

Camel-Allen Churches

Worship at Home
Good Friday 2021

A Journey through the Cross



We gather at the cross of Jesus, as Christians across the world, united in prayer.

As we accompany Jesus on his way to Calvary, let us consider the difficulty of that journey... Carrying his cross through the often steep, narrow Jerusalem streets, which were filled with people mocking, jostling and taking pleasure in watching Jesus' struggle.

Jesus' journey that day remains a symbol of Christianity in the world, as it struggles with its own crosses and failures and the challenges of modern life.

Through these Stations of the Cross, Jesus invites us to travel with him and reflect on his suffering as it continues in the lives of his people still.

In solidarity with all who suffer, let us pray that we will be open to whatever he wants us to see, hear and understand.

Our Journey begins...

Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, 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'. [Mt 16; 24, 25]

Jesus is condemned unjustly by those who did not understand him and by those who were frightened of what he did and said. Perhaps they sensed that this man could make a difference, that he could turn their world upside down...

Hymn

When I survey the wondrous cross

on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ my God:
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down:
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small,
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

1: Jesus is Condemned to Die

Jesus' Cross

Jesus was captured at night, taken away by soldiers, stripped of his garments, interrogated, tortured, crowned with sharp thorns and now handed over to be condemned to death by Pontius Pilate – death on a cross.



Today

We continue to condemn people unjustly today. People are condemned because of the colour of their skin, their gender, their beliefs, because they are born with a disability, because they don't conform to our way of thinking, the list is endless. There are also the people who have been justly condemned, who have been found guilty, served their sentence and asked for forgiveness. Does our society really forgive; really believe that people can change or do we continue to condemn them over and over again?

We Respond

Jesus, what a terrible injustice to see you condemned to death. Your own people, the Roman judges and the soldiers didn't recognise that you were the Son of God. Give us the grace to see, respect and love you in all people, both innocent and guilty. Change our hearts that we may see with new eyes those we might otherwise condemn. Amen.

2: Jesus Takes Up His Cross

Jesus' Cross

Jesus was led away carrying cross by himself. A cross is not just a piece of wood, it is everything that makes life difficult. Jesus carried the crosses of his life without complaint, as a poor person and as an itinerant prophet. In the calm and courageous way, he put up with the threats of the Pharisees and the lack of understanding of his own disciples. In the way that he carried all the burdens of his life but, in particular, the way in which he carries this awful, final burden, he transforms the cross from a symbol of condemnation into one of liberation.



Today

There are burdens that we all carry; some are very obvious and others we take great care to hide. There are the burdens of illness, pain and disability, of old age, dependence, and caring for someone who no longer knows who we are. There are the burdens of constant fear, of loneliness and of isolation. The invitation of Jesus on the cross is to hand over these burdens to him.

We Respond

May we see your presence Lord in all the burdens we carry today. Help us to share our burdens more freely, not to be afraid to acknowledge our fears and our pain. May we be more aware of the crosses that others bear and make time to alleviate their burden. May your face shine on each one of us through the crosses we bear. Amen.

3: Simon Helps Jesus

Jesus' Cross

Simon the Cyrene, a stranger in the city, did not know Jesus. But that did not matter. What matters here is that in this moment of need Simon was capable of lending his shoulders to one whose own had given out, of offering his strength to one who had nothing left, of taking on himself the cross, which Jesus could no longer carry.



Today

Look at Jesus who lies hidden and unknown beneath every person in need. Across our world we see human suffering in the faces of strangers, in the faces of those struggling for democracy in the Middle East and beyond, in the faces of those dealing with the loss of life and destruction of property. People we know of, but do not know, must live with the aftermath of the ravages and destructive forces of nature – coping with floods and drought, with the devastating effects of climate change...

We Respond

Lord, help us to grasp our opportunities to be a Simon in our world. In those times when we can help, let us have the generosity to do so. May we continue the spirit of Simon through our support of those who work to alleviate suffering in our world. Lord, may we have the humility to accept all the Simons along our road who reach out to help us in our moments of need. Amen.

4: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Jesus' Cross

The women of Jerusalem wept when they saw how Jesus suffered. Jesus recognised their distress, he broke his silence for the first time, spoke to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children'.



Today

We look at Jesus and listen to his message for us... Weep for the children who are abused. Weep for the women who are victimised. Weep for men and women who suffer from the tyranny of today's body image that controls their lives and prevents them from feeling lovable. Weep for the young who cannot find a job or a way in life. Weep for the old who are forgotten. Weep for people who starve in the shadow of abundance. Weep for people who are homeless, in exile or seeking refuge. Weep for them.

We Respond

Lord, open our hearts to the suffering of all people in our world. Give us the generosity of spirit to help us recognise their pain, the courage to challenge the systems that place intolerable burdens on them and the compassion to support them. Amen.

5: Jesus is Stripped of His Clothing

Jesus' Cross

As the clothes were ripped from Jesus, he was stripped of his dignity in front of an irreverent mob. Jesus sacrifices everything. He holds nothing of himself back. Here, on the threshold of death, even more intensely than during his lifetime, he is a being-for-others. He surrenders everything in order to ransom all.



Today

We look at Jesus and the absolute indignity inflicted upon him by society. Jesus continues to be stripped of his dignity in those who have their good name taken from them and the intimate details of their lives exposed through the media. Society takes on the role of judge and jury as we curiously devour the details. Jesus is stripped again when men, women and children are portrayed as objects in a pornographic manner in magazines, DVDs, on television and the internet.

We Respond

Forgive us Lord for being an irreverent mob prying into people's lives. Forgive us for being consumers of gossip under the name of 'news'. Let us never expose anyone. May we respect the dignity of others and leave judgement to God. Let us see the good in those around us and so enable them to reach their full potential. Amen.

6: Jesus is Nailed to The Cross

Jesus' Cross

Huge iron nails are hammered through his wrists and through his ankles. Iron through human flesh, the flesh must yield, there is no defence. Jesus, nailed to the cross, cannot move. The hand that has wiped blindness from the eyes; the hand that opened the seal of deafness, the hand that touched a heart and cured a leper, the hand that blessed children and those with a disability; the carpenter's hand is joined to the wood again. As the cross is put in place, he hangs there between us and God, a blood-stained victim for love.



Today

Jesus continues to be crucified in the ten children who die every minute of hunger in our world. He is crucified in all who are maimed, damaged or displaced because of war. He is crucified in all who are marginalised in our society because of their race, sexuality or gender. He is crucified in those who are abused physically, sexually or emotionally. He is crucified in those who are trafficked across the world. He is crucified in the exploitation of the earth and its resources.

We Respond

Jesus, we pray on behalf of those who cannot reach out to you at this moment. We pray for all victims of violence; those who suffer it and those who inflict it. We pray especially for children, for the elderly and those too vulnerable to defend themselves. May victims of cruelty and oppression know that you are always with them. Amen

7: Jesus Dies on The Cross

Jesus' Cross

As the life of Jesus ebbs away his words are not of condemnation or of pity for himself, but of forgiveness; 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'. In the midst of his anguish and suffering Jesus calls upon his Father to forgive those who are putting him to death. This is the real challenge of the cross, forgiveness even of those who hurt us most.



Today

There is much to seek forgiveness for in our world today, hunger, poverty, violence, abuse, war, neglect, corruption, the list seems endless. Each one of us praying these stations could continue the list on our own behalf and indeed on behalf of those who have hurt us. As Jesus dies on Calvary, he challenges us to love our enemies, to let go of hurt, to ask for forgiveness and when we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive, to ask God to do it for us. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

We Respond

Let us stand with those who watched and prayed in silence while Jesus breathed his last. As we cannot measure love, so we cannot dilute this ultimate act of love and forgiveness with words. Let our love span the silence. Lord! Let our love and forgiveness speak your praise. Amen.

8: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Jesus' Cross

Now Mary takes the broken body of her Son in her arms. In her grief, she remembers the words of her son, over the bread, 'this is my body, broken, for you,' and over the wine, 'this is my blood poured out for you.' She remembers that little baby in Bethlehem worshipped by shepherds and kings. She remembers the days when the crowds followed him and she is full of sorrow.



Today

Mary's grief is our grief too. As Mary cradles the lifeless body of her son and offers him back to the Father, she stands with all parents who have held their children close to them in death: those lost through accidents or acts of violence, those who have died by suicide, those who died suddenly or after illness. Mary grieves with all who sorrow for loved ones: parents, siblings, family members, friends.

We Respond

Help us Lord, to accept the partings that must come. Help us to offer our loved ones back to you as Mary offered her son. Faced with the silence of death, let us not despair but find hope. May the finality of death not oppress us. Help us to trust in you, the Lord of the living and the dead. Amen.

9: Jesus is Laid in The Tomb

Jesus' Cross

That night his body lay in the dark earth of the world, a seed dying, in the winter of all spirits. All those who had loved him felt emptied and exhausted. There seemed no longer any sense or purpose in anything. But at least no more harm could come to him. They closed the tomb and left.



Today

There are times when we are overcome by the darkness of the tomb, by the countless deaths that we experience each day, but the answer to all our grieving and despair lies in this place. The world is now the tabernacle of God. The grain of wheat sown in darkness and in death has indeed yielded a rich harvest. Our presence here gives witness to that. Jesus' death was not in vain.

We Respond

Jesus, each day you put before us life or death. Help us always to choose life. We pray for all those we have known who have died, and for those who have no one to pray for them. We ask for the gift of faith when we are faced with the darkness of the tomb and our own death approaches. May we have eyes to see the promise of new life that the darkness can hold. Amen.

Our Journey draws to a close...

Jesus says, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die' [John 11; 25, 26]

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small,
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.**

May God bless us,
that in us may be found love and humility,
obedience and thanksgiving, discipline,
gentleness and peace. Amen.

*These images of the Stations of the Cross are by Ken Cooke,
sourced from the Church of St. George the Martyr in Newbury,
with the kind permission of Rev Paul Cowan.
The written material was inspired by. 'Stations of the Cross for Our Time'
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*Hymn taken from missionpraise.com
CCLI# 999402*

*Prepared by Claire & Sue
Available on Camel-Allen Churches' YouTube from Thursday 1 April*