

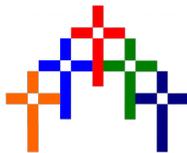
Lent 2017

# In the beginning was the Word ...



## A daily reading in the Gospel of John

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**Five Crosses**

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## Preface

John's gospel, like the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) tells the story of Jesus's ministry, death and resurrection. However, you don't need to read very much of it to realise that he tells this story in a quite different way. He records key events – the baptism, the healings and miracles, the teaching, the controversies with the Jewish authorities, the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection – but puts his own mark on those stories and gives them a unique context and interpretation.

Many of the events of Jesus ministry are accompanied in John's gospel by lengthy *discourses* which emphasize the significance of the what has happened. Where the other evangelists record many of Jesus's *parables* John employs these discourses. John does not record any narrative parables but some of Jesus's sayings in the gospel may derive from parables Jesus used. The discourses often elicit discussion, with either the disciples or with the Jewish leaders, just as the parables do in the other gospels but Jesus's teaching is generally much more extended in John's gospel than in the synoptic gospels. Jesus's teaching in the fourth gospel is much more focussed on who Jesus is and what the significance of his coming is (for instance in the several *I am* sayings) compared to the other gospels where there is much more teaching on right conduct.

There are fewer miracles in John but they are given a greater significance by the way they are introduced and reflected on. Two of them are described as *signs* (John 2.11; 4.54) which validate Jesus's ministry as blessed and originating from God, although the others are clearly intended to be understood in the same way.

This guide offers a daily reading from John's gospel throughout the whole season of Lent and for Easter Day. You will need your bible. During the first three weeks there are quite lengthy readings and alternative shorter readings are provided, although you will find that you "get into" the gospel better if you read the longer passages. From chapter 13 onwards the readings are considerably shorter as we are led to reflect on the passion and death of Jesus with its lengthy discourse

(John 13-16) and the high priestly prayer (John 17) of Jesus at the Last Supper.

Notes are provided for each day. They are not exhaustive in any way and are intended only to provide a focus and a context for each daily reading. If you don't find them helpful ignore them and simply read John's gospel and spend a little time reflecting on what you have read. There is also a short prayer provided for each day.

Bible quotes are taken from the New Jerusalem Bible, but use your favourite translation. These notes will appear on the benefice Facebook page each morning ([facebook.com/fivecrosses](https://www.facebook.com/fivecrosses)) if you wish to start or join in a conversation about what you have read each day.

## **Ash Wednesday - 1<sup>st</sup> March**

*John 1.1-18 (Short Reading John 1.1-14)*

The prologue to John's gospel is one of the best known and most well loved passages from the bible. It leaves the reader in no doubt as to the significance of the main character – Jesus – in the gospel. The prologue serves a similar purpose to the birth narratives in Matthew's (Mt 1 & 2) and Luke's (Lk 1 & 2) gospels and to the brief introduction to Mark's gospel (Mk 1.1).

In Jesus the *Word became flesh*. The Word is God and in Jesus God becomes human and reveals God's glory in the person of Jesus. John is also introduced here as the forerunner and the witness to the presence of the *light of men*.

*Prayer*

Holy God,  
reveal your Word to me,  
that I may be enlightened by his life  
and see his glory.

## **March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

*John 1.19-34 (Short Reading John 1.29-34)*

John tells the story of Jesus's baptism through the eyes of John the Baptist. The Baptist is challenged by the priests and Levites to justify his ministry of baptism. John, quoting Isaiah (40.3), explains his calling as one of preparing for the one who to come after him. This ministry of preparation for Jesus's coming is emphasized by John's witness to his disciples, *Look, there is the lamb of God* (John 1.29).

*Prayer*

Lord, give me grace and wisdom  
to witness to Jesus  
and reveal him to the world.

## March 3<sup>rd</sup>

*John 1.35-51 (Short Reading John 1.35-42)*

Again we hear the Baptist pointing his disciples to Jesus, *the lamb of God* (John 1.36) In response to his witness Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael and an unnamed disciple (perhaps John himself?) follow Jesus. In the meetings with Simon (John 1.42) and Nathanael (John 1.47) we see Jesus's talent for seeing to the heart of the people he meets – a frequent theme in the gospel. The words that Jesus speaks to Nathanael, *in all truth I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending over the Son of man*, are not easy for us to understand but certainly recall the dream of Jacob in Genesis 28.10-18. Perhaps these words are intended to reveal Jesus as a prophet, and possibly, refer back to Jesus acclaiming Nathanael as *an Israelite in whom there is no deception* (John 1.47) and imply that Jesus is suggesting that the disciples will be the first of a new Israel.

*Prayer*

Holy Father,  
give me courage and grace  
to follow your Son Jesus faithfully.

## March 4<sup>th</sup>

*John 2.1-25 (Short Reading 2.1-12)*

The story of the wedding at Cana in Galilee is well known to us, not least because of the striking miracle of changing water into wine. John describes this as *the first of Jesus' signs: it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him*. Some, but not all of the miracles are described by John as *signs* (see John 4.46-54; 6.2; 6.14; 6.26; 12.18; 20.30). John is clearly very selective about the miracles that he records. Each of them should probably be considered a *sign*, in the sense that they reveal something about the divine call, and the divine nature, of Jesus. The account of the cleansing of the Temple is recorded in the synoptic gospels when Jesus enters Jerusalem at the end of his ministry; in John it is at the beginning. John doesn't seem to do anything without a reason. Here it seems to be that he wants us to

understand that Jesus's presence on earth and his ministry (not just his passion and resurrection) mark the beginning of a new age – the old is overthrown and replaced by the new order. John makes references both to the *many* signs of Jesus and to his ability to see into the hearts of those he met.

### *Prayer*

Lord almighty,  
may I recognise the signs of the kingdom  
and rejoice in the presence of Christ.

## **March 5<sup>th</sup> – The First Sunday in Lent**

*John 3.1-36 (Short Reading John 3.1-21)*

Nicodemus, *a leader of the Jews*, comes to Jesus by night, probably to avoid the attention of the other Pharisees. The discussion he has with Jesus is typical of the style of Jesus's teaching in John's gospel. Here we have not parables but discourse. Jesus speaks at length and Nicodemus questions him in a wide ranging conversation. His teaching is no less challenging and confrontational than in the other gospels - *You are the Teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things!* There are references here to what it means to be a spiritual person (John 3.5-6), to Jesus's divine origin, death and resurrection (John 3.13-15) and to how we might gain eternal life (John 3.16). Jesus then leaves Jerusalem for the Judaeian countryside and there, with his disciples, baptizes. John, for a final time in the gospel, witnesses to Jesus to his followers, deferring to Jesus, *He must grow greater, I must grow less* (John 3.30).

### *Prayer*

Holy Father,  
give me your gift of faith in your Son,  
that I may gain eternal life.

## March 6<sup>th</sup>

*John 4.1-45 (Short Reading John 4.7-26)*

This long story of Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well is full of important teaching. We see again Jesus's perceptive skills on display as he tells the woman the truth of her life story, *You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you now have is not your husband. You spoke the truth there* (John 4.17-18). The discussion revolves around food and drink, *Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life* (John 4.13-14); *My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work* (John 4.34). However, the key to understanding this teaching is to recognize that Jesus is the source of eternal life.

*Prayer*

Lord God,  
Jesus is the source of eternal life;  
help me to trust in him.

## March 7<sup>th</sup>

*John 4.46-5.15 (Short Reading John 5.1-15)*

The second sign, like the first, takes place in Cana in Galilee. Or at least Jesus is in Cana, the boy who is healed is in Capernaum, about 20 miles away! Jesus assures the official who comes to him that *your son will live*. The man believes and returns home to find that the boy recovered from the time Jesus spoke those words. This story is followed by another account of a healing, this time back in Jerusalem, where, in John's gospel, Jesus in contrast to the other gospels is a frequent visitor. The instruction of Jesus to the man to *Get up, pick up your sleeping-mat and walk around* results in a dispute with the Jews.

## Prayer

Lord of life,  
bring healing and wholeness  
to me and to all who need it.

## March 8<sup>th</sup>

*John 5.16-47 (Short Reading John 5.16-29)*

John notes this healing, which occurs back in Jerusalem, as the spark that ignited the arguments between Jesus and the Jews, *It was because he did things like this on the Sabbath that the Jews began to harass Jesus*. There follows the lengthiest of Jesus's speeches to date. In these words Jesus tells how the Father's work is his work and that his claims are justified by the witness of the Father himself. The relationship between God and Jesus is that of Father to Son. In this way John demonstrates clearly the areas of disagreement between Jesus and the Jews. They cannot tolerate what seems to them to be blasphemy.

## Prayer

Father of Jesus,  
give me grace to know your Son  
and to serve him faithfully.

## March 9<sup>th</sup>

*John 6.1-40 (Short Reading John 6.1-15, 25-27)*

The feeding of the five thousand (again in Galilee) is followed by the story of Jesus walking on the water (although the Greek translated *on* can just as easily mean *by*; and some commentators claim this story not to be a miracle at all) and both stories are followed by lengthy teaching on the nature of bread that God gives. The bread which is Jesus – *I am the bread of life* – is clearly superior to the bread (*manna*) given through Moses, *it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is the bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world*. Jesus has the gift of true life for those who come to him, *No one who comes to me will ever hunger; no one who believes in me*

*will ever thirst; and It is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and that I should raise that person up on the last day.*

*Prayer*

Lord,  
feed me with the bread of life  
so that I may have eternal life.

## **March 10<sup>th</sup>**

*John 6.41-71 (Short Reading John 6.41-51)*

The teaching on true bread continues. At least by implication Jesus says that those who are not fed by him cannot have eternal life, *In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* This teaching becomes too much for some of Jesus's followers, but John tells us that he knows who are his true followers and who does not believe. He questions his close disciples (the first mention of the *Twelve*), who, through Peter affirm their commitment, *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.* Which is followed by the first indication that Jesus knows that it is one of the twelve who will betray him – and John does nothing to keep us in suspense and names *Judas son of Simon Iscariot.*

*Prayer*

Holy Father,  
may I know your Son  
as the one who has the words of eternal life.

## **March 11<sup>th</sup>**

*John 7.1-30 (Short Reading John 7.1-19)*

Jesus, now based in Galilee, sends his disciples to Jerusalem while he remains in Galilee. However, after they have left he travels secretly to Jerusalem. He will not return to Galilee again. There he maintains a low profile until the festival is half over. Jesus begins teaching in the Temple

and the dispute with the Jews deepens, particularly focussed on the keeping of the Sabbath, and on Jesus's divine origin, *I have not come of my own accord: but he who sent me is true; You do not know him, but I know him because I have my being from him and it was he who sent me.* Jesus accuses the Jews of hypocrisy and accuses them of wishing to kill him. In John's gospel it is almost as if Jesus plants the idea in the minds of the Jews.

*Prayer*

Blessed Lord,  
help me to see who Jesus is  
and that he is sent by you.

## **March 12<sup>th</sup> – The Second Sunday in Lent**

*John 7.31-52 (Short Reading John 7.31-36)*

As the festival draws to a close John's narrative focusses on the discussions among the Jews and the inability of the Pharisees to carry out their desire to have Jesus arrested. The people are divided about who Jesus is; some believing him to be the Christ and others doubting that he can be. As all this is going on Jesus makes more claims about his divine origin and prophesies his return to the Father followed by the sending of the Spirit.

*Prayer*

Lord God,  
send your Holy Spirit  
that I may know Jesus more truly.

## **March 13<sup>th</sup>**

*John 8.1-30 (Short Reading John 8.1-12)*

The scribes and Pharisees bring a woman to Jesus who has been caught in the act of adultery and demand a judgement from him. This story is similar to a number in the synoptic gospels where the Pharisees try to catch Jesus out, and here as there Jesus side steps their plan and reflects the question back to them, *Let the one among you who is guiltless be*

*the first to throw a stone at her.* This story is followed by more teaching. As earlier we heard Jesus say I am the bread of life so now he says *I am the light of the world.* There are a number of significant sayings of Jesus in this gospel which begin with the words *I am.* They are reminiscent of the name which the Lord reveals to Moses when he meets the Lord in the burning bush, *I am who he is* (more commonly, *I am who I am*, but the Hebrew is difficult and carries both of these possible translations – and a number of others; Exodus 3.1-15). There is more argument with the Pharisees which again revolves around Jesus's often stated belief that he has come from God.

### *Prayer*

Holy God,  
may I always walk in the light of Christ,  
that I may find life in him.

## **March 14<sup>th</sup>**

### *John 8.31-59 (Short Reading John 8.31-47)*

Jesus appears to pick an argument with the Jews who believed in him and the conversation ends with them picking up stones to throw at him. It is not easy to understand precisely what Jesus is intending here. Although, read in a Gentile context, where John's gospel originated, the rejection of the Jews in favour of Gentiles would make perfect sense. Perhaps this is why John records this story as he does. But the discussion continues to revolve around the fact that Jesus has come from God and is God's Son. If his audience are really descended from Abraham, as they claim, they should recognize who Jesus is, as Abraham did.

### *Prayer*

Gracious Father,  
make me your child  
that I might have life.

## March 15<sup>th</sup>

*John 9.1-41 (Short Reading John 9.1-17)*

Jesus, in another sign, heals a man born blind. A feature of the signs is that each one becomes more remarkable than the one before it, *Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of someone born blind*. There is a great debate between the Pharisees, the man himself and his parents about the nature of this miracle. Was he really blind from birth? What did Jesus do? Is Jesus a sinner? The man is thrown out of the synagogue because he will not renounce Jesus. While the man can truly see, it is the Pharisees who are truly blind – and condemned for their intransigence and refusal to see God at work in Jesus.

*Prayer*

Lord,  
open my eyes that I may see  
the glory of your work in Jesus your Son.

## March 16<sup>th</sup>

*John 10.1-21 (Short Reading John 10.1-14)*

The good shepherd is a well known and well loved image for Jesus (particularly by way of Victorian art and piety). This is a continuation of the debate in chapter 9 and adds to the criticism of the Pharisees in that chapter. Jesus, who here says of himself, *I am the gate of the sheepfold* and *I am the good shepherd*, is clearly contrasting his shepherding with that of the nation's leaders whose responsibility it is. In verse 16 the words, *and there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, one shepherd*, seems to refer to the Gentile Christians at the time the gospel is written.

*Prayer*

Loving God,  
gather me into your fold  
that I may be safe under your protection.

## March 17<sup>th</sup>

*John 10.22-42 (Short Reading John 10.22-33)*

With its imagery of sheep the conversation appears simply to move on, but this is a new occasion, about two months later. The Jews ask whether Jesus is the Christ, and his answer, which seems blasphemous to them, causes them to pick up stones to stone him. The argument from Jesus appears to dissuade them from stoning him but they still wish to arrest him. Jesus returns to the Jordan valley where Jesus is compared to John. John gave no signs but because of his signs the people believe in him. The contrast with the Jews, who do not find his signs convincing, in Jerusalem is clear, *I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?*

*Prayer*

Mighty Father,  
may I see Jesus's works in the world,  
and believe.

## March 18<sup>th</sup>

*John 11.1-44 (Short Reading John 11.32-44)*

The raising of Lazarus is the last and most remarkable of the signs in John's gospel showing, as it does, Jesus's power over death. There are a number of things that happen that emphasize the significance of what Jesus achieves – that he waits for several days to ensure that there can be no doubt that Lazarus is dead; that he has been so long in the tomb that his body will be already decomposing. There is teaching here in which Jesus claims for himself that he is *the resurrection and the life*. Martha and Mary are key figures in the story. They both greet him with the words, *Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*. It is Martha, though, who trusts that Jesus can raise Lazarus even now.

## *Prayer*

Lord God,  
all life is in your hands,  
and you sent Jesus to be the resurrection and the life;  
may I live in the joy of the resurrection.

## **March 19<sup>th</sup> – The Third Sunday in Lent**

*John 11.45-12.11 (Short Reading John 12.1-11)*

The focus now moves very firmly onto the death of Jesus. John interprets the words of Caiaphas, the high priest, which were spoken as a political judgement to solve the situation that the Pharisees and chief priests faced over Jesus, as a prophecy. Caiaphas, as high priest, is, unknowingly, speaking the will of God that Jesus should die *to gather together into one the scattered children of God*. Jesus, briefly, moves out of Jerusalem to Ephraim on the edge of the desert. At Bethany he visits Lazarus, Mary and Martha and shares a meal with them. At the meal Mary anoints Jesus's feet and we hear the second mention of Judas as the one who will betray him.

## *Prayer*

Father in heaven,  
may I be among your scattered children  
gathered into one by the death of Jesus.

## **March 20<sup>th</sup>**

*John 12.12-36 (Short Reading John 12.20-28)*

Now Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final time. As in the other gospels he enters on a donkey, greeted by the crowds – although in John's gospel he brings a crowd with him which then gathers more people. The Pharisees are alarmed by this. The story of the Greeks coming to Jesus is somewhat reminiscent of some of the stories of the calling of the disciples at the beginning of the gospel. The teaching that follows though is not. Jesus speaks clearly of his approaching death. He tells how *anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life*, and in words that recall the agony in

the garden says, *Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour.*

*Prayer*

Eternal God,  
help me to set my sights  
on the life to come  
and to be a true citizen of heaven.

## **March 21<sup>st</sup>**

*John 12.37-50 (Short Reading John 12.44-50)*

These last verses feel like a conclusion, not to the gospel but to the ministry of Jesus. Most, having heard his message, have not believed, but some have – even among the religious leaders. There remains a criticism of the leaders though, for they have never openly acknowledged their faith because *they put human glory before God's glory*. Jesus's teaching has come from God. Those who believe in him believe in God and all who reject him reject God.

*Prayer*

Heavenly Lord,  
in knowing Jesus  
may I come to know you more fully.

## **March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

*John 13.1-11*

Here begin six chapters recounting the events and teaching of Jesus at the Last Supper. In contrast, in the synoptic gospels the Last Supper is covered in just a few verses. For John the key event appears to be, not the institution of the eucharist, but the washing of the disciples' feet. It is clear that in doing this Jesus is acting out the way in which he wishes his followers to understand leadership, recalling Jesus's words in Luke's account of the Last Supper, *here am I among you as one who serves!*

*Prayer*

Lord,  
give me grace  
to serve you by serving your children.

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

*John 13.12-20*

Jesus now spells out for his disciples what it is that he has just done for them. Jesus is the disciples' *Master and Lord* and they are to follow his example – not only of serving leadership but also of humility which recognises who they truly are.

*Prayer*

Loving God,  
grant me the gift of true humility,  
that I may be used in the work of your kingdom.

**March 24<sup>th</sup>**

*John 13.21-30*

One of the features of Jesus's passion in John's gospel is that only Jesus understands what is happening. Here as he predicts Judas's treachery the disciples cannot understand what is happening even though it seems very clear to the reader that Judas, by receiving the bread dipped in the dish, will betray Jesus. John obviously is making a point with the words *It was night* as Judas leaves, presumably to show that Judas, in contrast to Jesus, *the light of the world*, is a child of the darkness.

*Prayer*

Glorious Lord,  
fill my life with light,  
that I may walk with Christ.

## **March 25<sup>th</sup>**

*John 13.31-38*

Now begins the longest piece of teaching in all of the gospels, with only very brief interruptions from the disciples to ask for clarification and, finally, to express understanding (John 16.29-30). With Judas's departure, to hand him over to the authorities, Jesus confirms that his purpose in coming is now to be fulfilled, *now has the Son of man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified*. Peter, wishing to show his faithfulness, promises what he cannot deliver, *I will lay down my life for you*. Jesus, seeing to the heart of Peter, predicts Peter's denial's.

*Prayer*

God of life,  
give me courage to follow Jesus  
and to walk in his way.

## **March 26<sup>th</sup> – The Fourth Sunday in Lent**

*John 14.1-7*

Jesus tells his disciples that he is going ahead to prepare their place in *my Father's house*. Thomas question shows that he has not understood what Jesus has to do. He needs to know that, *I am the Way; I am Truth and Life*. Jesus is the only way to be with God.

*Prayer*

God of the Way,  
be my guide in this life,  
and my joy in the next.

## **March 27<sup>th</sup>**

*John 14.8-21*

Philip is the next to ask a question showing his lack of understanding. To have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father. It has been clear that Jesus and the Father are one throughout the gospel. This has been the basis of the dispute between Jesus and the Jews, and the source of their

accusations of blasphemy. Jesus will do whatever his disciples ask. He will achieve this, as they will achieve *even greater works* because God *will give you another Paraclete to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth.*

*Prayer*

Lord,  
may the Spirit be your gift to me  
that I may know you through Jesus.

## **March 28<sup>th</sup>**

*John 14.22-31*

Jesus says that what he requires of his followers is their love and obedience – the one is evidence of the other. The Holy Spirit will teach them everything and remind them of all that Jesus said. He gives his peace to bring reassurance and freedom from anxiety or fear.

*Prayer*

Father,  
may your Spirit bring me comfort and peace,  
freeing me from fear.

## **March 29<sup>th</sup>**

*John 15.1-17*

The vineyard is a familiar image for Israel in, particularly, Isaiah. Is Jesus, in referring to himself as the *true vine*, suggesting that in him there is a new Israel? If not there is certainly a new relationship with God through Jesus, *whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing.* Again Jesus makes the link between loving him and keeping his commandments.

*Prayer*

Holy Lord,  
may I love with your love,  
and walk in your way.

## **March 30<sup>th</sup>**

*John 15.18-27*

Much of what Jesus is saying now seems to be addressed as much to the Christians who will come after the first disciples as it is to the disciples who sit around the table with Jesus at the Supper. The way that the world relates to us will be determined by the way that it relates to Jesus. The world's reaction will require of us to make a decision about the path along which we will walk.

*Prayer*

Eternal Father,  
help me to choose the right path,  
to follow Jesus.

## **March 31<sup>st</sup>**

*John 16.1-4*

It becomes clear that all that has come before was to prepare the disciples for the future – not specifically Jesus's passion and death but the days and years after those events. They should expect persecution but also they should understand that it is they who know God and that their persecutors are opposed to God.

*Prayer*

Holy God,  
be with all persecuted Christians,  
and keep my faith strong.

## **April 1<sup>st</sup>**

*John 16.5-15*

The Holy Spirit has been a key part of what Jesus has been saying. Here it is stressed that the coming of the Spirit will throw into stark relief what is good and true, not only in the faith of Christians but also in the world around them.

*Prayer*

Father,  
send your Holy Spirit  
to help me discern all that is good and true.

## **April 2<sup>nd</sup> – The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

*John 16.16-28*

Jesus now reassures his disciples by telling them that he will return, although first he must go away. Their sadness and sorrow will be turned to joy. It seems that his return will transform the relationship that we have with God, *When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In all truth I tell you, anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete.*

*Prayer*

Blessed Lord,  
give me the trust to bring my prayers to you  
knowing that you will answer.

## **April 3<sup>rd</sup>**

*John 16.29-33*

The disciples, who have expressed confusion until now, profess their faith in Jesus. Even so *the time will come – indeed it has come already – when you are going to be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone.* Now Jesus encourages them to believe that, even though they will be scattered, *yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* What will happen is God's will.

*Prayer*

Holy Lord,  
give me grace to understand  
that all things are in your hands.

## **April 4<sup>th</sup>**

*John 17.1-8*

The nature of Jesus's words now changes. No longer is he speaking to the disciples but rather praying to his Father. He speaks not of suffering but of glory, *Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you.* This is in contrast to the synoptic gospels. Jesus's death is his glory because it will be God's victory, *and eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

*Prayer*

Father,  
let me see your glory  
in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

## **April 5<sup>th</sup>**

*John 17.9-12*

Jesus prays that God will *keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.* In the context it is a prayer for his disciples, but it feels like a prayer for those who follow as well. While Jesus was with his disciples he kept them true to him, except *one who was destined to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures,* another reference to Judas. Did Judas choose to betray Jesus or was it inevitable?

*Prayer*

Lord God,  
keep me true to your name;  
uphold me in the truth.

## **April 6<sup>th</sup>**

*John 17.13-23*

Jesus prays that his disciples may be protected from the *Evil One* because *they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the*

*world. He prays too for those who will believe through them. His prayer emphasises how we are all one in Jesus, with me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me.*

*Prayer*

Holy Father,  
make us one in Christ  
through the love you have for us.

**April 7<sup>th</sup>**

*John 17.24-26*

The final words of Jesus's prayer make clear again that we do not belong to the world; we belong to God. The love of God makes us one with him through Jesus, *the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.*

*Prayer*

Father in heaven  
may I prepare myself  
for my home in heaven.

**April 8<sup>th</sup>**

*John 18.1-11*

With the long discourse at the Last Supper complete John turns to his passion narrative. His account of the passion as close to the accounts in the other three gospels as he ever gets – but it is, nevertheless, distinctively Johannine. As the guard comes to arrest Jesus it is striking that it is Jesus who is completely in control of the situation, *when Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they moved back and fell on the ground.*

## *Prayer*

Lord God,  
make me faithful  
so that I never betray Jesus by what I do.

## **April 9<sup>th</sup> – Palm Sunday**

*John 18.12-27*

Jesus is taken to the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. Here Peter denies that he knows Jesus as Jesus had predicted (John 13.38), although John makes little of it, stating only the events as they happened. Again it is Jesus who controls the events through his defiant questioning and requiring the guards to justify their behaviour, *if there is some offence in what I said, point it out; but if not, why do you strike me?*

## *Prayer*

Holy Father,  
help me to stand up for Jesus  
even when the world is against me.

## **April 10<sup>th</sup>**

*John 18.28-40*

Jesus is taken to Pilate. John demonstrates that the case brought by the Jews has no merit. When Pilate asks what Jesus is charged with their answer is evasive, *if he were not a criminal, we should not have handed him over to you*. In accepting that reply Pilate shows himself to be weak and fearful. Jesus's fate is already sealed. The discussion about kingship between Jesus and Pilate shows Jesus still controlling events. Although Pilate finds no case against Jesus he lacks the courage to release him.

## *Prayer*

Lord almighty,  
give me grace and courage  
to do the things that are right.

## **April 11<sup>th</sup>**

*John 19.1-11*

After Pilate brings Jesus out in the purple robe and a crown of thorns Jesus refuses to speak until he tells Pilate, *you would have no power over me at all if it had not been given you from above; that is why the man who handed me over to you has the greater guilt.* These are the last words that Jesus speaks until he is on the cross. He knows that his goal is achieved and he will go to be crucified.

*Prayer*

Holy Father,  
give me the will  
to follow Christ and to share his cross.

## **April 12<sup>th</sup>**

*John 19.12-22*

The final decision revolves around Jesus's alleged kingship. The Jews because they cannot tolerate him claiming to be *King of the Jews* and Pilate because he cannot tolerate a challenge to the supremacy of Caesar. All of this is reflected in the words on the cross, *Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews* – so perish all who challenge Caesar's rule.

*Prayer*

Holy God,  
may I accept the kingship of Jesus  
and his rule in my life.

## **April 13<sup>th</sup>**

*John 19.23-30*

As Jesus hangs on the cross the guards divide his clothing, Jesus gives his mother and the disciple whom he loved to one another. And then, taking a drink Jesus dies, *After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'It is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.*

## *Prayer*

Blessed Father,  
may I never forget  
that Jesus died for me.

## **April 14<sup>th</sup> – Good Friday**

*John 19.31- 42*

Jesus is taken down from the cross. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus lay him in a tomb with the traditional spices and seal the tomb. Is John making a point by telling us about two *secret* disciples coming to bury Jesus? Only Joseph is mentioned in the other gospels. Are they the beginning of the new movement that will spread the gospel around the world?

## *Prayer*

Father of Jesus,  
make me his true disciple,  
ready to witness for him.

## **April 15<sup>th</sup>**

*John 20.1-31*

Mary of Magdala finds the tomb empty and encounters a man who reveals himself to be Jesus. Peter and the beloved disciple inspect the empty tomb and Jesus appears to his disciples in the upper room. He appears a second time and Thomas makes an affirmation of faith in Jesus and the resurrection, *My Lord and my God!* The final two verses suggest that this was the original conclusion of the gospel.

## *Prayer*

Father of all,  
help me to know Jesus  
as my Lord and my God.

## April 16<sup>th</sup> – Easter Day

*John 21.1-25*

This chapter may have been added later. It tells the story of another appearance of the risen Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius. Peter, who appears reluctant to come to Jesus, is reconciled. The last two verses are a second conclusion and vouch for the reliability of the witness of the author. It may not have been written by John himself.

### *Prayer*

Lord God,  
reveal the risen Lord to me,  
that I may offer him my worship and praise.



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