

# WHEATHILL PRIORY BENEFICE

*“Jesus Lives: Follow Him”*

*2 April 2021 Good Friday*

Welcome to this service for Good Friday. Our worship today is led by Jane Durham and Jane Sedgman from Wheathill Benefice in Somerset, filming in Kingweston Church. It recalls Jesus passion and death on the cross and leads us to reflect on the themes that the cross evokes in us. Today, we use the last three words of Christ recorded in John’s Gospel for our reflection and prayer.

## **Opening Responses**

In the shadow of our suffering **is the suffering of Jesus.**

In the shadow of our weakness **is the vulnerability of the Christ.**

In the Shadow of our pain **is the God who cried out.**

We are never rejected **we are never abandoned.**

We hear our first reading is John 19:16-25

***Here is your son: Discerning interdependence, Creating new communities of care when others have been lost***

The first of our words from the cross are the words Jesus speaks to his mother and his beloved disciple John

John 19:25-27

This word from the cross shows us Jesus very human heart and his care for his mother and the beloved disciple John. These two have come with him all the way, even to the foot of the cross, their grief has brought them together and Jesus asks them to care for one another when he is dead. ‘Woman, here is your son; Son, here is your mother.’ In the face of his own

death Jesus is creating new bonds of family and relationship, new levels of interdependence.

From a place of pain, it is Jesus who is seeking to protect and care for his loved ones, to help them to know that they each have a purpose and a responsibility to each other after his death. It echoes his love's work, of bringing isolated and unloved people together in new communities of care. 'look after my mum' is a very human response to an appalling situation.

These new relationships are based not upon ties of blood and family, but are creating a new family of choice. A community project can see volunteers coming together some very lonely, some with disabilities yet each so much to give. A common endeavour and strong sense of belonging can be like family, creating a basic building block for repairing communities. When so much is fractured and broken, Jesus longs for us to belong together in intentional communities of love.

We take into silence:

memories of our own loss, grief, aloneness.....

A picture of our own circle of friends and family.....

The challenge of where we are being called into new community.....

Be strong, and let your heart take courage **all you who wait for the Lord**

Lord Jesus, you draw us into new patterns of relationship and care. You help us to rebuild our broken communities through your generous, inclusive love. Help us now to open our hearts and our homes to find new ways to belong together within the promise of your kingdom. **Amen**

**I am Thirsty *Our real needs, Being able to receive from others***

We come to our second word from the cross, as Jesus cries out in pain and need.

John 19:28-29

This word from the cross speaks of real human need, the most basic need of all. In the heat of the sun and wracked by pain, Jesus cries out 'I thirst', 'I thirsty, give me a drink. He who is the living water, bubbling up for others to find life, he is thirsty – and these words express that need.

Jesus lived a life of generous giving, he poured himself out for others, But he was not afraid to name and know his own real needs. He was not afraid to ask for help. In this cry from the cross, 'I am thirsty', we see his willingness to receive, and to be needy.

In a world of competence, which prizes strength and ability and self-reliance, these words can encourage us to acknowledge our own real needs. It is sometimes hard for us to recognise what we really need. There are so many things that we think we want in life, consumer products to pamper and comfort us, luxuries to build up our self-esteem, so many inessentials that crowd in on us. All these diversions camouflage our real needs and leave us diminished or dissatisfied.

It takes a certain level of humility to receive from others, and we don't find it easy. It is important to learn how to give and receive with good grace.

We take into the silence –  
Our own dryness and thirst....  
Our own deepest need....  
An openness to receive.....

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, **all you who wait for the Lord**

Gracious God

You know our deepest needs, help us to hear them too. Amid the clamouring voices of want and desire, we thirst for your unconditional love, help us to receive you now. Amen

***It is finished Honest endings; recognising death and what has been accomplished***

In our final word from the cross Jesus knows that the end is near and calls out

John 19:30

The last word from the cross in St John's Gospel: 'It is finished'. The horror is over, it is accomplished, the work is done. In the eyes of the world, this is the moment of absolute failure, but in the purposes of God, this is the consummation of an act of unconditional love for the world. These words don't imply a defeated sense of relief that Jesus suffering is over, his life is ending. The Greek word is a word with a strong triumphant ring, 'it is accomplished'. 'It is complete'.

In hospital, where Doctors fight for every moment of life for a patient death can easily be seen as a failure. Hospices have reminded us of the possibility of a 'good death', of sometimes being able to let go into the ultimate healing of heaven. We sometimes speak of winning or losing the battle against illness. The real accomplishment may be the willing acceptance of the disintegration, letting go into death, to find deeper integration into the depths of God's love.

For Jesus, there is a recognition in the words 'It is finished' that death comes as the completion of a life lived to the full offered for others. And as we understand this more fully, perhaps it even helps us to face our own death without fear. We may even ultimately be able to see death as a friend

leading us home as St Francis does in his 'Canticle of the Sun': 'And though most kind and gentle death, waiting to hush our latest breath, thou ledest home the child of God, and Christ himself that way has trod'.

We take into the silence:

Our own sense of mortality.....

Our own accomplishments.....

An openness to what lies beyond the horizon.....

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, **all you who wait for the Lord**

Gracious God,

Accomplish in us your purposes, complete in us your work of exhaling love, that though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we may find you one step ahead of us, leading us home Amen

Our final reading comes from John 19:31-42

Let us pray

Lord Christ,

On the cross, on the nails, you loved beyond reason and forgave beyond measure.

On the cross, on the nails, you gave the forces of evil their notice to quit.

On the cross, on the nails, you soaked up this world's sadness like a sponge in vinegar.

On the cross, on the nails, you lost – and won – in a single, glorious throw of the dice.

On the cross, on the nails.

In the hands, in the side, you felt the misery of this world's cruelty.

In the hands, in the side, you endured the hammer blows of the world, the flesh and the devil.

In the hands, in the side, you experienced the pain of tortured, disfigured humanity.

In the hands, in the side, you lost the power to live, and won the right to glory.

In the hands, in the side.

Through the sweat, through the blood, we see the eternal face of a suffering God.

Through the sweat, through the blood, we glimpse the anguish of the crucified creator.

Through the sweat, through the blood, we begin to believe the impossible is happening.

Through the sweat, through the blood, we begin to know that our God saves to the uttermost – and then beyond.

Through the sweat, through the blood.

In the darkness, in the darkness

All our prayers have died, save this:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

*Pause*

Gracious God, your hands now bear the wounds, your heart now holds the agony of that appalling cross. Hold us in your everlasting arms as we face the little deaths of daily life and the great mystery of our own mortality.

May we find you there beside us, light in our darkest night. Amen

Standing at the foot of the cross we pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever Amen.**

Thank you for joining us in worship today, please do join us on Easter Day, outside in Lydford at 10:30am or here on YouTube at the same time.

We conclude this service with our final song 'The wonder of the Cross '

Service taken from: *Apprentices and Eyewitnesses* by Chris Thorpe  
Canterbury Press 2019

Prayers: *The Intercessions Handbook* by John Pritchard SPCK 1997

