a reminder that we are children of the earth and seas, integrally connected with crops and livestock, with plants and fish. What we do to the earth, we do to ourselves. We too are creatures, not creator.

**The fifth word of Jesus from the cross is one of bodily need.** John's gospel tells us that Jesus said it in order to fulfil the scripture. But it is reasonable to assume that in the circumstances – the heat, the dust, the pain - Jesus actually was thirsty. In matters of material necessity, the assumption that hunger and thirst are purely spiritual categories is only possible for people who are able to take food and water for granted; who can take as given clean water from their taps, the ready availability of food and the wherewithal to pay for it. Millions, including many in our own wealthy country, do not have this assurance. Jesus, who fed hungry crowds and healed broken bodies and minds, never treated material needs as unimportant. He met and saw whole people, body, mind and spirit, and not just as individuals but in their relationships and communities. He did this as one who was intimately familiar with bodily need, and recognised its insistence. 'I am thirsty'

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for all who are thirsty and hungry today.

***Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us***



## 6. 'It is finished' ([John 19: 30](#))

Nearly half a million Syrians have died since 2011. Numbers of wounded have been put at 1.88million, and 45% of the population has been displaced, 6.36 million internally and more than 4 million abroad. Life expectancy has dropped from 70 in 2010 to 55.4 in 2015. ((The Guardian, 11/2/2016)

**The sixth word of Jesus from the cross is one of letting go.** Done, completed, accomplished, ended, finished-there are so many ways this word has been translated, and so many meanings that can be read into it. All we can really hear is the recognition by Jesus that his death is imminent. This young man joins the ranks of all of those who do not die peacefully in their beds in old age. Victor Frankl, the Jewish Austrian psychiatrist and survivor of Auschwitz, wrote: "We cannot judge a biography by its length, by the number of pages in it; we must judge by the richness of the contents...Sometimes the 'unfinished' are among the most beautiful symphonies."

While we can affirm the truth and wisdom of this, we know that it is not the whole story, and that even by this measure, too many lives are only half-lived, no matter their length. We know also that this moment will come to all of us, and to all whom we love. It is the one thing we share with the whole of humanity-the fact of our death, and the knowledge of that fact. We share it also with Jesus. 'It is finished'

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, we pray for all who are dying, especially those we love.

***Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us***



## 7. 'Into your hands I commend my spirit' ([Luke 23: 46](#))

An elderly woman, asked what was good about being a child, answered, 'You always have someone to go to when you're hurt.'

**The last word of Jesus from the cross is one of trust.** Only in Luke, the tender gospel, do we find these words of trust. They are also from one of the psalms (Psalm 31: 5) that liturgical backbone of faithful Jewish life. In them we hear the surrender of the deep will to God, the confidence in God, the ever-renewed place of prayer. From the child held in his mother's arms, comforted by God as a mother comforts her child (Isaiah 66: 13) to the same promise of comfort in Jerusalem, this trust has been tested, tried, shaken, but has ultimately endured. The God who comforts is one with the man who dies. 'Into your hands I commend my spirit'

*In the pain, misfortune, oppression and death of the people,*

*God is silent,*

*God is silent on the cross*

*In the crucified.*

*And this silence is God's word,*

*God's cry.*

*In solidarity,*

*God speaks the language of love.*

(Jon Sobrino)

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, into your hands we commend our spirits.

**Lord Jesus, by your passion and death, deliver us**

Travelling the road to freedom,

I am the Way, I'll take you there.

Choose to come on the journey,

Or choose to criticise and stare.

Earth's mesmerising evil





## 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 Kathy Galloway 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.*

