

# The **IMPORTANCE** *of* **BEING** Holy Week Retreat



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING

Enter into this spiritual journey through Holy Week, beginning with the decision to go to Bethany and concluding with the gathering around the Cross on Good Friday. We will ask such questions as, “Where are you?” We will look at Jesus’ choices, his proximity to those he loved and the attitude of His loved ones towards Him.

Each day will begin with the same form of prayer and incorporate a Psalm for the day as well as the opportunity for personal intercession.

The Midday Meditation offers the opportunity to gather, read the Scripture and listen to the reflection in company. Using an ‘Ignatian’ approach to the Scripture, we will place ourselves into the moment and imagine the scene with its emotional, personal and theological import.

Night prayers are here for you to read and will also be available to watch online, premiered at 6:30pm for you to settle down with for the night.

Each Night Prayer will trace the same pattern of greeting, Scripture, reflection and blessing so that you might be enabled to rest in Jesus' care.

On Good Friday, there will be a Psalm for the day , a passage of Scripture and a lone reflection. Then, we will intentionally experience the loss & loneliness of the cross. You are encouraged to be attend a Good Friday Service on this day - shed your tears. Be present.

And then we wait...

Wait for the dawn to break and make your way to worship to celebrate the unexpected joy of Resurrection Sunday.

Being there will make all the difference.

In an increasingly flaky world, the spiritual discipline of showing up will galvanise your faith this Holy Season.

Holy Week is an opportune moment to be rooted in God’s presence and to experience Jesus drawing closer to you.

The Importance of Being is a spiritual retreat for Holy Week.

I pray that you might engage with it and gain a closer proximity to Jesus and his hear his call to you.

Love,



# MORNING PRAYERS



Psalm 113:1-3 NIV

*Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, you his servants;  
Praise the name of the Lord.  
Let the name of the Lord be praised,  
Both now and forevermore.  
From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,  
The name of the Lord is to be praised.*

**+ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

For this fresh dawn I give you thanks, Lord God  
For this new day, I praise you Jesus  
For the opportunities held waiting  
I invite your presence, Holy Spirit.

**The Lord Jesus asks you; “Will you follow me today?” John 6:68 NIV  
“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”**

*A Psalm for today - see pages 6-7*

Loving God  
Be with me throughout today:  
As I go about my business at home and outside.  
As I trace the steps of our Lord Jesus  
From the safety of the country to Jerusalem and Calvary.  
Walk with me and teach me as I follow him.  
Open my heart and teach me His love.  
Open my mind and teach me His ways.  
Open my life and teach me His strength.  
That I may be transformed this day  
To be more like Jesus, to the Glory of God. **Amen**

**On this Holiest of weeks I honour your sacrifice,  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world:**

Isaiah 53:4-5 NIV

*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.*

**Who is this Jesus whom you follow?**

***“We have come to believe and to know that  
you are the Holy One of God.”***

*Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend; My Prophet, Priest & King;  
My Lord, My Life, My Way, My End: Accept the praise I bring.*

Pray for your own needs and for the world around you, concluding:

Loving Jesus, hear my prayer for all who walk with You today.  
For my brothers and sisters in my Church Fellowship  
For my brothers and sisters who worship You in my community.  
For my brothers and sisters who worship You around the world.  
Grant to each the courage to walk closely with You,  
The wisdom to know and the strength to do what is right.  
Gift me Your voice to speak words of love and invitation.  
To meet with You under the Cross. **Amen**

**Let this day be filled with the the Lord’s goodness!**

***Glory be to the Father And to the Son And to the Holy Spirit  
As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be  
World without end. Amen***

I go and live today under the shadow of Calvary  
As the weight of God’s promise draws me ever closer.

***In the Name of Christ. Amen***



## Monday

Psalm 96:1-13 NIV

[1] Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. [2] Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. [3] Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. [4] For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. [5] For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. [6] Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. [7] Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. [8] Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. [9] Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. [10] Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns. " The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. [11] Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. [12] Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. [13] Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

## Tuesday

Psalm 57:1-11 NIV

[1] Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. [2] I cry out to God Most High, to God, who vindicates me. [3] He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me---God sends forth his love and his faithfulness. [4] I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts---men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. [5] Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. [6] They spread a net for my feet---I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path---but they have fallen into themselves. [7] My heart, O God, is steadfast, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. [8] Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. [9] I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. [10] For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. [11] Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

## Wednesday

Psalm 27:1-14 NIV

[1] The Lord is my light and my salvation---whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life---of whom shall I be afraid? [2] When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. [3] Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. [4] One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. [5] For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. [6] Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord. [7] Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me. [8] My heart says of you, "Seek his face! " Your face, Lord, I will seek. [9] Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake

me, God my Saviour. [10] Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. [11] Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. [12] Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations. [13] I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. [14] Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

## Thursday

Psalm 63:1-11 NIV

[1] You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. [2] I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. [3] Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. [4] I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. [5] I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. [6] On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. [7] Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. [8] I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. [9] Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. [10] They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. [11] But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

## Friday

Psalm 56:1-13 NIV

[1] Be merciful to me, my God, for my enemies are in hot pursuit; all day long they press their attack. [2] My adversaries pursue me all day long; in their pride many are attacking me. [3] When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. [4] In God, whose word I praise---in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? [5] All day long they twist my words; all their schemes are for my ruin. [6] They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, hoping to take my life. [7] Because of their wickedness do not let them escape; in your anger, God, bring the nations down. [8] Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll---are they not in your record? [9] Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. [10] In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise--- [11] in God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me? [12] I am under vows to you, my God; I will present my thank offerings to you. [13] For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.





# MONDAY MIDDAY MEDITATION

## Planning to be There

### Gathering Prayer

Gracious God

Meet with us, in this oasis place;

This time set apart to abide in your presence,

To listen and learn from you.

Help us to set aside every  
worrisome detail of our living,

That in our waiting on you

We might know you more fully

And be blessed.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen

### Read

John 11:1-16 CEV

[1-2] A man by the name of Lazarus was sick in the village of Bethany. He had two sisters, Mary and Martha. This was the same Mary who later poured perfume on the Lord's head and wiped his feet with her hair. [3] The sisters sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick. [4] When Jesus heard this, he said, "His sickness won't end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son." [5] Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother. [6] But he stayed where he was for two more days. [7] Then he said to his disciples, "Now we will go back to Judea." [8] "Teacher," they said, "the people there want to stone you to death! Why do you want to go back?" [9] Jesus answered, "Aren't there twelve hours in each day? If you walk during the day, you will have light from the sun, and you won't stumble. [10] But if you walk during the night, you will stumble, because you don't have any light." [11] Then he told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, and I am going there to wake him up." [12] They replied, "Lord, if he is asleep, he will get better." [13] Jesus really meant that Lazarus was dead, but they thought he was talking only about sleep. [14] Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead! [15] I am glad that I wasn't there, because now you will have a chance to put your faith in me. Let's go to him." [16] Thomas, whose nickname was "Twin," said to the other disciples, "Come on. Let's go, so we can die with him."



### Reflect

Being far from our loved ones who are struggling with sickness or crisis is so hard to bear. The pressures of life crowd in and we might live in a bubble of our own pressures formed of life's joys and sorrows, commitments and anxieties. We see too clearly the problems and perplexities of our immediate situation, so



much so that it seems impossible to leave them. Jesus too found himself in a time of deliberate seclusion. Beyond him, still to be faced, were all the things that the Disciples voiced. And right there in the path on the edge of danger lay Lazarus, dying even as the Messenger reached Jesus. There too were Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters who were facing the imminent loss of their brother and alone; dealing with that grief and pain.

Jesus makes plans to be present with the Sisters, bursting his own protective bubble of safety and the security of a location away from danger. He plans to draw near to those who need him most.

“Don't come!” The Sisters might have insisted on the ‘discipleship community WhatsApp Group’. Theirs adding to the anxious voices of those present with Jesus saying; “You can't go! –You mustn't go! Don't put yourself at risk!”

And yet the imperative of the pull to be Immanuel is relentless. Jesus always comes to those who need Him. It is His nature.

Jesus takes two days –not of procrastination. He waits to leave with a deliberate calm. A time of preparation, of prayer and planning. He will be ready for the meeting. He will be ready to talk with Martha, share with Mary and command the unthinkable. He will ‘bring God glory’.

Today, our preparations to make a visit can look like purchasing tickets and packing clothes. We organise our lives and we make arrangements. We contact people and arrange transport. We listen to voices of censure;

“Don't come!”

“Don't go!”

And so we seek to know and do what is right and good.

And what of being ‘too late’? If we aren't able to be present when the moment of crisis is at its height? What value our being there, our risking relationships and spending our time if the cry is “It's too late, it's all over”?

Jesus point to the most important thing. Being there brings everything into focus. In life and death, Jesus is Lord. His presence matters, being close to those he loves matters, whether you are a close-by Disciple or far-off Community, the value of Jesus' presence is inestimable. He will be the presence by whose light the community of faithful disciples stumble through the darkness of enemy

territory to arrive in the place of welcome unscathed. Jesus is Comfort to those who are deep in loss and Teacher to the sisters, to the disciples who are watching, fearful of unnamed foes and to the plethora of people who have come to grieve. Too late?

Come in anyway and be here, be present.

Be present for the miracle.

Be present to comfort and to receive the comfort that Jesus offers.

Be present even though it is costly and the Big Event has passed.

Draw near with faith. Offer yourself into the moment and know that the sacrifice of bursting the bubble of your own situation will draw you into the oneness of fellowship in Jesus. Their names are no more 'Mary', 'Martha' or 'Lazarus' than yours is 'The Lord Jesus', and still you are needed to be there. Making plans to be present against the resistance of those who would keep you from 'putting yourself out' and those very ones will support you to their final breath, even though they sigh in exasperation because you just won't be told.

## Silence

The Lord's Prayer

Time for you to pray aloud ...

Thank you Lord for meeting us in the middle of the day

*Your Presence is my peace and my power.*

Lord, let your blessing remain upon us as we walk in the light of your presence.

*May my feet tread your paths of righteousness,  
May I live my life in the presence of the Lord .*

Be present in your church and build your kingdom.

Restore to us the years the locusts have eaten.

Lift up our heads, that we might see the splendour of the King

In whose presence we forever dwell.

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*





# NIGHT PRAYERS ON MONDAY

## I'll be there for you

Welcome to Night Prayers in Holy Week as we draw close to Jesus and spend time being in His presence.

May the peace of God be with you and remain with you at the ending of this day and throughout the night ahead.

We turn to words of Holy Scripture in John 11:17-37 CEV

[17] When Jesus got to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. [18] Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem, [19] and many people had come from the city to comfort Martha and Mary because their brother had died. [20] When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. [21] Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask." [23] Jesus told her, "Your brother will live again!" [24] Martha answered, "I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised." [25] Jesus then said, "I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. [26] And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?" [27] "Yes, Lord!" she replied. "I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come into the world." [28] After Martha said this, she went and privately said to her sister Mary, "The Teacher is here, and he wants to see you." [29] As soon as Mary heard this, she got up and went out to Jesus. [30] He was still outside the village where Martha had gone to meet him. [31] Many people had come to comfort Mary, and when they saw her quickly leave the house, they thought she was going out to the tomb to cry. So they followed her. [32] Mary went to where Jesus was. Then as soon as she saw him, she knelt at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." [33] When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, he was terribly upset [34] and asked, "Where have you put his body?" They replied, "Lord, come and you will see." [35] Jesus started crying, [36] and the people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus." [37] Some of them said, "He gives sight to the blind. Why couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"



## I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU

I've been in this household long enough to see what's what. I saw how those little girls adored their brother, following him around when they were just little ones and getting into all the mischief. He couldn't shake them off.

I thought they'd get married quick enough once they were old enough. I'd see Martha looking wistful, watching her friends with their babes. She had a stillness in her watching we hardly saw when she was busy with her hands.

And Mary, such a lovely woman, kindness itself watching her sister and looking like her mirror image. Those girls grew up to be such kind and generous women, and their hospitality is a credit to the family name – just look at the people here!

Look at them though – Mary's in the house surrounded by the mourners and Martha over there, got herself out as fast as she could to 'check on something' - she needs the space to breathe deeply, that one! They've both been waiting for something, for someone to arrive. Each time dust has stirred on the horizon I've watched as their eyes have risen up in expectation only to descend to the floor once more. It's true, their hope has been dashed so often that there's little wonder they look so pinched and poorly.

Martha sent a message out a week past, asking for Jesus to come with all haste. His delayed arrival has set this house in a pickle. They all thought He would come soon and then Lazarus took badly so quickly. One day he was put to his bed and suddenly he was sliding fast towards his end and before long he'd passed over. His sisters sat by his bedside day and night. They were there, whatever their brother needed, they fetched and carried, cajoled and soothed him in his fever. They broke their hearts to place him in the tomb and seal it up, clinging to each other to draw strength.

And now Jesus is here - and the look on Martha's face was quite the picture when he pitched up with his followers, a stern and solemn procession, Jesus in the centre with Peter and John flanking him, James looking like he was guarding his back and Thomas' eyes scanning right and left as though they may be ambushed any moment.

I heard her tell him Lazarus wouldn't be dead now if He, Jesus had been with him. I heard her gasp when Jesus said Lazarus would live again. But it just can't be. The tomb is sealed and four days have passed. Their brother's spirit is gone. Gone.

So what difference can Jesus really make now? He can't do anything now. Lazarus is dead and gone. Jesus is shedding his



tears too, looking at the sealed tomb. Martha and Mary stricken with sadness stand at his right and left.

They are talking about Jesus being the Resurrection and the Life. Everyone has come out of the house and is whispering about it, a rising anger among them as they remember the many Jesus healed. Why wasn't He here sooner? Why didn't He come?

But Jesus IS here now. His hands resting on the sisters' shoulders. Jesus' presence is solid and His life is pulsing through the fabric of the ground we stand on, his tears running freely down his face as he faces the tomb and his Words begin to command.

He's here.

The hollowness of the days of his absence are filled with his Life and his love. He's here. The delay forgotten in the awe of the possibility of his presence.

## Prayer

As night falls, we rest our weary bodies and sink into the comfort and safety of our home, our favourite chair, or cosy bed.

Come Jesus, be the safe place; the fortress and guardian of our resting.

Let the sweetness of sleep overwhelm us as we settle into the rest that comes from living under the shadow of your wing,  
the security of the Everlasting Arms.

Bless our loved ones, near and far.

Bless your precious ones, living in the valley of the shadow of death,  
where evil and threat are lurking.

Bless your older ones, Bowed under the weight of years

Bless your younger ones, full of hopes and dreams

Bless your little ones, protect them from all harm.

As we settle in your presence this night,

We ask that the uncertainties of that which is yet to come

Be held in your safekeeping

And that our rest may be a blessing

In Jesus' Name

Amen





# TUESDAY MIDDAY MEDITATION

## Gaining Admittance

### Gathering Prayer:

Gracious God

Meet with us, in this oasis place;

This time set apart to abide in your presence,

To listen and learn from you.

Help us to set aside every  
worrysome detail of our living,

That in our waiting on you

We might know you more fully

And be blessed.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen

## Read

**John 12:20-32**

John 12:20-22 CEV

[20] Some Greeks had gone to Jerusalem to worship during Passover. [21] Philip from Bethsaida in Galilee was there too. So they went to him and said, "Sir, we would like to meet Jesus." [22] Philip told Andrew. Then the two of them went to Jesus and told him.



## Reflect

We would see Jesus, the Jesus of the Resurrection and the Life who raises Lazarus and heals the sick, comforts those who mourn. We would like to meet Jesus who teaches and preaches with authority and vigour, attracting huge crowds. We would love a back stage pass with all the VIP perks to stand close to Jesus, and maybe even take a selfie (a photo of us all together) to show our friends and post on our socials so everyone knows we got close, so very close.

We are caught up in the drama of the occasion, the fission of excitement caused by Jesus' interactions with the Scribes and Pharisees. We are enticed by the rumour of threat and the undercurrent of anger. Those who come close to Him are breathless with excitement to tell their stories, to recount their experience. We would like to meet Jesus.

We would like to meet Jesus on the shores of Galilee, surrounded by the sounds of the sea and the gentleness of sand beneath our feet; the sun warming our

backs. We would like to hear His soothing tones and His holy words reassuring that we are 'alright with God'. We would love this meeting.

We would like to meet Jesus on the road, surrounded by the Twelve and the many who follow faithfully. To get lost in the mountains of their faith, awestruck by insight and feeling small in the vastness of the talk of God and Covenant of Law and Redemption. To be one of many others, disappearing like mist in the glare of the sun when his words turned pertinently to the things that are too real and too challenging to how we live.

We would like to meet Jesus entering Jerusalem. The pomp and celebration of the Soon Coming King, the switches of palm held aloft as we run alongside his steed. As the donkey stops for the crowd to make room, we would grab a few breathless moments with Jesus. "Hosanna, Lord!" We would say, "You are the One Who Comes in the Name of the Lord!" We would see Jesus fulfilling prophecy and it would be so exciting. The stories we would tell of that meeting!

We would see Him, see Jesus in this stage of breathless wonderment. We would take a ticket and join the queue for a conversation, get Him to speak our name and we would be so happy. What a moment!

The world looks at the spectacle, the pomp, the wonder and the miracles and it is so very good. To those who draw nearer still, Jesus speaks in the lower tones that have no quotable quote for the media. Seeing Jesus is spectacular but to really gain admittance to His presence is next-level.

Hear him as you gain admittance into His presence, no camera or selfie-stick to hand. Hear His words of Truth, and truly wonder at his impending death, chosen and entered into as a sacrifice of utter love. Love of us. Love of the Father and passion for His glory. He speaks of being lifted up - not on the shoulders of groupies. This will never be his way. His way is one of self-giving sacrifice. To gain admittance to Jesus is to surrender to follow Him with the same desire to serve and Glorify God.

The roar of the crowd's approval will not accompany Jesus' true ministry. The Voice from heaven will speak with thunderous approval for all to hear. To God be the Glory forever and ever.

Sir, we would like to be with Jesus. Be his followers. Amen.

**Silence**

The Lord's Prayer

Time for you to pray aloud ...

Thank you Lord for meeting us in the middle of the day

***Your Presence is my peace and my power.***

Lord, let your blessing remain upon us as we walk in the light of your presence.

***May my feet tread your paths of righteousness,  
May I live my life in the presence of the Lord .***

Be present in your church and build your kingdom.  
Restore to us the years the locusts have eaten.

Lift up our heads, that we might see the  
Splendour of the King

In whose presence we forever dwell.

***In the Name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.***



## NIGHT PRAYERS ON TUESDAY

### Being Real

Welcome to Night Prayers in Holy Week as we draw close to Jesus and spend time being in His presence.

May the peace of God be with you and remain with you at the ending of this day and throughout the night ahead.

We turn to words of Holy Scripture in John 12:37-46 CEV

[37] He had worked a lot of miracles among the people, but they were still not willing to have faith in him. [38] This happened so that what the prophet Isaiah had said would come true, "Lord, who has believed our message? And who has seen your mighty strength?" [39] The people could not have faith in Jesus, because Isaiah had also said, [40] "The Lord has blinded the eyes of the people, and he has made the people stubborn. He did this so that they could not see or



understand, and so that they would not turn to the Lord and be healed." [41] Isaiah said this, because he saw the glory of Jesus and spoke about him. [42] Even then, many of the leaders put their faith in Jesus, but they did not tell anyone about it. The Pharisees had already given orders for the people not to have anything to do with anyone who had faith in Jesus. [43] And besides, the leaders liked praise from others more than they liked praise from God. [44] In a loud voice Jesus said: Everyone who has faith in me also has faith in the one who sent me. [45] And everyone who has seen me has seen the one who sent me. [46] I am the light that has come into the world. No one who has faith in me will stay in the dark.

## BE REAL

I didn't come along for the ride, I wanted the adventure, I wanted to make the memories to tell the children. I wanted a story to entertain enthralled parties by the fireside, to put my hands behind my head, lean back and have everyone's eyes on me in anticipation of the wonders my words would tell.

I wanted my moment of conversation with Jesus spoken of for generations as - lets face it- his miracles are magnificent; the signs he performs are just superb... I would be remembered for meeting Him.

What do you mean, "Is that the point?" What other point could there be? He must know we needed a something good to focus on? "That's still not the point?" Well, what else could it be? I've enjoyed watching him very much, I just can't get close, past the ones who are always there, hanging on his every word and being more like extensions of himself than individuals.

Yes, I'm Greek by descent, I find it fascinating to listen to Jesus. Not seen anything like it before – we were just talking earlier about him; just wish we weren't on the outskirts of it all that we could get right in so that we could really get what the ones up at the front get! They seem to see Him and look like they see beyond Him... I mean, no matter how excellent the miracle, it isn't right for all those people to look at one Man in that way, like he's The Man, the Big Man, like he's God or something, but hush now, saying things like that can get us booted out in a storm of stones...

You're telling me that IS the point? The stoning?? Ah, OK, makes more sense... "They're looking at Jesus and seeing God's very self" I see it– for them, but come on– I don't see it for me. You want to explain Him for me in tiny words I can understand?

Yes, I've Got it; so you're saying that,

“The I Am is the Lord our God who revealed his Name to Abraham and who spoke to Sarah. The reality of God’s presence realised in relationship as they journeyed through life’s long adventures of struggle and suffering, of hope and happiness. The One who was and is and is to come came and travelled near them, a Covenant, a commitment showing courage and conviction. Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Prophets and Judges, witnesses and wonderers all pointed to God and now this man, Jesus is the exact representation of God come and living among us here on earth?”

OK, and there are people around us who believe this – secretly holding their new-found faith in their hearts?

I think He’s amazing, but I don’t see it. I can wait and hope for it to make sense to me, but to be fair, its going to be another sign and wonder if and when it does..,Yes, the praise of people does seem to matter to the Pharisees – and OK, yes I take your point, I did start on that tack, but you’ve set me thinking – He has come as Light into the world, being in very nature the Worlds’ Light.

“I’m not far away?” Good to know! I wonder what it will take? “Give it a few days?” OK then. Right you are...

## Prayer

As night falls, we rest our weary bodies and sink into the comfort and safety of our home, our favourite chair, or cosy bed.

Come Jesus, be the safe place; the fortress and guardian of our resting.

Let the sweetness of sleep overwhelm us as we settle into the rest that comes from living under the shadow of your wing,  
the security of the Everlasting Arms.

Bless our loved ones, near and far.

Bless your precious ones, living in the valley of the shadow of death,  
where evil and threat are lurking.

Bless your older ones, Bowed under the weight of years

Bless your younger ones, full of hopes and dreams

Bless your little ones, protect them from all harm.

As we settle in your presence this night,

We ask that the uncertainties of that which is yet to come

Be held in your safekeeping

And that our rest may be a blessing

In Jesus’ Name

Amen





# WEDNESDAY MIDDAY MEDITATION

## Close Encounters Part 1

### Gathering Prayer:

Gracious God

Meet with us, in this oasis place;

This time set apart to abide in your presence,

To listen and learn from you.

Help us to set aside every  
worrisome detail of our living,

That in our waiting on you

We might know you more fully

And be blessed.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen

## Read

### John 13:3-10 CEV

Jesus knew that he had come from God and would go back to God. He also knew that the Father had given him complete power. [4] So during the meal Jesus got up, removed his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist. [5] He put some water into a large bowl. Then he began washing his disciples' feet and drying them with the towel he was wearing. [6] But when he came to Simon Peter, that disciple asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" [7] Jesus answered, "You don't really know what I am doing, but later you will understand." [8] "You will never wash my feet!" Peter replied. "If I don't wash you," Jesus told him, "you don't really belong to me." [9] Peter said, "Lord, don't wash just my feet. Wash my hands and my head." [10] Jesus answered, "People who have bathed and are clean all over need to wash just their feet. And you, my disciples, are clean, except for one of you."



Here, we have the setting for our meal, the Disciples have gathered, and the person of most importance is on His knees, fingers wrinkled by their immersion in the washing water as he scrubs away the dirt on each person's feet in turn.

The importance of Jesus being among us seen here in this demonstration of his care for people and in His willingness, which is clear and apparent, to roll up his sleeves and get on with what needs to be done. We note the layers of symbolism, the conversation about Peter being only a little bit grubby round the

edges in stark contrast to the ‘except for one of you’ who is Judas, the Betrayer. It is not the most easiest social situation.

The importance of being willing to serve is key to this scene in Scripture. Jesus is willing to do what no one else has, to take the lowest place and wash the road-enfilthed feet of his Disciples. From here, there is a reflection and a prayer before the New Covenant in His blood is announced. Note the proximity of service to salvation. It is important that we are ready to serve and be served, as we then move onward to receive the symbols of New Covenant and Salvation. Amen.

## Share words of peace before Holy Communion

**Time for you to pray aloud:**

prayers of intercession, for our church, community, country & world.

The Lord is with you

*The Lord is also with you.*

We look to God

*And give the love of our hearts.*

We look to each other

*Through God’s eyes of mercy and grace.*

Our love for your Name rings out in all the world.

God of patience and restoration.

God of the waiting-places.

God of the lonely places and the sad places.

God who knows suffering and temptation.

*God who lived our human life and remained holy.*

**Silent Prayers of Penitence:**

Hear the words of mercy and grace: “Your sins are forgiven.”

*Amen, come Lord Jesus.*

With the whole of heaven, we praise and glorify God together:

*Holy God! Powerful and mighty!*

*Creation is full of your glory.*

*Hosanna! Hosanna in highest heaven! Hosanna!*

We thank you for Jesus:  
Who gathered with his friends for Passover.  
Full of love and with an ever-thankful heart  
He broke the bread:

“My body, broken and freely given - for all to be free”

Taking the cup and facing the suffering it would hold

He declared the new Way:

“My blood, poured out for all people for the forgiveness of sin.”

He calls us to remember his love and His everlasting sacrifice :

***Make us One***

***That the world might believe.***

***Make us One***

***As we each receive***

***The broken bread, a taste of wine.***

Pour out the Spirit of God:  
Holiness and Grace to live in us,  
Making us One with Jesus Christ



***To love as he loves***

***To serve as he serves.***

We break the bread

***The One Body of Christ.***

We take the wine

***The blood of Christ.***

Receive the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus and be thankful.

***Thank you for this taste of sacrifice and love.***

***For gathering around the table together***

***And departing as family.***

***We look forward to the day of Glory***

***when we will share with you in heaven. Amen***

Go in peace, the God of peace goes with you.

***May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and  
The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all forevermore. Amen.***



# NIGHT PRAYERS ON WEDNESDAY

## Close Encounters Part 2

Welcome to Night Prayers in Holy Week as we draw close to Jesus and spend time being in His presence. May the peace of God be with you and remain with you at the ending of this day and throughout the night ahead.

We turn to words of Holy Scripture in John 12:1-8 CEV

[1] Six days before Passover Jesus went back to Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus from death. [2] A meal had been prepared for Jesus. Martha was doing the serving, and Lazarus himself was there. [3] Mary took a very expensive bottle of perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. She wiped them with her hair, and the sweet smell of the perfume filled the house. [4] A disciple named Judas Iscariot was there. He was the one who was going to betray Jesus, and he asked, [5] "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?" [6] Judas did not really care about the poor. He asked this because he carried the moneybag and sometimes would steal from it. [7] Jesus replied, "Leave her alone! She has kept this perfume for the day of my burial. [8] You will always have the poor with you, but you won't always have me."



## REFLECT

That name, Judas again, creeping into the stories of beauty and blessing. I could feel his disapproval across the room as I sat on the floor, just to her right hand side where I could offer a cloth, a jug of water or be able to call for help if disapproval turned loud and threatening.

Mary had told me stories of His birth and the gifts that came to Him, weighty with prophetic intent. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh for the King, for his anointing in death. It was a Kingly offering she made now; pouring her wealth over his feet – this King who would not rule an earthly Kingdom but whose Kingship would be accomplished by his death. Her anointing was poured out over his feet, running into the ground and she wept as she poured and poured and wiped them over and over with the scandalous train of her hair, the warmth of the fragrance rising to fill the whole house where he was.

Judas spoke of the poor, and I could see it made sense to have saved the wealth to feed them. I had passed so many hungry, sick and scared people even as we had wound my way through the streets with the baskets of food to prepare the evening's meal. Jesus would not bear the rebuke and spoke strongly about the nature of the anointing. This was a One Time Thing. Once He is the King, proclaimed and anointed as King, that anointing and proclamation stands on Earth for Eternity.

She prepared him for Death and for Kingship. He prepares us in the same scene for Worship and for Service. She placed Jesus as King over her life and no one else mattered. She was secure in her decision. Being close to Jesus, she saw and acclaimed the truth of his very being. Jesus: Dying Saviour, forever our King.

I watched her and was drawn closer into His presence by her devotion, her commitment, her comprehension of what was needed. A statement to all around, she used no words, but the effects of her presence was felt in that room for the whole of the following week. The lingering fragrance of the Kingly anointing would catch on the warm breezes to waft like a pennant over the valley towards Jerusalem.

## Prayer

As night falls, we rest our weary bodies and sink into the comfort and safety of our home, our favourite chair, or cosy bed.

Come Jesus, be the safe place; the fortress and guardian of our resting.

Let the sweetness of sleep overwhelm us as we settle into the rest that comes from living under the shadow of your wing,  
the security of the Everlasting Arms.

Bless our loved ones, near and far.

Bless your precious ones, living in the valley of the shadow of death,  
where evil and threat are lurking.

Bless your older ones, Bowed under the weight of years

Bless your younger ones, full of hopes and dreams

Bless your little ones, protect them from all harm.

As we settle in your presence this night,

We ask that the uncertainties of that which is yet to come

Be held in your safekeeping

And that our rest may be a blessing

In Jesus' Name

Amen





# THURSDAY MIDDAY MEDITATION

## “Together”

### Gathering Prayer:

Gracious God

Meet with us, in this oasis place;

This time set apart to abide in your presence,

To listen and learn from you.

Help us to set aside every  
worrisome detail of our living,

That in our waiting on you

We might know you more fully

And be blessed.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen

### Read: John 18:1-8CEV

[1] When Jesus had finished praying, he and his disciples crossed the Kidron Valley and went into a garden. [2] Jesus had often met there with his disciples, and Judas knew where the place was. [3-5] Judas had promised to betray Jesus. So he went to the garden with some Roman soldiers and temple police, who had been sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees. They carried torches, lanterns, and weapons. Jesus already knew everything that was going to happen, but he asked, "Who are you looking for?" They answered, "We are looking for Jesus from Nazareth!" Jesus told them, "I am Jesus!" [6] At once they all backed away and fell to the ground. [7] Jesus again asked, "Who are you looking for?" "We are looking for Jesus from Nazareth," they answered. [8] This time Jesus replied, "I have already told you that I am Jesus. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go."

## BEING TOGETHER

Today, we share a simple meal together, recognising the importance of being together. We know that in times of celebration, it is good to have the success

and joy shared within the community of our friends and family. Jesus had created a community around Him who were genuinely seeking the fellowship of one-ness in a shared faith, shared hope and the sharing of sorrow and joy. In this reading, we see a journey of companionship as Jesus descends into the Kidron Valley and to the Garden. It was to be the time of active betrayal. Of loyalty. Of submission. A journey begun in the company of community.





Today, we share a meal together.  
We share in conversation around the table.

Who are the people around you?

What matters to them?



Why are they here?

Be prepared to talk and listen as we share in being together as community.

Silence

The Lord's Prayer

Time for you to pray aloud ...

Thank you Lord for meeting us in the middle of the day

*Your Presence is my peace and my power.*

Lord, let your blessing remain upon us as we walk in the light of your presence.

*May my feet tread your paths of righteousness,  
May I live my life in the presence of the Lord .*

Be present in your church and build your kingdom.

Restore to us the years the locusts have eaten.

Lift up our heads, that we might see the splendour of the King

In whose presence we forever dwell.

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*





# NIGHT PRAYERS ON THURSDAY

## “Apart”

Welcome to Night Prayers in Holy Week as we draw close to Jesus and spend time being in His presence. May the peace of God be with you and remain with you at the ending of this day and throughout the night ahead.

**We turn to words of Holy Scripture in John 18:15-27 CEV**

[15] Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. That disciple knew the high priest, and he followed Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest's house. [16] Peter stayed outside near the gate. But the other disciple came back out and spoke to the girl at the gate. She let Peter go in, [17] but asked him, "Aren't you one of that man's followers?" "No, I am not!" Peter answered. [18] It was cold, and the servants and temple police had made a charcoal fire. They were warming themselves around it, when Peter went over and stood near the fire to warm himself. [19] The high priest questioned Jesus about his followers and his teaching. [20] But Jesus told him, "I have spoken freely in front of everyone. And I have always taught in our meeting places and in the temple, where all of our people come together. I have not said anything in secret. [21] Why are you questioning me? Why don't you ask the people who heard me? They know what I have said." [22] As soon as Jesus said this, one of the temple police hit him and said, "That's no way to talk to the high priest!" [23] Jesus answered, "If I have done something wrong, say so. But if not, why did you hit me?" [24] Jesus was still tied up, and Annas sent him to Caiaphas the high priest. [25] While Simon Peter was standing there warming himself, someone asked him, "Aren't you one of Jesus' followers?" Again Peter denied it and said, "No, I am not!" [26] One of the high priest's servants was there. He was a relative of the servant whose ear Peter had cut off, and he asked, "Didn't I see you in the garden with that man?" [27] Once more Peter denied it, and right then a rooster crowed.

## BEING APART

Oh Peter! Marching down through the Kidron Valley with a sword sheathed in your tunic's belt and your fists balled as you mount a close-detail bodyguard's stance in front of Jesus. You body-block the father of a small family making their way home late that night, squaring up to him, saying nothing until he shrinks back into the darkness with his family scooped before him in the swash of his cloak. On edge, we all heard them coming to arrest Jesus in the garden; the threat, the sword-swipe, the blood and



the healing in a matter of moments before Jesus was taken. We knew it was not a legal arrest... Coming for Him at night was always the method of the slippery groups, manufacturing evidence – finding blasphemers under the bed and spurious statements about ‘what was said...’ Night time arrests are done by those who have a vendetta – and my, oh my was this one of those!

Just the two of us had followed Jesus that night. Peter couldn’t stop himself, glaring at the rest of us to go - Go now! Go hide! I joined him, and he couldn’t exactly yell at me to stop. I led the way into the courtyard, coming back to make sure he was through the gate, a few choice words muttered to the woman by the door.

Oh Peter! With each denial that brought you closer to His proximity, you drew a line of separation in your spirit. His interrogation by Annas aped by yours with the serving woman... I told you to not make eye contact with anyone. I told you that you look like a fisherman out of water and tonight, spectacularly unhinged...

Jesus remained composed, facing his accusers with grace, while you came apart at the seams. Jesus dragged in front of Caiaphas, bruises beginning to show on His arms and face where the guards had hit him. White with shock and desperate for clues as to what was happening you were drawn to the fire.

Oh Peter! Every time you opened your mouth it just got worse... the woman spoke to the man no one recognised and you took the bait.

They heard you speak and your accent gave you away, your voice’s cadences drawing a line, marking you out and separating you still further from the people who had gathered round the fire in the courtyard, cold in those early hours before the dawn.



They draw Jesus further apart, Temple Guards, a crowd of Temple priests and officials surrounding him in a storm of accusation and vitriol. The sorrow of being parted finally caught up with Peter when the rooster blasted his reveille into the final shreds of night’s darkness, the darkness of Peter’s final denial breaking bonds with the One who declared Himself the Light of the World...

Oh Peter, you fell apart. Agonised sobbing, unconsolable and lost. Apart from Jesus, you could do nothing... Apart from Jesus, you diminished and grew small. I saw the marks of grief on you and knew that I looked just the same.



## Prayer

As night falls, we rest our weary bodies and sink into the comfort and safety of our home, our favourite chair, or cosy bed.

Come Jesus, be the safe place; the fortress and guardian of our resting.

Let the sweetness of sleep overwhelm us as we settle into the rest that comes from living under the shadow of your wing, the security of the Everlasting Arms.

Bless our loved ones, near and far.

Bless your precious ones, living in the valley of the shadow of death, where evil and threat are lurking.

Bless your older ones, Bowed under the weight of years

Bless your younger ones, full of hopes and dreams

Bless your little ones, protect them from all harm.

As we settle in your presence this night,

We ask that the uncertainties of that which is yet to come

Be held in your safekeeping

And that our rest may be a blessing

In Jesus' Name

Amen

## GOOD FRIDAY

Holy God

We approach with heads hung low and eyes cast down.

We grieve the death of Jesus with the whole of heaven.

We seek no comfort, we ask no blessing.

The Son of God will Be Crucified.

The Sun will stop shining and darkness will fall, relentless, across the earth.

This is the day of suffering,

This is the day when we would turn our faces away from the horror of our sin's consequences, instead to focus on a future time of joy.

We choose to be here. To witness this moment, this surrender, this sacrifice.

Under the Cross on Golgotha, we choose to feel the weight of his gaze, the weight and press of our sin and let His Spirit intercede with our own; allowing him to look at us as we dare to lift our eyes to gaze upon his wounds and see what we have done.

Holy God, hold us to this place, this time; that we might be present with you in your death and truly know the sacrifice you made. Amen



## John 19:16-30 CEV

[16] Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be nailed to a cross. Jesus was taken away, [17] and he carried his cross to a place known as "The Skull." In Aramaic this place is called "Golgotha." [18] There Jesus was nailed to the cross, and on each side of him a man was also nailed to a cross. [19] Pilate ordered the charge against Jesus to be written on a board and put above the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." [20] The words were written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The place where Jesus was taken wasn't far from the city, and many of the Jewish people read the charge against him. [21] So the chief priests went to Pilate and said, "Why did you write that he is King of the Jews? You should have written, 'He claimed to be King of the Jews.'" [22] But Pilate told them, "What is written will not be changed!" [23] After the soldiers had nailed Jesus to the cross, they divided up his clothes into four parts, one for each of them. But his outer garment was made from a single piece of cloth, and it did not have any seams. [24] The soldiers said to each other, "Let's not rip it apart. We will gamble to see who gets it." This happened so that the Scriptures would come true, which say, "They divided up my clothes and gambled for my garments." The soldiers then did what they had decided. [25] Jesus' mother stood beside his cross with her sister and Mary the wife of Clopas. Mary Magdalene was standing there too. [26] When Jesus saw his mother and his favourite disciple with her, he said to his mother, "This man is now your son." [27] Then he said to the disciple, "She is now your mother." From then on, that disciple took her into his own home. [28] Jesus knew that he had now finished his work. And in order to make the Scriptures come true, he said, "I am thirsty!" [29] A jar of cheap wine was there. Someone then soaked a sponge with the wine and held it up to Jesus' mouth on the stem of a hyssop plant. [30] After Jesus drank the wine, he said, "Everything is done!" He bowed his head and died.

## REFLECTION

On this Good Friday, where will you be?  
Will you stay in bed, then join the shoppers in the High Street;  
a Bank Holiday privilege of rest and relaxation?  
Will you plant potatoes, as tradition instructs you must?  
Will you visit your family, share a meal and watch the TV together?  
Will you march round the streets with your Sunday School;  
Banners held high, blood oranges, biscuits and benedictions  
for all in the Town Square...

Jesus' followers had slipped into the deepest darkness of the night's inky shadows, cloaks pulled across their faces. They had kept their heads down, incognito as tears streamed down their faces, they skulked among the crowds, voices mute while all around them they heard the cries of "Crucify! Crucify!"

For them, the sun had stopped shining at nightfall on Thursday and would not rise, would cast no warmth or illumine their faces with the joy of daybreak while Crucifixion loomed.

They had lost themselves in the horror of the plot to kill Jesus. Helplessly watching, hopelessly waiting and always drawn close to Him.

Never to leave Him, never to abandon hope entirely and to just be there. Just to be as close as possible, despite the cost to their heart, to their spirit. They were there in the crowds, they were there along the streets, there in the group on the hillside when the Cross was raised and His imminent death was definite.

They knew Him then, they know Him still:

The One who forever holds them together, their very fibres of being held intact by Jesus who spoke them into existence and spoke New Life, New Hope, New Covenant over them and into them.

They faced their own humanity, the sorrow and sin of their own life's path; The frailty of their own human hearts. They knew that they were not good enough to be in His presence and yet they were drawn to be here, His call to follow took them all the way to Golgotha. To witness His death and to know that Upon this cross, upon The Cross, Jesus would die and that His death, like His birth would be one that should be witnessed and noted. This death must be drawn close to and seen. The importance of their very being determined by this moment, when Jesus, from the Cross saw their love and devotion and Blessed them from his elevated place of dying – on death's very brink, receiving their love and offering them hope.

There is immeasurable value in being close to Jesus.

Immeasurable worth in standing, even today, drawn to the foot of His Cross to watch and witness, to ponder and to pray.

To allow the Saviour of the World to look at you with his final gaze and to let His gaze penetrate your bone and marrow. To receive the truth of being in His gaze, the subject of His Crucifixion. To know the pain of the weight of your shame and sin, holding Him there, and in that moment feeling it lift from your life, no longer stuck to your status quo.

Being released. Being forgiven. Being renewed.

Where will you be today?

Be present in worship. Be present in prayer.

Be close to the Cross.

Be seen. Be honest. Be forgiven. Be Holy.

Be where you can truly hear His words:



**“Everything is done. For you, for all Creation... It is finished.”**

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