

The Upper Culm Valley Mission Community  
The Parishes of Hemyock with Culm Davy, Culmstock and Clayhidon

**17 March 2024**  
**Fifth Sunday of Lent**  
Worship sheet

**‘The time has come’**

The fifth Sunday of Lent is known as ‘Passion Sunday’ because in our readings today we see Jesus start on the last part of his journey to his ‘passion’ or suffering on the cross. The name is derived from the Latin, *passio*, meaning suffering. All through Lent our thoughts have been turning to this culmination of his life’s calling. Today we pay particular attention to God’s timing, both in Jesus’ life and in our own. And as we worship Jesus in awe and wonder at the lengths he was prepared to go to out of love for us, so we receive his challenge – and invitation – to walk with him in living his Way.

**The Collect for this Sunday**

Gracious Father,  
you gave up your Son out of love for the world.  
Lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,  
that we may know eternal peace  
through the shedding of our Saviour’s blood,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Bible reading: John 12:20-33 (NRSVA)**

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we would like to see Jesus.’ Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

‘Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—“Father, save me from this hour”? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to him.’ Jesus answered, ‘This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

*Here is love, vast as the ocean,  
loving kindness as the flood,  
when the Prince of Life, our ransom,  
shed for us his precious blood.  
Who his love will not remember?  
Who can cease to sing his praise?  
He can never be forgotten,  
throughout heaven’s eternal days.*

*William Rees (1802-1883)*

**God’s timing**

*A reflection by Revd Becky Totterdell*

If you read John’s Gospel straight through, you will become aware of a clock ticking. The whole Gospel is a countdown to Jesus’s death, and every so often John looks at the clock and notes how time is progressing. The ticking clock is the constant reference to ‘my hour’ or ‘the hour’. Time and again we read that Jesus’ ‘hour’ had not yet come.

Then suddenly, in our verses this morning Jesus says, ‘the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.’ Then follow all the events of the Passover meal, his betrayal, trial, and crucifixion, until we hear those final words from the cross: ‘It is finished.’

So, what makes Jesus aware that the hour has now arrived?

**‘We would like to see Jesus.’**

It was a group of Greek pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. They were clearly ‘God fearers’, worshipping the God of Israel, and had heard a lot about Jesus. They really wanted to meet him. ‘See’ in John’s Gospel is used figuratively just as much as literally, meaning understand,

comprehend, ‘the penny drops’; people ‘get it’. And Jesus takes their request in this sense: they want to understand who he is, they want to know him truly.

The clock stops ticking. Jesus knows this request signals that his hour has come, because they will only truly know who he is once they see him raised up on the cross to die, and then raised up to new life on the third day, having borne in his own person the sins of the whole world. This is the tremendous fruit that would come of his death – like a grain of wheat it will look as if he is consigned to oblivion in the earth. Yet that very process is the means by which his life will bear fruit.

### **Called to bring glory to God**

But - when Jesus comes to the point that the whole of his life has been leading up to, he struggles with it: ‘Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father save me from this hour?” No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’

We see a very human Jesus full of horror at the thought of what lay just around the corner: death by crucifixion. The ‘glory’ he speaks of is a double-edged thing. What brings glory both to Jesus and to God the Father is Jesus’ costly love which leads him to such suffering, and his subsequent triumphant resurrection to the place of highest honour in the universe. This is the Jesus that the Greeks will see: only the one prepared to give up his life for the world is the One who will be raised up as Lord of it. And the One who will one day be seen as the Lord of all is none other than the one who has suffered all for it.

We all recoil from suffering. In illness, in difficulties, in family problems, we can be really afraid of what’s going to happen to us. Jesus understands. Yet despite his real dread, Jesus doesn’t ask to be rescued from ‘this hour’. Why not? Because, more than anything, he wants to live life in a way that honours God and fulfils his will.

The question, ‘Why am I here?’ presents itself time and again to us, particularly at perplexing times of life. The Westminster Shorter Catechism sums up our calling so well when it gives this answer: ‘Our chief purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.’

Jesus’ calling was unique, but we have very wide scope for how we might bring glory to God, whether actively in what we do, or more passively as we

commit our life journey to the Lord, or deal patiently with adverse circumstances. Peter Cotterell, a former Principal of London Bible College, was a missionary in Ethiopia for many years. He tells the story of a group of new Christians who were thrown into prison immediately after they were baptised. Finding themselves there they prayed, ‘God, we’re new to this faith. We need someone to teach us.’ A few days later, a church pastor was put in prison with them. Their prayer was answered! Now, that pastor wouldn’t have prayed, ‘Lord, I think it would be really good if I had a little spell in prison. Perhaps you could arrange that for me?’ But he’d asked for God’s will to be done in his life, and meant it. And being alert to the ways of God, when he found himself in prison with these new converts he recognised that this was God’s timing and God’s calling.

When Joan of Arc knew how strong her enemies were and how short her time was, she prayed, ‘God, I shall only last a year; use me as you can.’

Where has God placed you? What are your circumstances? Who are the people you have contact with? What are the issues that concern you and compel you to pray? The Lord is in that situation with you. He calls us to bring glory to God wherever we are. But in order to do that we ourselves, like those Greek pilgrims, need first to give ourselves the time to come and sit at his feet and let him heal and nourish us as we gradually realise the depth of his love for us. Then we can ask him to let that love of his show through us for others.

From heaven you came, helpless babe,  
entered our world, your glory veiled,  
not to be served but to serve,  
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
he calls us now to follow him,  
to bring our lives as a daily offering  
of worship to the Servant King.*

*(Graham Kendrick)*

### **A prayer**

O Lord, we ask that you will foster in us as individuals and in our nations the spirit of loving and powerful service. Give to our leaders a vision of peace and reconciliation, wisdom to know your will, regard for your laws, and respect for human rights, that they may seek to lead all people in the paths of truth, freedom and peace, for the glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.