



Opening Responses

As the day draws into its close,
we gather to watch and to pray.

Open our hearts and ready our lips, O God,
and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

Our help is in the name of the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

Space for Silent Reflection on the Past Day

Prayers of Renewal

Jesus told his disciples that if they wanted to follow him,
they needed to deny themselves, and take up their crosses.

God calls us into that same movement
of dying to sin and rising again with Christ.

In this quiet space for reflection,
let us bring to God those things in need of renewal:

We bring to you those things for which we are sorry:
Restore us and heal us.

We bring to you the times we've failed to love one another:
Restore us and heal us.

We bring to you the burdens we carry and sorrows we bear:
Restore us and heal us.

We bring to you the injustices and oppression in our world:
Restore us and heal us.

We bring to you the failings and disunity of your Church:
Restore us and heal us.

God of our journeys and false starts and new beginnings,
you walk with us all of our days,
and nothing in life or death or all creation
can separate us from your love in Jesus Christ.

Thank you that you forgive us our faults and mistakes,
share with us in our worries and struggles,
and lead us onwards into fullness of life.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus.
Amen

An Evening Hymn

Before the ending of the day,
Creator of the world, we pray
That with thy wonted favour thou
Wouldst be our guard and keeper now.

From all ill dreams defend our eyes
From nightly fears and fantasies;
Tread underfoot our ghostly foe
That no pollution we may know.

O Father, that we ask be done
Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son
Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,
doth live and reign eternally.
Amen

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 36:5 – 11

At the end of the psalm, the following is said:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever.
Amen

Reading Matthew 21:12 – 17

Reflection

Matthew's Gospel was the second to be written, and it clearly draws upon the earlier narrative of Mark's Gospel. However, there are also some differences, not least the ordering of the events of Holy Week. For Mark, Jesus's overturning of the tables in the Jerusalem Temple occurred on the Monday, whereas in Matthew's account, it happens immediately after his triumphal entry into the city. The switch of time functions to link his bringing the religious life of the establishment to a halt with the dramatic and symbolic events of Palm Sunday, which saw Jesus hailed as Messiah by the crowds. The prophet Zechariah spoke of the 'Son of David' as descending from the Mount of Olives, heading to the Temple upon the back of a donkey, and inaugurating the new creation. Jesus was following this blueprint, and his actions in the seat of Israel's political and religious powerbase reflect a deep passion for God's justice. Healing sick people who came to him was one part of this (21:14), but the key to understanding his overturning of the tables lies in the extract from Jeremiah quoted in 21:13, which points to the Temple as having become a 'den of robbers'.

In Jeremiah 7, God tells the prophet to stand in the Temple and take to task those worshipping there, because they were acting as though worship alone was enough and justice didn't matter. The vulnerable

were being oppressed, innocent blood was being shed, and idolatry was harming the people. Against this backdrop, the Temple was the place where those benefitting from this exploitation took refuge – its sanctuary was being used, and it had become a hideout for robbers, a den of robbers (Jeremiah 7:11). Making this accusation led to the prophet being threatened with execution by the religious authorities, but he was saved from death because the whole crowd agreed with him (Jeremiah 16:24), and they backed down.

The experience of Jeremiah serves to frame the prophetic action of Jesus in the Temple, not least in how he'd enraged the Chief Priests and Scribes but drawn in the crowd, who proclaimed him once again as the Messiah (21:15). Moreover, this background reveals that his concern was not with the provision necessary to enable the sacrifice of doves and other offerings, but with the injustice present in Israel's national life and given false theological legitimacy by those who said they spoke for God. Thus, stopping the normal business of the place by overturning the money changing tables and driving its traders out (21:12) was a symbolic shut-down in protest at these injustices. The establishment would attempt to strike back by questioning the basis upon which Jesus was acting (21:23), and we will explore this in the coming days. However, the ordinary people continued to regard him as a prophet and effectively to protect him from arrest (21:46). From their reaction, the call to justice enacted by Jesus had a real impact, and resonated deeply with them.

So, today's passage poses a question: are our churches places that pursue and enact justice, or have we too become 'sucked into' what is effectively a pattern of empty worship making our sanctuaries into retreats for robbers? If Jesus were to drop in during this Holy Week, would he overturn our tables? Amen

Responding to the Word

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

I commend my spirit.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Keep me as the apple of your eye.

Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

Canticle – The Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;
A light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever.**

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

The following Collect is said at the end of the intercessions:

Almighty God,
as we stand at the foot of the cross of your Son,
help us to see and know your love for us,
so that in humility, love and joy
we may place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

A Prayer of Journeying On

As you journey onwards in God's love,
towards the foot of the cross of Christ,
may you step forward boldly and act justly,
so that through you, all may know that they matter.
And the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you, and all whom you love and pray for,
now and for ever.

Amen