

Breaking Open the Word

Lent VI
13th April, 2025
Sunday of the Passion



The Reason for all Seasons

A weekly reflection and
sermon, with study and
prayer guides following the
RCL Lectionary

Dennis Webster



Revised Common Lectionary

Lent VI

Isaiah 50.4-9a

Psalms 31.9-16

Philippians 2.5-11

Luke 23.1-49

Almighty and everlasting God,
who, of thy tender love towards mankind,
hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
to take upon him our flesh,
and to suffer death upon the cross,
that all mankind should follow the example
of his great humility;
Mercifully grant, that we may both
follow the example of his patience,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Dennis reflects on the significance of the Palm Sunday Collect from the Book of Common Prayer in the sermon, emphasising how it encapsulates love, humility, and resurrection as we enter Holy Week.

He highlights that the Collect serves as a theological framework, central to understanding this week's readings and the broader narrative of God's compassion expressed through Jesus's incarnation and sacrifice.

Dennis underscores that the cross is rooted in divine love rather than wrath, calling believers to appreciate the depth of Christ's humility and the cost of his love as he willingly suffers for humanity.

Further, Dennis invites the congregation to embrace the teachings of the Collect, encouraging them to mirror

Jesus' example of humility and patience. He challenges the prevailing notions of power and success, urging everyone to adopt a mindset of service and love, following Christ's path through their struggles.

Ultimately, he emphasises that the journey through Holy Week is a reflection and an opportunity for spiritual transformation.

The sermon encourages believers to engage with the elements of the Collect, including adoration of God's love, contemplation of Christ's humility, and a hopeful anticipation of resurrection life—inviting all to be deeply changed by the love that this Collect represents.

Prayer Prompts

Take a moment to share any prayer requests in your group.

- Ask God to help each member embody the humility of Christ in their daily lives this week.
- Pray for patience amid challenges, modelling the steadfastness of Jesus.
- Seek God's guidance to reflect on the promise of resurrection and how it can transform your outlook on life.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

Reflection on the Palm Sunday Collect (BCP)

As I prepare my study guide each week, I always include the Book of Common Prayer (BCP 1662) Collect set for the Sunday in question. I do this partly out of my love and admiration for Cranmer's language but also because the structure of each prayer neatly 'collects' all the theological and hermeneutical points that will follow in the readings.

Preaching from the New Revised Common Lectionary (NRCL) will often have different readings than the BCP's. To start with, the BCP is an annual lectionary and not a three-year cycle like the NRCL. There are times when the NRCL differs from the Roman Catholic lectionary, but generally, it does follow pretty well.

It is customary where I am for no formal sermon, just a short reflection on the upcoming Holy Week, detailing the various activities available to people. There will be thirteen services during the following week.

Each day in Holy Week is different, with varying emphases

for each day. Many will attend only the Triduum (from Maundy Thursday evening to Easter Dawn), while others may come and go as they can. It is a journey through Holy Week, akin to a pilgrimage. It is a long week for the clergy, but one shared, lived, and prayed together.

This is why the daily Collect for this week is essential for me. If nothing else, if the faithful were to pray the Daily Collect, the Lenten (Ash Wednesday) Collect, and the Lord's Prayer, at least some spiritual connection would be established in our common pilgrimage. So, together, let us explore the structure of the Collect and see precisely how it embraces not only Palm Sunday but also the very nature of God's love in giving us His only Son.

**Almighty and everlasting God,
who, of thy tender love towards
mankind,**

**hast sent thy Son our Saviour
Jesus Christ,**

**to take upon him our flesh,
and to suffer death upon the
cross,**

**that all mankind should follow
the example**

**of his great humility:
(Mercifully grant, that we may
both**

**follow the example of his
patience,**

**and also be made partakers of
his resurrection:**

**through the same Jesus Christ
our Lord**

The Palm Sunday Collect begins with a powerful declaration: **"Almighty and everlasting God, who, out of Your tender love for humanity, sent Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take on our human nature and to suffer death on the cross."** It serves as a profound reminder that the cross is rooted not in divine wrath but in an abundance of love. In a world quick to see God as distant or harsh, this Collect brings us back to the heart of it all—God's unwavering compassion.

Now, let's unpack the next part: **"...hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh."** Here we encounter the mystery of the Incarnation—Jesus, the eternal Word, doesn't simply hover above humanity; He immerses himself, taking on our flesh and blood. Imagine the staggering implications! This isn't just a spiritual descent; it's a gritty, embodied connection with our struggles and joys.

And then we confront the stark reality of his mission: **"...and to suffer death upon the cross..."** This moment isn't an unfortunate accident but a deliberate act of love. As Isaiah 53:5 boldly states, **"But he was wounded for our transgressions."** It is a sacrificial act that pierces the heart of the Christian narrative. Jesus' death is where love meets its ultimate cost, a concept that theologian Fleming Rutledge aptly describes as **"the most irreligious, godforsaken event in history."**¹ Yet, within this darkness, we find the seeds of redemption.

Next, the Collect calls us to action: **"...that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility."** Here's the twist! It's not enough to simply adore him; we are invited to mirror his humility. Picture this: Jesus rode into Jerusalem not as a conquering hero on a war horse, but on a humble donkey—a moment that perfectly encapsulates His approach to power.

Christ flips the script in a world where strength is often equated with dominance. His humility is a strength dedicated to service. He washes feet, dines with sinners, and embraces rejection, all while inviting us to follow in His footsteps—not in pursuit of power, but in the offering of love.

Next, we reach an essential request: **“Mercifully grant that we may both emulate his patience...”** Here, patience transcends mere waiting; it involves enduring challenges with love. Consider Jesus in Gethsemane, suffering in prayer yet yielding to the Father’s will. He exemplifies this steadfast trust. Even while on the cross, He forgives those who ridicule and crucify him. The Collect urges us to follow this journey, not by our own determination but through divine mercy.

And let’s not forget the grand finale: **“..and also be made partakers of his resurrection.”** With this, we’re lifted from suffering to the heights of glory. The goal isn’t just to imitate Christ; it’s to partake in His risen life. Romans 6:5 reminds us that if we share in His death, we will also share in His resurrection. This isn’t mere moral encouragement; it’s a radical hope that transforms lives.

So, what does this Collect mean for us today? It immerses us in the rhythm of Holy Week, urging us to walk humbly, suffer patiently, and hope confidently. It challenges the consumerist view of faith, steering us from seeking success and power. Instead, we’re called to embody humility, patience, and the promise of resurrection.

Let this Collect serve as our spiritual compass as we approach Palm Sunday. It invites us to:

- **Adore the love of God that sent Christ for us.**

- **Contemplate the humility of Christ in taking on flesh.**

- **Marvel at the suffering love displayed on the cross.**

- **Follow in His footsteps with patience and humility.**

- **Hope in the promise of resurrection life.**

As we echo this powerful prayer, we align our hearts with Christ’s incredible journey—from profound humility to divine glory, from the depths of death to the fullness of life. This Holy Week, let us not merely remember but allow ourselves to be profoundly transformed by the overwhelming love captured in this Collect. Embrace this moment and let it change you!

1. Rutledge, Fleming, **Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ**, Erdmann Publishing, Michigan USA 2015, p 54

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does the Collect reveal about God's love for humanity?

- The sermon emphasises that the Collect begins with a declaration of God's love, reminding us that the cross is rooted in compassion rather than divine wrath.
- How can understanding God's love in this way change your perspective on difficult situations in your life?

In what ways does Jesus' humble entry into Jerusalem challenge our views of power and strength?

- The reflection discusses how Jesus chose to ride on a donkey instead of a war horse, flipping the script about how power is typically viewed in society.
- Can you think of a time when you chose to act humbly or serve others instead of seeking power or recognition? How did that feel?

How does the concept of participating in Christ's suffering and resurrection shape our understanding of faith?

- The sermon highlights that we are called to partake in Jesus' suffering and His resurrection, as mentioned in Romans 6:5.
- What steps can you take in your life to more actively participate in the challenges and joys of your faith journey?

Why is patience viewed as a vital quality in following Jesus, and how can we emulate this in our lives?

- The sermon describes patience as enduring challenges with love and highlights Jesus' example during His suffering in Gethsemane.
- How can you practice patience daily, especially when facing challenges or waiting for something important?

What practical ways can we embody the humility and love exemplified by Jesus during Holy Week?

- The reflection encourages us to mirror Jesus' humility and service rather than seek power or success, especially during Holy Week's pilgrimage.
- Considering the sermon's teachings, how can you showcase humility and love in your actions this week?

Further Discussion Starters

What does it mean to you that God sent His Son because of his love for us?

This question relates to the beginning of the sermon where it discusses the declaration in the Palm Sunday Collect, emphasising God's love.

How can we show humility in our everyday lives like Jesus did?

This is derived from the sermon section, which talks about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey and inviting us to mirror his humility.

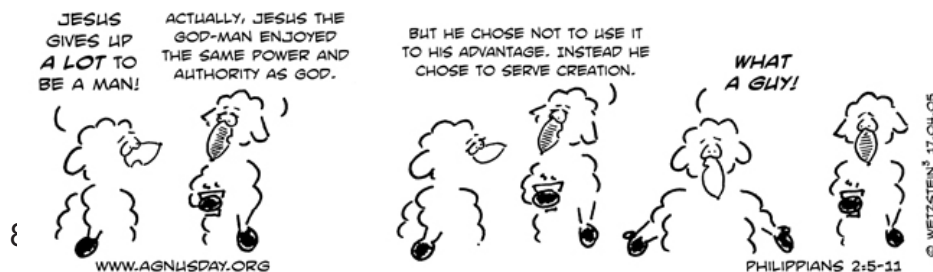
Why do you think patience is so important, especially when we face challenges?

This question connects to the discussion about Jesus' patience in Gethsemane and the call to emulate his endurance through difficulties.

Can you think of a time you felt God's love or compassion in your life?

How does the promise of resurrection make you feel about facing tough times?

This question ties back to the sermon's conclusion about the transformative hope found in sharing in Christ's resurrection.



5 Day Devotional

Walking Gently on Sacred Ground

This five-day devotional will examine the sermon from this weekend in greater depth, reflecting on the powerful themes of humility, love, and resurrection as seen in the Palm Sunday Collect.



Day 1 Isaiah 53:5

The Cross is often seen as the ultimate symbol of suffering and sorrow. Yet, as we step into the depths of this scripture, we begin to understand that it is also the foundation of our hope. The Palm Sunday Collect reminds us that Jesus' suffering was not an arbitrary act of violence but a profound expression of love. In embracing our humanity, He offers a lifeline to those shackled by sin and despair.

As we reflect on this, let us consider how we might respond to such love. How can we mirror the humility of Christ, who willingly took our burdens upon Himself? In acknowledging his sacrifice, we are called to remember and embody that love in our daily lives.

How can I embody humility in my actions this week?

What does it mean for me to follow Christ's example of patience?

In what ways can I experience and share the hope of resurrection?

Pray for the strength to reflect Christ's humility in your relationships.

Ask God to open your heart to the depth of His love and sacrifice.

Day 2 Philippians 2:5-8

The theme of humility resonates deeply as we navigate through Holy Week. In Philippians, we are encouraged to adopt the same mindset as Christ, who humbled himself to the point of suffering. This attitude connects us to the divine and shapes our interactions with others. Just as Christ descended into humanity, we are called to lift those around us through acts of kindness and service.

How can I better serve others in my community this week?
What does humility look like in my everyday life?
How can I show kindness to someone who might not expect it?
Pray for opportunities to serve and humble yourself for the sake of others.
Ask God to reveal ways to demonstrate His love in action.

Day 3 Romans 6:5

The connection between suffering and resurrection is a profound element of our faith. Romans 6 reminds us that in sharing in Christ's suffering, we ultimately participate in his resurrection. This invitation not only reassures us of God's promise but also challenges us to embrace our suffering as part of our journey. It is often through our trials that we witness the depths of God's grace and the power of resurrection.
As we navigate our challenges, let's remember that we are not alone. Just as Christ endured the cross, we, too, can find hope in our struggles, knowing that they are momentary compared to the eternal glory that awaits. Reflect on how your suffering can lead to deeper faith and connection with Christ.

What areas of my life feel like a struggle right now, and how can I surrender these to God?
How does understanding resurrection change the way I view suffering?
In what ways can I celebrate the hope of resurrection in my life?
Pray for both patience and strength in your challenges.
Ask God to help you see the light of His resurrection in your life.

Day 4 Matthew 20:26-28

Christ's model of leadership stands in stark contrast to societal expectations. In Matthew, Jesus elucidates that true greatness is found in servitude. As we reflect on his teachings, we are reminded that our purpose is not about rising to the top but lifting others as we go. This message of service aligns beautifully with our understanding of humility and love; it challenges us to act not for our gain but for the blessing of others.

As we consider this concept of leadership through humility, let's examine our roles. How can we lead in our families, workplaces, and communities by serving others? Christ's call to serve reshapes our definition of greatness and encourages us to take humble steps toward building a community grounded in love and respect.

What does it mean for me to serve those around me?
How can I change my perspective on leadership to reflect Christ's example?
In what ways can I encourage others to serve and uplift each other?
Pray for the heart of a servant that mirrors Christ's love.
Seek opportunities to lead through serving in your community.

Day 5 1 Peter 1:3

As we conclude this five-day journey, let us remember that our hope is rooted in the resurrection promise. 1 Peter assures us that Christ gives us new birth into a living hope. This hope is not passive; it invites us to live out our faith with confidence actively. Reflecting on how this hope transforms our daily lives is essential as we transition into the resurrection celebration.

The call to embodiment extends beyond mere acknowledgment; it invites us to engage fully with the life-affirming truths of our faith. Let each moment reflect our hope in Christ—working through our trials and rejoicing in his promise of new life. May we carry this enriching hope into our lives, inspiring those around us as we journey together in faith.

What does it look like to live in the hope of resurrection daily?
How can my faith be a source of hope for others?
What steps can I take to deepen my understanding of this hope in Christ?
Pray for renewed hope and joy that comes from Christ's resurrection.
Ask God to help you share this hope with those in need around you.

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press)

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of John

Tannehill, Robert C, **Narrative Unity Luke Acts Vol: A Literary Interpretation: Volume One: The Gospel According to Luke:**, Augsburg Fortress Publishers 199

1. Rutledge, Fleming, **Crucifixion: understanding the death of Jesus Christ**, Erdmann Publishing, Michigan USA 2015

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

The following authors as featured at The Woship Cloud

www.theworshipcloud.com

N. T. Wright, Jane Williams, PJames Woodward, Paula Gooder and Mark Pryce, David Perry



Brabarlung Totem

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