

Teach Us Mercy



Worship Resources for the Creative Church • Lent/Eastertide 2017

*Sacred Seasons, a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,
from Seeds of Hope Publishers: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745;
Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com; Web address: www.seedspublishers.org.*

art by Erin Conaway

Sacred Seasons



Worship Tools for the Creative Church

These unique resource packets are available for the liturgical year, three packets a year for \$100 (\$125 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$50 (\$65 outside of the US).

Staff and Volunteers

Editor: L. Katherine Cook
Copy Editor: Ellen Kuniyuki Brown
Social Media Editor: Chelle Samaniego
Liturgist: Guilherme Almeida
Editorial Assistant: Leanne Kerr
Library Assistant: Bill Hughes
Artists: Robert Askins, Sally Askins, Peter Yuichi Clark, Erin Conaway, Robert Darden, Van Darden, Jesse Manning, Erin Kennedy Mayer, Lenora Mathis, Kate Moore, Sharon Rollins, Susan Smith, Rebecca Ward

2017 Council of Stewards

Sara Alexander
Guilherme Almeida
Sally Lynn Askins (Vice President)
Meg Cullar
Derek S. Dodson
Sandy Londos
(Recording Secretary)
B. Michael Long (President)

Board of Advisors

Dale A. Barron
H. Joseph Haag
Kathryn Mueller
Jo Pendleton
Jacqueline L. Saxon
Jon Singletary
David Wilkinson

Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. For 23 years, the group has sought out

Teach Us Mercy

...in this worship packet:

- 3 A Word about This Packet
- 4 A Voice in the Temple: *A Meditation*
- 5 A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday
- 6 Prayer of Thanksgiving & Confession
- 7 Not Enough: *A Sermon for Ash Wednesday*
- 10 A Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent
- 11 A Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Lent
- 12 Who Will Weep? *A Musical Lament for Refugees*
- 13 A Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Lent
- 14 A Liturgy for the Fourth Sunday in Lent
- 15 Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings
- 16 A Liturgy for the Fifth Sunday in Lent
- 17 Liturgies for Palm Sunday
- 18 Invocation for Palm Sunday
- 19 Winners & Losers at the Cross:
A Sermon for the Liturgy of the Passion
- 22 A Liturgy for Maundy Thursday
- 23 Thoughts about Mercy & Washing Feet
- 24 A Liturgy for Holy Friday
- 25 Depth of Mercy: *A Responsive Song for Holy Friday*
- 26 Readings & Hymns for Holy Saturday
- 27 A Liturgy for Easter Sunday
- 28 Benediction

people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of hunger and poverty.

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. The mailing address is: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com. Web address: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2017.

Material in this packet is for the use of the purchasing faith community to enhance worship and increase awareness in economic justice issues. ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status. All contributions above the subscription rate are fully tax-deductible.

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version, Copyright © 2003, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

A Word about This Packet

When Guilherme Almeida and I first began planning the liturgy for this packet, we had before us an old fasting calendar from the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. Since the calendar contained 12 objects of intercession—including poor and hungry people, marginalized people, people in pain and darkness—we had thought to create a service around the Stations of the Cross.

However, as we looked more closely at the lectionary texts, another structure emerged. The theme of mercy also emerged—mercy that we so lavishly receive and the mercy that we are called to give. With this in mind, we created, instead, nine “Stations of Mercy,” pulling together objects of intercession for nine Lenten services, beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending with Holy Friday.

As the texts prompted us, we chose first a conversion in our own hearts, then our faith communities and then groups of people for whom to fast and pray. To the right is a list of our “Stations of Mercy.”

As we wrote these liturgies, we envisioned that you might create actual “stations” around your worship area—things like banners, tables along the front or in the foyer or symbolic objects on the altar—as the weeks unfold. Perhaps your youth, Sunday school classes or fellowship groups could each be assigned one station and come up with objects that represent that station’s focus for prayer and fasting. We know you are creative. We would love to hear what you decide to do in this area.

We are deeply indebted to Karen Lane, Burt Burlison, Erin Conaway, Brett Younger and Grayson Wolf for the gifts of their writing. This packet is also the Seeds debut of art by Erin Conaway, who is pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, the faith community that houses the Seeds ministry. You will also appreciate a musical lament very recently written by Keith Sanford for refugees who are turned away from safe places.

We are also grateful to Ellen Brown, who has stepped in as our chief copy

editor and shows a great deal of patience as we obsess over these resources. We are grateful for the many people who have kept the Seeds ministry going for 25 years—literally against all odds. We are also deeply grateful for all of you who subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, and who make use of these gifts in your worship and work.

As always, we want you to feel free to play around with these materials, and adapt them to your congregation’s needs and resources. The contents of this packet are your congregation’s to use freely and share with others as the need arises, and we pray that this packet will help all of us discover the true meaning of mercy.

*Gratefully,
Katie Cook, on behalf of the Seeds staff
and Council of Stewards*

Stations of Mercy

1. Ash Wednesday: We pray that our hearts will be turned toward justice.
2. First Sunday: We pray for our faith communities as we acknowledge our brokenness and work together toward healing.
3. Second Sunday: We pray for migrants, immigrants, refugees and those who provide shelter and welcome.
4. Third Sunday: We pray for those who are victimized or marginalized because of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion, and for those who work to bring healing.
5. Fourth Sunday: We pray for those who do not see the needs around them.
6. Fifth Sunday: We pray for people who suffer from disabilities, disease, mental illness and addictions, for people who are incarcerated or imprisoned within their circumstances, and for those who work to bring resurrection.
7. Palm Sunday: We pray for those with whom Jesus identified himself: hungry, thirsty, homeless and outcast people, the objects of scorn, hatred and violence.
8. Maundy Thursday: We pray for the grace and courage to wash the feet of those for whom we have fasted during this Lenten season.
9. Holy Friday: We pray that we can, like Christ, enter into the suffering of others for the healing of the world.

The Voice in the Temple

by Katie Cook

This is the year that King Uzziah died.

There is brokenness and death all around us.

There is violence and injustice and hunger.

We have hatred in our hearts,

And we dwell in the midst of a people with hateful hearts.

We fear that our dreams and hopes are dying.

We believed that we were supposed to dream along with God,

But we wonder sometimes if it's worth all the pain.

We see evidence that the work is not in vain,

And we cling in the midst of our fatigue to those glimpses of truth,

We cherish those rumors of glory.

This is the year that King Uzziah died,

And we have come to the temple to weep.

We wait now to hear that word that will keep us going.

We wait to taste of the holiness of God,

The vision, high and lifted up.

We wait to hear that voice that we love so much.

Somewhere in the middle of our weeping we hear a question:

“Who will go out into a world such as this,

Where people suffer and die

And infant hopes are dashed against the rocks?”

And we search our hearts.

Are we ready for this task?

Are we worthy to go where God sends us?

Can we do this?

We feel too young. We feel too old.

We tend to stammer. We tend to fall down.

We each feel unfit in different ways.

But we have heard a voice, a beloved voice,

In the temple, where we went to weep.

This is the year that King Uzziah died,

And we have heard a voice in the temple.

May God give us grace,

May God give us courage,

May God keep us on the journey,

For we must go and tell the people what the voice has told us.

—Katie Cook is the *Seeds of Hope* editor. “Voice in the Temple” was first printed in *Baptist Peacemaker*, the journal of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America in 2003. Art on this page is by Rebecca S. Ward.

A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

First Station of Mercy: Today we will begin our fast, remembering that the fast chosen by God is that we work to feed the hungry, house the homeless and bring about justice for all people. We begin by fasting and praying that our hearts will be turned toward justice.

First Reading from the Prophets

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Hymn

"Lord, Who Throughout"

WORDS: Claudia F. Hernaman

MUSIC: American folk melody

The Worshiping Church No. 200

Meditation

The reasons we pray and fast are also many. But one reason I think needs to be highlighted. Prayer and fasting have an effect on us. We are often changed, confronted or comforted in ways we are not expecting. Some pray and fast in hopes some "thing" will change: health, job, the other person, and so on, when generally it is us who are most impacted. We see things differently or respond differently to the situation.

A practice of prayer and fasting, similar to a Sabbath practiced in Judaism or in the manner that Gandhi called his nation to do, can have an effect on others, many others. But first it will have an effect on us.

—Markie Oliver, Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

Second Reading from the Prophets

Isaiah 58:1-12

Hymn

"O Holy God, There Was a Time"

WORDS: Psalm 85, paraphrase by Andrew Donaldson

MUSIC: Jesus Ahatonia (Huron Carol), Canada

Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice and Peace No. 51

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 51:1-17

Hymn

"Dust and Ashes"

WORDS: Brian A. Wren

MUSIC: David Haas

Hymnal Worship and Song No. 3098

Epistle Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Meditation

You have an unrepeatable purpose as a priest of Christ. It is not to learn someone else's skills, or
continued on page 6



to project a personality you do not have, to say words that are not your words, or to do anything at all that is alien to who you are and the gifts that are already in your hands. Be who you are, do what you do, tell what you know: your style, your stuff, your way, your gift.... There is a way of saying the name of Christ that only your life can say.

—Paul Duke

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Sermon

"Not Enough"

by Erin Conaway

(See page 7.)

Benediction

Go in peace, and may your hearts soar with the knowledge that God can make a difference in your life. May your minds rest happily in the possibilities that are before you. May you go in peace and prepare for resurrection.

Prayer of Thanksgiving & Confession

Our Great Creator, thank you for giving us this day.

Each day, each hour, each minute is a gift from you,
and we are not always successful in showing our appreciation.
Please help us to view each day, not as a race to be won or lost,
not as merely time to be spent on obligations,
but moment by moment a chance to make our world—your world—a better place.

Help us to notice and act on the chances that appear daily
to be kind, to be loving, to be understanding of those in our path.
Help us to stop and just breathe and feel the love you have so freely given us.
Let us learn to see the world each day, not as a battlefield filled with winners and vanquished,
not as a war to be endured, but as a platform from which each of us can speak our hearts
and, more importantly, listen to the hearts of others.

Help us to learn to love the holders of viewpoints with whom we disagree
and strive and strive and strive to find common ground with those who oppose us.
Help us to stop and just breathe and experience the love you have so freely given us.

Our Great Creator,
thank you for this day.

Teach us to show gratitude for this life, all creatures,
and the beauty of nature that surrounds us.

Help us to share your divine love with all around us.
We pause now in our races and say thank you.
We step off our battlegrounds and say thank you.
For you have blessed us all beyond measure.

Amen.

—Karen is an artist living in Temple, Texas. She describes herself as being a member of Seventh and James Baptist Church, wife to Jim, and Grammy to two sweet girls and one who's on the way.

art by Susan Daily, IBVM

Not Enough:

A Sermon for Ash Wednesday

by Erin Conaway

Text: Isaiah 58:1-12

If you listen, the dull roar distinguishes itself into separate sounds of diesel engines growling, of metal claws grabbing old cars and stoves and bikes and throwing them into different piles while the other machines squash and smash and tear the metal junk into smaller metal junk.

Rats dart in and out of piles in the dawn and dusk, and roam free in the darkness of the night. The crunch of glass and metal shards grind beneath your feet and the putrid combination of garbage and sewage wafts their assault on your senses.

It is an all-purpose junkyard and it is also the home to 50 Syrian refugees. This wretched place lies just five miles from the Syrian border in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. These families pay \$50 a month to live here. The man charges them rent to let them live in his junkyard.

There are no official refugee camps in Lebanon—they won't allow any to be established because, the last time there was a regional crisis of displaced asylum seekers, they set up camps and some of those camps became permanent towns that still exist. That was in 1948, during the Arab-Israeli War, when 300,000 Palestinians fled to Lebanon for their lives. It seems like a long time ago, but some wounds leave deep scars.

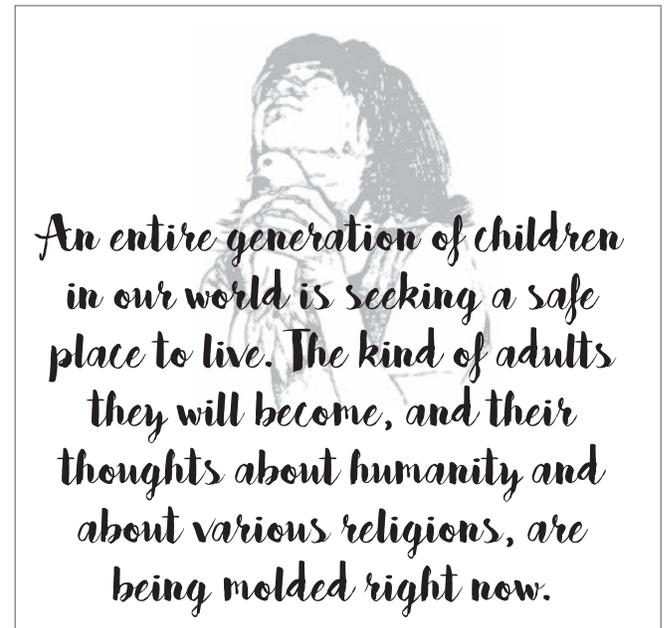
The number of refugees in Lebanon is around a million, in a country of just 4.4 million, so you can imagine how crowded it is getting, and how thin the resources are becoming. The center of this junkyard contains a black pipe sticking up out of the ground with a spigot on top. It's where they get their water. "We don't know where it comes from, but we drink it, we bathe in it and we cook with it," one man says. "The kids have diarrhea most of the time."

Kids are everywhere running around on their scabbed and scarred feet. None of them have warm clothes. The shelters are cobbled together from the garbage in the junkyard. The side of one family's shelter has a pouty-lipped model staring at them.

One father, a recent move-in, is building a shelter for himself and his four children—scouring the piles for large scraps of plastic and anything resembling straight supports. "We have nowhere else to go," he says.

No one there will give their name to the *Washington Post* reporter for fear of retribution from President Bashar al-Assad's government.

This is the plight of just 50 people, including a pregnant mother who will probably deliver her baby



An entire generation of children in our world is seeking a safe place to live. The kind of adults they will become, and their thoughts about humanity and about various religions, are being molded right now.

in this very compound. Her three-year-old daughter has burns up and down her right side from a barrel bomb. The children heard a helicopter, and like any child would do, ran to get a better look.

While I've been talking about this four or five refugees have left Syria.

Central America is also teeming with people fleeing their countries, seeking asylum in Mexico, the United States and South America. They are running from gang violence, drug cartels and human trafficking.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHR), one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. If this were the population of a country, it would be the world's 24th largest. According to these UNHR figures, which are from last year, more than half of the world's refugees are children. The number has grown even more since then.

An entire generation of children in our world is seeking a safe place to live. The kind of adults they will become, and their thoughts about humanity and about various religions, are being molded right now.

But I came to church almost every Sunday, and during Lent I would pray and fast... doesn't that count?

World Vision does a survey every year to gauge the attitudes of Christians towards various poverty populations and, for the last several years, the survey has been about refugees.

In 2016, 41 percent of people who self-identified as committed Christians (as opposed to just being Christian), said they would be willing to pray for refugees. Only 19 percent said they had actually prayed for refugees. And these numbers are down from 2015.

The prophet Isaiah has a very uncomfortable word to share with us this morning. The Hebrew people were getting frustrated with God—it just seemed as if God wasn't listening. So they fasted, and asked God for righteous judgments, and wondered aloud, "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why do we humble ourselves, but you do not notice?"

God comes back with a revealing look in the mirror: you only fast to quarrel and fight, and even in your fasting you are still oppressing all of your workers. That won't do. You won't hear my voice from that posture.

And then we get the unfortunate specificity of God's desires. I say it's unfortunate because it's just too clear—there's no wiggle room of contextuality or translation that we could apply to hear something different—something that would be less challenging to our lifestyles. Mark Twain said, "It ain't those

parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

God says, "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" Oh...couldn't we just give up chocolate for six weeks?

That's not enough.

It would be nice to try to confine this sentiment to the Old Testament—to say this must be part of the Law that we don't really need any more now that we all have Jesus. But Jesus said the same things: "I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." (Matt. 25)

But I came to church almost every Sunday, and during Lent I would pray and fast...doesn't that count? It matters, of course, but our worship and our prayer and our exercising spiritual disciplines like fasting are supposed to transform us—to shape us into the people God created and is calling us to be. I met a friend a few weeks ago who went through a divorce this summer and I had to confess to her, "I've done a terrible thing to you; I prayed for you often, but I never told you or reached out to you."

She smiled and graciously said, "I'll take all the prayers I can get."

I said, "Yes, but it's not enough." Frederick Douglass, who is coming into a resurgence of awareness these days, said, "I prayed for freedom for 20 years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs."

Wait; are you saying prayer is insignificant? No; it is essential to our life of faith, but prayer should change us. In prayer, we not only open our hearts to God and confess our sins and cry out our laments and giggle our thanksgivings, but we also listen, we also feel the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The "amen" of our prayers must not only be the end, but rather the beginning and the middle too. We must pray with our legs and our hands and our wallets and our tears. There are times and seasons in our lives when we need to fast to gain clarity of vision and to quiet our hearts and minds to hear God more clearly, but that's not enough. We must also offer the fast that God chooses: the one of breaking every yoke, loosing the bonds of injustice, setting the

oppressed free, sharing our bread and our homes, covering the naked and not hiding from our kin.

And God says, when we fast this way, “Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and God will say, Here I am.”

There’s a part of me every week that hopes for a passage in Scripture that’s really more about “them” than it is about me. You know; one of those

The gospel calls for love, but not for love from on high, safely separated from pain. Our gospel models for us sacrificial love; incarnational love; love that gets dirty and hurt and close.



passages where we can clearly see what God desires and we know someone or some group of people who are violating that desire, and we can sit back comfortably and say, “You people need Jesus... you’re not right with God.” And we wouldn’t feel the discomfort of conviction, we’d just feel a healthy helping of righteous indignation.

I’m still waiting to find that passage that points to someone else’s speck and leaves the plank in my own eye alone. And just in case we think this might be our big moment—when we could point to those people and shame them, God says to stop pointing fingers—it literally says that in verse 9, and it says we’re supposed to stop speaking evil.

This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t call and write your representatives and senators and protest in the streets. It means that’s not enough. It’s not

only “their” problem. It’s *our* problem, and God is expecting us to do something about it: to pray with our legs and do our part to serve Christ, whom we feed and quench and welcome and comfort in our sisters and brothers.

The good news is that God says as we do this holy and good work, light will shine in the dark places and our gloom will be like noonday. God promises to guide us continually, to satisfy our needs in the parched places, and to strengthen our bones that we might live like a watered garden, or a spring that never fails. Jesus said we would bubble up with Living Water.

Now, let’s not get too Pollyanna about this; we’re not promised a life of service free from suffering. The gospel calls for love, but not for love from on high, safely separated from pain. Our gospel models for us sacrificial love; incarnational love; love that gets dirty and hurt and close.

God told the Israelites that this kind of love, this active fasting, this working prayer will rebuild the ruins and raise up the foundations of many generations. What will the millions of children currently seeking asylum come to know of God through us? Will this generation of homeless children—not only around the globe, but also right here in our city—will this generation of children learn that God is well-wishing, but distantly removed?

Will they learn from us that God sits in safety and comfort while sending good thoughts their way? Or will they learn from us that God’s love is incarnational, present in suffering and success? Will they learn from our prayers and fasting that God’s love is sacrificial? Will they learn that God’s reach is limitless, extending even to the pits of the earth where babies are born into garbage huts in junkyard villages? What will the witness of our prayers and fasting be to these children currently wandering the world?

Amen.

—Erin Conaway, a native of Midland, TX, is the pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed.

Endnotes

1. *Washington Post*, “Scraps of Life: A Junkyard Camp.”
2. United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHR), “Worldwide Displacement Hits All-Time High as War and Persecution Increase.”

A Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Second Station of Mercy: This week we will fast and pray for our faith communities as we acknowledge our brokenness and work together toward healing.

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Hymn

“There Is a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

WORDS: Frederick W. Faber, 1854

MUSIC: Lizzie S. Tourjee, 1877

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 41

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 32

Meditation

For Ragamuffins, God’s name is Mercy. We see our darkness as a prized possession because it drives us into the heart of God. Without mercy our darkness would plunge us into despair—for some, self-destruction. Time alone with God reveals the unfathomable depths of the poverty of the spirit. We are so poor that even our poverty is not our own: It belongs to the *mysterium tremendum* of a loving God.

—Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*

Hymn

“Praise, Oh, Praise God, O My Soul”

WORDS: Psalm 103,

paraphrase by Andrew Donaldson

MUSIC: Traditional,

as taught by Michael Ghattas, Egypt

Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice and Peace

No. 33

Epistle Reading

Romans 5:12-19

Meditation

I think we too are the people who, on the one

hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: Mercy. I think—and I say it with humility—that this is the Lord’s most powerful message: Mercy.

—Pope Francis 1, *The Church of Mercy*

Hymn

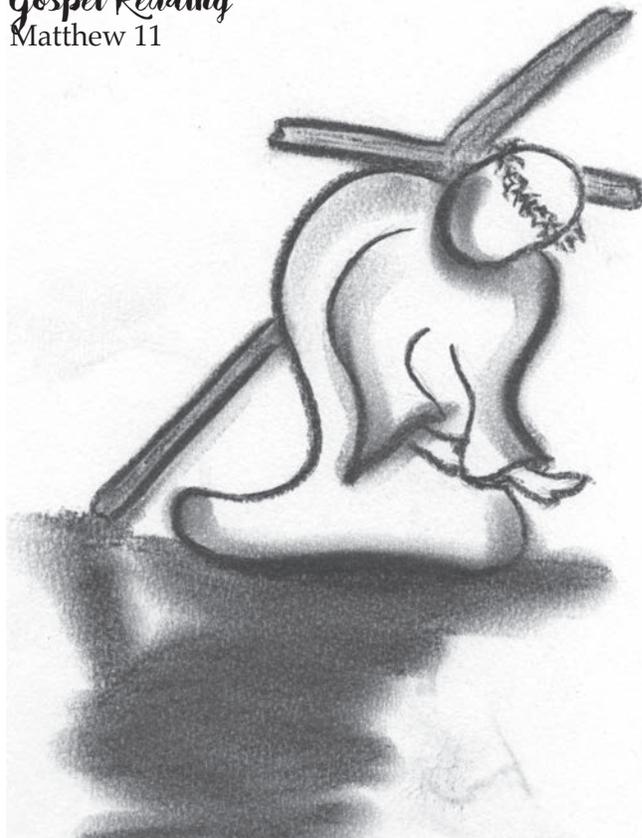
“For the Troubles and the Sufferings”

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Gospel Reading

Matthew 11



art by Erin Conaway

A Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Third Station of Mercy: This week we will fast and pray for migrants, immigrants, refugees and those who provide shelter for those who are persecuted and welcome for those who are strangers.

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Exodus 17:1-7

Hymn

"We Utter Our Cry"

WORDS: Fred Kaan

MUSIC: attr. to Johann Michael Haydn

The Baptist Hymnal (1991) No. 631

Meditation

In the Genesis creation stories, cosmic hospitality was God's first act. God created a world that was good and filled with all the things we need to get along and live well. God's hospitality includes not only giving us abundantly all we need, but also God's gracious acceptance of us and generosity toward us in loving and forgiving us when we don't deserve it. When we extend hospitality to others, it is a reflection of gratitude to and trust in a generous God.

—*The Tao of Christ*

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 95

Hymn

"Tryin' to Get Home"

WORDS and MUSIC: African American Traditional
Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice and Peace No. 73

Epistle Reading

Romans 5:1-11

Meditation

We have made money our god and called it the good life. We have trained our children to go for jobs that bring the quickest corporate advancements

at the highest financial levels. We have taught them careerism but not ministry and wonder why ministers are going out of fashion. We fear coddling the poor with food stamps while we call tax breaks for the rich business incentives. We make human community the responsibility of government while homelessness, hunger, and drugs seep from the centers of our cities like poison from open sores for which we do not seek either the cause or the cure. We have created a bare and sterile world of strangers where exploitation is a necessary virtue. We have reduced life to the lowest of values so that the people who have much will not face the prospect of having less.

—Joan Chittister, OSB

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Gospel Readings

John 3:1-17

Matthew 17:1-9



Who Will Weep?

A lament for the refugees aboard the St. Louis fleeing from Germany in 1939

by Keith Sanford

“We sang a dirge and you did not weep.” Matt. 11:17, Luke 7:32

The musical score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "Be - yond a night of bro - ken glass The A quo - ta sys - tem law that stands It Now hear the sounds of re - fu - gees Their ship, St. Lou - is, sought to pass A keeps the stran - gers off the land The songs u - pon the waves at sea Just car - go flee - ing cer - tain doom Nine - cap - tain plead - ed night and day Still the like the home - less chil - dren cry To hun - dred souls, there is no room. cur - sed ship was turned a - way. mar - ket crowds with no re - ply. Now child - ren beg in a mar - ket place They sing a dirge, and who will weep for grace."

—Keith Sanford is a professor of psychology at Baylor University in Waco, TX. He shared this song with the fellowship at Seventh & James Baptist Church in early February. Note: In 1939, the ocean liner St. Louis was turned away from Cuba, the US and Canada with more than 900 Jewish refugees from Hamburg aboard. According to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, more than half of the passengers were forced to return to the continent. Of these, most were trapped by German invasions. Some escaped the Holocaust, but many did not.

A Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Fourth Station of Mercy: This week we will fast and pray for those who are victimized or marginalized because of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion, and for those who work to bring healing to everyone involved.

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Exodus 17:1-7

Hymn

"A Servant of the Least"

WORDS: L. W. Terley

MUSIC: George J. Elvey

The Baptist Hymnal (1991) No. 628

Meditation

Human righteousness is about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As the salt of the earth, we are disciples of Jesus when we allow our characters to be formed by God's blessings. As the light of the world, we are followers of Jesus when we accept the covenantal blessings as a call into relationships with despised groups because of what we believe—even if it means that we may be persecuted. As disciples of the Jesus who came not to abolish but to fulfill the law and the prophets, we seek to live righteously in ways consistent with the new interpretation of the law that Jesus provides.

—Marcia Y. Riggs, "Theological Perspective," *Feasting on the Word*

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 95

Hymn

"For Everyone Born"

WORDS: Shirley Erena Murray

MUSIC: Brian Mann

Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice and Peace No. 71

Litany of Confession

ONE: We miss the mark so often, Lord,

Ignoring the needy who reach out to us,
MANY: Judging those who are different from us,
Asking more of others than we ourselves
are willing to give.

ONE: Open our eyes to the meaning of love.

MANY: Let our feet be quick to answer the cries of
the wounded,

ONE: Let our hands lift up the fallen,

MANY: Let our wealth bring healing to the sick.

ONE: So we shall live the meaning of love,
O Christ.

ALL: Amen.

—from "Communion Prayer" in *Fall Fresh on Me*
by Mary Ruth Crook

Epistle Reading

Romans 5:1-11

Confession

What more can we say, God, that you don't already know? You long for justice for all people, but it is washed away by the flood of violence in our world. You hope that righteousness will walk with us, but you hear the clear cries of those we mistreat. You ask us to speak up for those in need, but we shut our mouths and turn away. Forgive us, God. Have mercy on us.

—From a worship bulletin at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

continued on page 14

A Liturgy for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

This week we will fast and pray for those who do not see the needs around them, that their eyes and hearts will open and they will find the joy of diverse community.

Reading from the Hebrew Scripture

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Hymn

“What Wondrous Love Is This”

WORDS: American Folk Hymn

MUSIC: William Walker’s *Southern Harmony*, 1835
The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration No. 177

Meditation

Jesus encourages his followers to bring light to a dark and broken world. The light is the light of the gospel, and it draws all people to its warmth and radiance. This mission has been primary, from the very beginning, throughout every age. Archbishop William Temple is often quoted as saying, “The church is the only organization on earth that exists for those who are not its members.” In order for the light to be seen, we must be willing to go where the darkness exists, to engage and walk through it, so that, in time, the light can overcome it.

—Charles James Cook, “Pastoral Perspective,”
Feasting on the Word

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 23

Hymn

“Make Room within My Heart, O God”

WORDS: Bryan Jeffery Leech

MUSIC: Traditional English melody;
arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906
The Worshiping Church No. 559

Epistle Reading

Ephesians 5:8-14

Meditation

For a person with a deep-rooted faith in the value and meaning of life, every experience holds a new promise, every encounter carries a new insight, and every event brings a new message. But these promises, insights and messages have to be discovered and made visible. Christian leaders are not leaders because they announce a new idea and then try to convince others of its worth; they are leaders because they face the world with eyes full of expectation, with the expertise to take away the veil that covers its hidden potential.

—Henri Nouwen

Hymn

“For the Troubles and the Sufferings”

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Gospel Reading

John 9:1-41

Third Sunday in Lent

continued from page 13

Gospel Reading

John 4:5-42

Benediction

O God, as we commit ourselves to you,
Fearful and hesitant, strengthen us,
Feed us with your manna in the desert places.
Keep our eyes bright and our voices joyful
As we praise your name. Amen.

—adapted from “Prayer of Commitment”
in *Fall Fresh on Me* by Mary Ruth Crook

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not.

—Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

More and more I come to value charity and love of one's fellow being above everything else...all our lauded technological progress—our very civilization—is like the axe in the hand of the pathological criminal.

—Albert Einstein

We are simply asked
to make gentle our bruised world
to be compassionate of all
including one's self
then with the time left over
to repeat the ancient tale
and go the way of God's foolish ones.

—Jim Strathdee

For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political, or philosophical one. God shows the poor "his first mercy." This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, because we are called to have "this mind...which was in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 2:5). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor, which is understood as a "special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness." This option—as Benedict XVI has taught—"is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty." This is why I want a Church that is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be

evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them, and to embrace the mysterious wisdom that God wishes to share with us through them.

—Pope Francis I, *The Church of Mercy*

It is mercy, not justice or courage or even heroism, that alone can defeat evil.

—Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien*

I used to think mercy meant showing kindness to someone who didn't deserve it, as if only the recipient defined the act. The girl in between has learned that mercy is defined by its giver. Our flaws are obvious, yet we are loved and able to love, if we choose, because there is that bit of the divine still smoldering in us.

—Susan Meissner, *The Shape of Mercy*



art by Erin Conaway

A Liturgy for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Sixth Station of Mercy: This week we will fast and pray for people who suffer from disabilities, disease, mental illness and addictions, for people who are incarcerated or imprisoned within their circumstances, and for those who work to bring resurrection in their lives.

Reading from the Prophets

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Hymn

"We Are Raised to Newness of Life"
WORDS and MUSIC: Allison Gilliam
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 447

Meditation

We become more human as we discover we are able to love people. And when I say "love people," I mean to see their value and their beauty, to love people who have been pushed aside, humiliated, seen as having no value. Then we see that they are gradually being changed. At the same time, sharing our lives in community with the weak and the poor, we come in touch with our own limits, pain, and brokenness. We realize that we, too, have our handicaps which are often around our need for power and the feeling that our value lies in being powerful—a power that frequently involves crushing other people. So we're confronted by two visions of society: a vision of a pyramid, where you have to have more and more power in order to get to the top, or a vision of a *body* where every person has a place.

—Jean Vanier

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 130

Hymn

"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"
WORDS: Rusty Edwards
MUSIC: Ananias Davisson's *Kentucky Harmony*
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 353

Epistle Reading

Romans 8:6-11

Meditation

Christ is present today in the people who are considered unwanted, who have no job, who do not receive any attention or care, who are hungry, who have no clothing or shelter. The state and society consider them parasites. No one has time for them. You and I are worthy, as Christians, of Christ's love if our love is real. We have the duty of looking for these people and helping them. They are there so we can go to meet them.

—Mother Theresa

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"
WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Gospel Reading

John 11:1-45



art by Sharon R. Rollins

Liturgies for Palm Sunday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Seventh Station of Mercy: This week we fast and pray for those with whom Jesus identified himself: hungry, thirsty, homeless and outcast people, the objects of scorn, hatred and violence.

Liturgy of the Palms

Procession of Palm Branches

Hymn

"All Glory, Laud, and Honor"

WORDS: Theodulph of Orleans;

tr. John Mason Neale

MUSIC: Melchior Teschner

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 175



art by Susan Daily, BVM

Meditation

Christ, our Savior, not only loved the poor, but rather "being rich, he became poor." He lived in poverty. His mission centered on advising the poor of their liberation and he founded his Church as the sign of that poverty among men.

—*Latin America Bishops, Poverty of the Church, Medellin Documents 1968*

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Epistle Reading

(from the Liturgy of the Passion)
Philippians 2:5-11

Meditation

To see whose side God is on, just go to the Bible. It is the widow and the orphan, the stranger and the poor who are blessed in the eyes of the Lord; it is kindness and mercy that prove the power of faith, and justice that measures the worth of the state. Kings are held accountable for how the poor fare under their reign. Prophets speak to the gap between rich and poor as a reason for God's judgment. Poverty and justice are religious issues, and Jesus moves among the disinherited.

—Bill Moyers

Gospel Reading

Matthew 21:1-11

Hymn

"How Deep the Father's Love for Us"

WORDS and MUSIC: Stuart Townend

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 178

The Liturgy of the Passion

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Litany from the Psalms

ONE: Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.

MANY: For the troubles and the sufferings of the world, God, we call upon Your mercy,

ONE: I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.

MANY: For the troubles and the sufferings of the world, God, we call upon Your mercy.

ONE: For I hear the whispering of many—terror all around!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

MANY: For the troubles and the sufferings of the world, God, we call upon Your mercy.

(Silence)

ONE: But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God."

MANY: My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

—From Psalm 31:9-16

Epistle Reading
Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel Reading
Matthew 27:11-54

Sermon
"Winners and Losers at the Cross" by Brett Younger
(See page 19.)

Invocation for Palm Sunday

by Burt Burleson

Come, Lord Jesus, come now into our midst and hear our hosannas.

Hear the confident hosannas offered this day...

from bright and peaceful places,
from mountain tops and green pastures.

From these places where vision is clear
and presence is known,

hear our quiet but joyful praise.

And hear the hesitant hosannas offered this day.

Hear them too...

from dark and unsettled places,
beneath looming mountains,
in shadowed valleys.

From these places where direction is uncertain
and longing is real,

hear our quiet but hopeful praise.

—Burt Burleson is the University Chaplain and Dean of Spiritual Life and Missions at Baylor University in Waco, TX.

art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruz Blanca



Winners and Losers at the Cross

A Sermon for the Liturgy of the Passion

by Brett Younger

Text: Matthew 27:15-37

It's easy to tell winners from losers, right? Winners pour champagne on each other. Losers complain about the referees. Winners hold trophies over their heads. Losers hang their heads. Winners smile from ear to ear. Losers grit their teeth. Winners look like their pictures should be on the cover of *People* magazine. Losers look like their pictures should be on the wall in the Post Office.

We think we can tell winners from losers, but in some of the most important ways, the definition isn't as clear as we think. We have two pictures this week. One is of a conquering king entering his capital city, with people lining the street to applaud. The second picture is of a criminal executed by the state, left to hang as a warning to others. It seems obvious who's a winner and who's a loser.

At the triumphal entry, Jesus looks like a winner. Trumpets blare "Hail to the Chief." Jesus must have had Zechariah's prophecy in mind when he sent the disciples for the colt:

Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech. 9:9)

The crowds line the street cheering wildly. They spread their garments and throw branches down before the donkey. They shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David." They praise Jesus saying, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

This is a ticker tape parade after a world championship. The disciples think, "This is the greatest day ever." Jesus looks exactly like they hoped he would. He's finally the conquering hero. This is when it would be the most fun to follow Jesus. This is the vision of Christ that we love—Jesus tall and strong, handsome and good-looking. Jesus as an all-American quarterback. On Palm Sunday, Jesus looks like a winner.

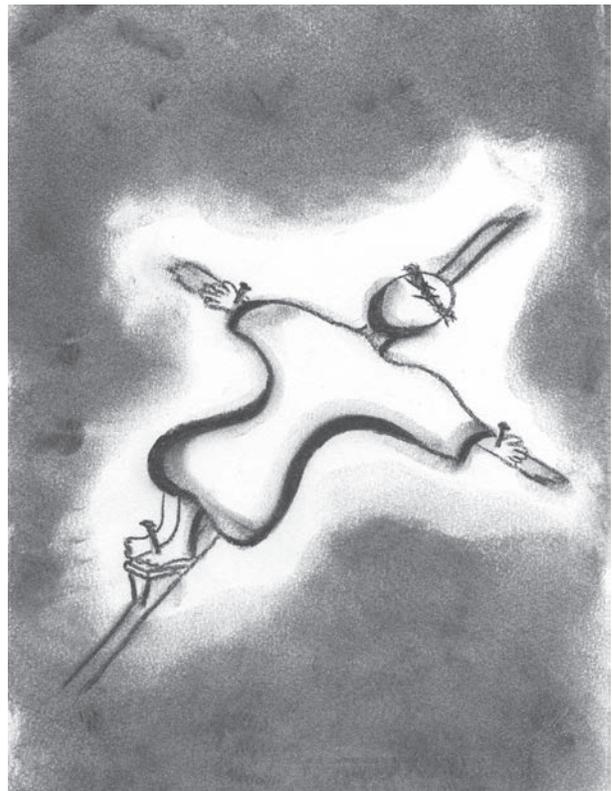
But on Friday, he doesn't look like a winner any more. The people are offered the choice of the murderer Barabbas or Jesus. They have no love for

Barabbas, but they can tell who's looking more and more like a loser. The soldiers drape a scarlet robe over Jesus' shoulders and push a crown of thorns on his head.

A walking stick becomes a make-believe scepter. They spit on him and hit him with the stick. After they finish, Jesus can't even carry his own cross. The sign over his head says, "King of the Jews." The Romans think it's a wonderful joke. The leaders of the temple try to get it changed. People walk by and shout, "You were supposed to be the king. What happened?"

Victims of crucifixion usually died of suffocation. The loss of blood weakened them until they couldn't push up to breathe.

When it becomes clear that Jesus isn't going to win, most people wander off. The crowd lining the



art by Erin Conaway

streets on Palm Sunday was a lot bigger than the small group of mourners gathered at the foot of the cross. The cross looks for all the world like defeat.

At a gospel music concert, just before the offering to pay the band, the lead singer says, "You may wonder how we can ask you to give us an offering if you saw me drive up this evening in a new Cadillac. I believe that Christians should go first class." The

If Christ were to appear, would he come in regal robes? Isn't Jesus still wearing peasant garb? Isn't Jesus still the servant of broken-hearted people? Aren't we still called to take our place with Christ?

people shout, "Amen," because it's hard to admit the truth. When Jesus died it wasn't on a first-class cross. They didn't use first-class nails. It wasn't first-class Roman spit dried on his face.

About 400 CE, Nestorius, the Archbishop of Constantinople, wrote, "A born God, a dead God, a buried God, I cannot adore." He couldn't believe that God could suffer. Nestorius was soon thereafter condemned as a heretic, but he raised a hard question. Do we really want to follow one who dies like Jesus?

The disciples didn't. They wanted it to always be Palm Sunday.

If they had been paying attention, they would have seen it coming from the start. Before Jesus was born, his mother sang that he was coming to put down the mighty from their thrones and exalt those of low degree. Jesus was born in a stable to a peasant couple. He grew up in Nazareth. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" people asked. It was the first-century equivalent of Cut and Shoot, TX, or Bucksport, TN.

The path Jesus chose isn't what the religious people want or expect. He spends his time caring for the hurting rather than trying to become the chief priest, rather than running for president of the synagogue, rather than taking a cushy job at the seminary giving lectures on circumcision. Rather than go for any prestigious position, he spends his time with common, ordinary, everyday people. He

doesn't try to finagle a place in the halls of honor. He looks for people to serve. Jesus keeps sharing good news with the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed, with anyone who knows they're needy.

Sometimes Jesus had problems relating to successful people, to those who don't feel needy. The rich young ruler looked like such a fine young man. He didn't steal or lie. He took care of his mother and father. And selling everything you have and giving it to the poor isn't a reasonable suggestion. The prodigal son's elder brother was a hard worker who got a bad rap. He was the reason the farm was a success. He should have gotten the party. Working hard must be better than running away from home. The rich man building barns seems like a prudent person planning for the future. We admire that kind of person, and with good reason.

It's frustrating that Jesus keeps admonishing the successful and taking his place with the needy. The people who hang around Jesus are mostly unimpressive—fishermen, prostitutes, tax collectors. Jesus touches the elderly, children, and the sick. Jesus touches lepers. He talks to people who have made terrible mistakes. He listens to the sinful. Some of them have messy lives because they themselves made their lives a mess, but Jesus keeps spending his time with them.

He wouldn't stop giving his life away. He gave his life away all the way to the cross. Jesus infuriated the ones who thought they were winners by taking his place with the ones who knew they were losers.

Jesus' way is hard to accept. We want to look like winners. We like the sound of applause. Who doesn't want an easier life? We don't want to admit it when our goals begin to reflect the popular ideas of what it means to be successful. Somewhere inside we secretly suspect that God should have done it differently. It could have been so much easier for Jesus if God saw winning and losing more reasonably, more like we do.

In Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the Grand Inquisitor comes to interrogate Jesus and explain that he has gotten it all wrong. Essentially, what he says is this:

Jesus, you didn't understand. When he came to you and said to climb up on the pinnacle of the temple and jump down from the pinnacle, and the entire world will come and see who you are, you should have done it. Jesus, when he came to you and he said to you "Bow down before me and I will give you all the kingdoms of this earth," you didn't listen to him and look what happened

to you. Jesus, we in the church figured it all out and we know how to do it. We bowed down to him and he has given us all the kingdoms of the earth. Jesus, your way did not work and we have learned that his way is better than to do the things you said to do.

The church is still tempted to ignore Christ's way and look for what's easiest. Who in their right mind wants to serve the needy? Why would anyone choose to carry a cross?

As Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die, his disciples got into an argument over who was the greatest, over who would be the most successful. Jesus said, "If any one would be first, be servant of all."

In the agony of the crucifixion we see clearly the Christ we are to follow. In his life, and in his death, Jesus makes it plain that his way is hard. Jesus took up a cross and said words we might wish he had skipped, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

In the crucifixion, Jesus shows us what love looks like. On Calvary, Christ calls us to live with the same love. In the cross, God demands we change our way of thinking.

If Christ were to appear, would he come in regal robes? Isn't Jesus still wearing peasant garb? Isn't Jesus still the servant of broken-hearted people? Aren't we still called to take our place with Christ? God challenges us to give our selves to love, run the risk of being foolish in order to be faithful, care for the one member of our family who isn't invited to the reunions, eat lunch with the student who usually sits alone, and offer a ride to the co-worker to whom no one ever offers a ride.

To follow Christ is to look for ways to serve. St. Augustine wrote, "What does love look like? It has the hands to help others, the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sorrows of one."

Following Christ isn't glamorous. It's holding hands stiffened by arthritis, sharing food with someone who doesn't have enough, sitting in the home of one who has died, telling a lost person about God's grace.

We serve Christ not by arguing over who's right about the most things, but by doing as God directs. God has chosen us to be healers in the midst of the brokenness of humanity. God has chosen us to be Christ in the world.

In the end, there is no more glorious calling. The

game isn't over. The final victory doesn't go to the ones who seek the applause of Palm Sunday. True victory comes in the defeat of the cross. Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached, "There are no crown wearers in heaven who were not cross bearers below." The prophet Isaiah promised that the one who has suffered is the one God will vindicate. In the cross, God puts to shame the powers of the world.

We serve Christ not by arguing over who's right about the most things, but by doing as God directs. God has chosen us to be healers in the midst of the brokenness of humanity. God has chosen us to be Christ in the world.

The cross is both the darkest spot of all history and the light by which we understand that Jesus changed all the definitions: "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for Christ's sake will find it." To lose yourself in suffering for those who suffer, to lose yourself in love, is to find yourself.

When you look honestly at the way Christ lived and the way he died, who would have guessed that he would be remembered a hundred years later, much less two thousand years? Jesus lived his extraordinary life in the hope that people would live the same kind of life, because it's the one true life.

Do we believe it? Do we really believe it? Do we believe that Jesus reveals God's hopes for us? Do we believe that God calls us to live like Christ? If we believe it, what difference does it make? What difference does it make in the way that we do our jobs, the way we treat hurting people, the way we spend our time, because if it doesn't make any difference, then maybe we don't really believe it.

We like the idea of Palm Sunday. It must have been such fun. But we know Christ calls us to carry a cross. We need to lay down our tiny aspirations and take up the hope of following Jesus.

—Brett Younger is the pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY, and a longtime contributor to Sacred Seasons.

A Liturgy for Maundy Thursday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Tonight we pray that we will have the grace and courage to wash the feet of those for whom we have fasted during this Lenten season; those who would be the most astounded to have us do so.

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Exodus 12:1-4

Hymn

"Jesus Is Lord"

WORDS and MUSIC: Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 419

Meditation

Nowhere is there any visible sign of glory. But, because in every town and village and hamlet of the world there are those who have surrendered their lives, who have made their offering daily, from the small grains of the common life, a miracle of Love is happening all the time, everywhere. The Holy Spirit is descending upon the world.

—Caryl Houselander, *The Passion of the Infant Christ*

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 116:1-2, 12-19

Hymn

"Come, Share the Lord"

WORDS and MUSIC: Bryan Jeffery Leech
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 459

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Meditation

Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ comes uninvited. But because He cannot be at home

in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet He must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world. He is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst.... It is in these that He hides Himself, for whom there is no room.

—Thomas Merton, from "The Time of the End Is the Time of No Room," *Raids on the Unspeakable*

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"

WORDS and MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 691

Gospel Reading

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Additional Hymns

"Abide with Me"

WORDS: Henry F. Lyte
MUSIC: William Henry Monk
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 543

"Reach Out and Touch"

WORDS and MUSIC: Charles F. Brown
The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration No. 314

"And Can It Be?"

WORDS: Charles Wesley
MUSIC: Thomas Campbell
The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration No. 203

art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruz Blanca

Thoughts about Mercy & Washing Feet

by Grayson Wolf

It's Maundy Thursday, and today is a new mercy: the washing of feet. As with mercies prior, the washing of feet blesses benefactor and beneficiary alike. Blessed are the needy, after all, and Christ is present in and for those who meet their needs.

Yet this mercy is distinct in that it extends beyond the reciprocity found in meeting needs and physically prepares both parties to receive mercy in distinct ways.

The past few weeks have instructed us to show mercy for underserved people—such as hungry people, homeless people, and people scorned by society. For these individuals, the washing of feet is a mercy, because it exalts them.

The act of washing feet takes the most downtrodden and neglected people and transforms them into something celebrated. No matter who they are, from where they come, or even what they have done, these people are all deemed desirable. They are loved for their brokenness, and that is mercy.

God, as we are reminded time and time again, has special interest in those who have the most need. The Beatitudes pronounce this truth, as does Jesus's miracle-working. On this Maundy Thursday, let us not forget that the washing of feet mercifully celebrates hungry, homeless and scorned people, not in spite of their dependency, but rather because of their great need.

Those who would wash others' feet receive a different kind of mercy. Through this act, they are enabled to live out the love of Christ. Jesus's washing of his disciples' feet is part of a long journey toward Calvary. First of all, he became incarnate to dwell among us.

He healed sick people and fixed broken people. By the washing of feet, he declared himself lower than his own creation—a humble servant to an errant humankind. Then he humbled himself once more and was crucified. Finally, from this act of humility came God's ultimate triumph and glorification through the resurrection.

The act of washing feet takes the most downtrodden and neglected people and transforms them into something celebrated.

Washing others' feet is a mercy because it physically places the benefactor beneath the beneficiary. Providing for the needy typically assumes a position of privilege, but exalting the needy helps remove one's tacit pride in helping others.

Serving the needs of others can no longer be trite altruism when this happens. It renounces conventional social hierarchies. In emulating Christ by humbling ourselves, we find that we now get to participate in Christ. Thus, the washing of feet is a mercy for us.

But it doesn't have to be the literal washing of feet. Other acts can bring about the same mercy, as

long as they exalt those who are in need and humble the provider. The Kingdom of Heaven is realized in our midst when the "least of these" are placed first.

—Grayson Wolf is a former Seeds of Hope intern. A native of Waco, TX, he majored in English and Religion at Baylor University. His next step is to study public-interest law.



art by Sharon Rollins

A Liturgy for Holy Friday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Today we give thanks for the love of Christ that caused him to give himself in death, and we pray that we can become like the Servant of the Lord and enter into the suffering of others for the healing of the world.

Reading from the Prophets

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Hymn

"The Power of the Cross"

WORDS and MUSIC:

Keith Getty

& Stuart Townend

Celebrating Grace

Hymnal No. 190

Meditation

Lord, we long for righteousness within and without. We pray for the church we love to be the church as it's meant to be. Hear our prayer. Empower us with vision and courage. Redeem us, your body, from that which tears us asunder, ripping the fabric of your flesh and blood over and over, in nonsacramental ways. Bring healing, help and hope as only you can, Lord Jesus. It begins within me now, and within each of my brothers and sisters. Thank you for working your work, and remake the church. Amen.

—David Delacroix, Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

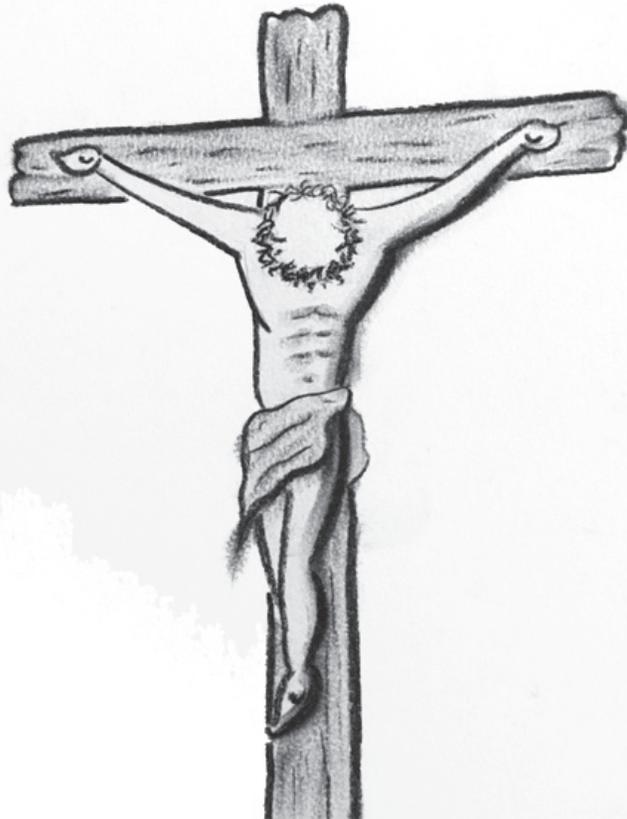
Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 22

Hymn

"For the Troubles and the Sufferings"

WORDS & MUSIC: Rodolfo Gaede Neto



art by Erin Conaway

Celebrating Grace
Hymnal No. 691

Epistle Readings

Hebrews 10:16-25

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Meditation

Jesus risked reputation and dignity in order to love—risked loving even a sinner. O God who risks everything to love, show us compassion that does not count the cost, and teach us to share it without hesitation.

—Thomas Hoffman, *A Child in Winter*

Hymn

"Depth of Mercy"

Text: Charles Wesley, 1740

Music: Hymns and Songs of the Church, 1623, George Wither

Tune: CANTERBURY

Complete Mission Praise No. 820

Responsive Song

(See "Depth of Mercy" on page 25.)

Gospel Reading

John 18:1-19:42

Depth of Mercy

A Responsive Song for Holy Friday

by Guilherme Almeida

MANY (singing): Depth of mercy! Can there be mercy still reserved for me?

Can my God his wrath forbear,
me, the chief of sinners, spare?

FIRST READER: "This the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." He also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (*Heb. 10:16-18*)

MANY (singing): I have long withstood his grace,
long provoked him to his face,
would not harken to his calls,
grieved him by a thousand falls.

SECOND READER: Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. (*Heb. 10:19-23*)

FIRST READER: And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (*Heb. 10:24-25*)

MANY (singing): I my Master have denied,
I afresh have crucified,
oft profaned his hallowed name,
put him to an open shame.

SECOND READER: Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the

heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(*Heb. 4:14-16*)

MANY (singing): There for me the Savior stands,
shows his wounds and spreads his hands.
God is love! I know, I feel;
Jesus weeps and loves me still.

FIRST READER: In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (*Heb. 5:7-9*)

MANY (singing): Now incline me to repent,
let me now my sins lament,
now my foul revolt deplore,
weep, believe, and sin no more.

—From "Depth of Mercy"

WORDS: Charles Wesley

MUSIC: adapt. from Orlando Gibbons
The United Methodist Hymnal No. 355

—Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida, a native of Brazil, is a lecturer in Musical Theatre at Baylor University, a Baptist minister specializing in music, a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and a frequent liturgist for Sacred Seasons.

Readings & Hymns for Holy Saturday

by Guilherme Almeida

art courtesy of the Franciscans de Cruz Blanca



Lectionary Readings for Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

Lectionary Readings for the Easter Vigil

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures

- Genesis 1:1-2:4a and Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26

- Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13 and Psalm 46
- Genesis 22:1-18 and Psalm 16
- Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21 and Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18
- Isaiah 55:1-11 and Isaiah 12:2-6
- Baruch 3:9-15, 3:32-4:4 or Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6 and Psalm 19
- Ezekiel 36:24-28 and Psalm 42, 43
- Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Psalm 143
- Zephaniah 3:14-20 and Psalm 98

New Testament Readings and Psalm

Romans 6:3-11 and Psalm 114

Matthew 28:1-10

Hymn suggestions:

“Were You There”

WORDS & MUSIC: African-American Spiritual
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 192

“What Meekness and What Majesty”

WORDS: Terry W. York

MUSIC: Ralph Manuel

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 170

“Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne”

WORDS: Emily E. S. Elliott

MUSIC: Timothy R. Matthews

Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 165

“Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle”

WORDS: Venantius Honorius Fortunatus;

tr. John M. Neale

MUSIC: Carl F. Schalk

The Worshiping Church Hymnal No. 228

“Lift High the Cross”

WORDS: George W. Kitchin

MUSIC: Sydney H. Nicholson

The Worshiping Church Hymnal No. 229

A Liturgy for Easter Sunday

by Katie Cook & Alyssa Miller

Note: Many churches give their children small bells to ring during the hymns on Easter Sunday. Every time the hymn lyrics say "Allelujah" or "Hallelujah," the children ring the bells. This adds a festive note to the singing.

Litany of Proclamation

ONE: We have felt the sorrow and the pain of loss. We have felt the oppression of humankind. We have borne with Jesus the sorrows of this world. But now—a new thing has happened. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

MANY: Christ is risen indeed!

ONE: Prophecy has been fulfilled, for God promised through the Prophet Isaiah, "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." Christ is risen!

MANY: Christ is risen indeed!

ONE: We will then be glad and rejoice forever in this new creation; for God has created Jerusalem as a joy, and all people as a delight, and has made us all a part of that creation through Jesus Christ—the risen one. God rejoices in Jerusalem and in all God's people. No more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. Christ is risen!

MANY: Christ is risen indeed!

ONE: Salvation has come through the power of the resurrection morning. God's promises are sure. God's love is our strength. We are forgiven for our trespasses. We are a resurrected people. Christ is risen!

ALL: Hallelujah! Christ is risen indeed!

Reading from the Prophets
Jeremiah 31:1-6

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Hymn

"Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing"

Text: Brian Wren, 1969, rev. 1995

Music: Olwen Wonnacott

Tune: OLD CLARENDONIAN

Church Hymnary (4th ed.) No. 416

Epistle Reading

Colossians 3:1-4

Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Acts 10:34-43

Hymn

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Again"

Text: Michael Weisse, 1531; trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1858

Music: attributed to Johann Rosenmuller

Adapt. and Harm. William Henry Monk

Comp. Stephen A. Crisp

Tune: WURTTENBERG

Common Praise No. 217

Gospel Readings

John 20:1-18

Matthew 28:1-10

Lessons for Easter Evening

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalms 114

1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

Luke 24:13-49

art by Susan Daily, BVM

Benediction

By the tender mercy of our God

The dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

—Luke 1:78-79



art by Susan Daily, IBM