

# Maundy Thursday Watch

This order of service is based on the Watch Service which for many years has been held between 9 and 10 p.m. on Maundy Thursday in St James's Church, Boroughbridge. The service is based on the traditional Passiontide service of Tenebrae, which means 'shadows'.

The service is normally held in the south aisle of St James's Church, with people sitting or kneeling in semi-darkness before a representation of the Garden of Gethsemane, made up of flowers and lit candles. The first forty-five minutes of the service comprises the reading of the Passion Gospel and Psalms, guided by the chiming of the church clock every quarter-hour: the Gospel is read after the clock has finished striking, followed by a period of approximately ten minutes silence, with the Psalm being read just before the clock strikes the next quarter. At 9.45 p.m. candles in the Garden are extinguished, and the congregation moves to the Chancel, where a Psalm is read while the Sanctuary is stripped. The congregation leave in silence as the clock strikes 10 p.m.

You can take part in the service at home simply by following the readings – slowly, as if you were listening to them being read. However, you might like to consider:

- Setting aside a period of time when you will be undisturbed
- Having a clock in view – although you don't have to keep strict timings: move on when you feel ready
- Sitting in semi-darkness – with just sufficient to read
- Lighting a candle or candles as a visual focus – plus a cross or crucifix if you have one
- Having something to hold onto – this might just even be a pebble
- Playing some quiet music in the background – if you find periods of silence unhelpful

Normally, you would listen to the readings without having the text to follow. Take your time reading the texts. Try to visualise the events they describe as you read: you will have time to reflect on them more in the period of quietness which follows each reading. Unless you have a tablet/iPad, it is probably best to print out the order of service rather than follow it on a computer screen or mobile phone.

This is not meant to be a specific reflection respecting the Coronavirus outbreak, although your own experience of social distancing may make the increasing isolation of Jesus in the narratives more poignant and personal.

## **The first Quarter**

***Read: Matthew 26. 26-35.***

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' Peter said to him, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples.

***Consider: Jesus shares a meal with his friends. In what ways are you his friend?***

*Towards the end of the Quarter, read: Psalm 41. 1-12*

Happy are those who consider the poor;  
the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.  
The Lord protects them and keeps them alive;  
they are called happy in the land.  
You do not give them up to the will of their enemies.  
The Lord sustains them on their sickbed;  
in their illness you heal all their infirmities.

As for me, I said, 'O Lord, be gracious to me;  
heal me, for I have sinned against you.'  
My enemies wonder in malice  
when I will die, and my name perish.  
And when they come to see me, they utter empty words,  
while their hearts gather mischief;  
when they go out, they tell it abroad.  
All who hate me whisper together about me;  
they imagine the worst for me.

They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me,  
that I will not rise again from where I lie.  
Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted,  
who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.  
But you, O Lord, be gracious to me,  
and raise me up, that I may repay them.

By this I know that you are pleased with me;  
because my enemy has not triumphed over me.  
But you have upheld me because of my integrity,  
and set me in your presence for ever.

## The second Quarter

### **Read: Matthew 26. 36-56**

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.’ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.’ Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, ‘So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again he went away for the second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.’ Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.’

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.’ At once he came up to Jesus and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed him. Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, do what you are here to do.’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?’ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.’ Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

**Consider: ‘The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,’ Jesus says to the sleeping disciples. They then prove the reverse is also true as they flee. Does the certainty of death make us sleep – or make us run?**

*Towards the end of the Quarter, read: Psalm 38*

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath.  
For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation;  
there is no health in my bones because of my sin.  
For my iniquities have gone over my head;  
they weigh like a burden too heavy for me.

My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness;  
I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all day long I go around mourning.  
For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh.  
I am utterly spent and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

O Lord, all my longing is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you.  
My heart throbs, my strength fails me;  
as for the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.  
My friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction,  
and my neighbours stand far off.

Those who seek my life lay their snares;  
those who seek to hurt me speak of ruin, and meditate treachery all day long.

But I am like the deaf, I do not hear; like the mute, who cannot speak.  
Truly, I am like one who does not hear, and in whose mouth is no retort.

But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait;  
it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.  
For I pray, ‘Only do not let them rejoice over me,  
those who boast against me when my foot slips.’

For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me.  
I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin.  
Those who are my foes without cause are mighty,  
and many are those who hate me wrongfully.  
Those who render me evil for good  
are my adversaries because I follow after good.

Do not forsake me, O Lord;  
O my God, do not be far from me;  
make haste to help me,  
O Lord, my salvation.

## **The third Quarter**

**Read: Matthew 26. 57-75**

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, ‘This fellow said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”’ The high priest stood up and said, ‘Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?’ But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, ‘I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?’ They answered, ‘He deserves death.’ Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, ‘Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?’

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied it before all of them, saying, ‘I do not know what you are talking about.’ When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ Again he denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.’ Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, ‘I do not know the man!’ At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: ‘Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.

**Consider: ‘Certainly you are also one of them,’ the bystanders say to Peter. Could the same accusation be made of you – or is it only your accent?**

***Towards the end of the Quarter, read: Psalm 22. 1-21***

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?  
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.  
In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.  
To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human;  
scorned by others, and despised by the people.  
All who see me mock at me;  
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;  
'Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'

Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.  
On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.  
Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me;  
they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;  
my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.

For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me.  
My hands and feet have shrivelled; I can count all my bones.  
They stare and gloat over me;  
they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.

But you, O Lord, do not be far away!  
O my help, come quickly to my aid!  
Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my life from the power of the dog!  
Save me from the mouth of the lion!

## The last Quarter

*Normally, at this point the Sanctuary is stripped. If you have lit a candle, extinguish it now. If you have been holding a cross or other item, put it down.*

**Read: Psalm 51 1-17**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgement.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.  
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.  
For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.  
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.



***Now read: Hebrews 4. 12-13***

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

***Now re-read: Psalm 51 1-17***

***The hour concludes:***

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
Have mercy on me, a sinner.