



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 22nd March 2026 Passion Sunday

Prepared by Rev Derek Grimshaw



Call to worship:

Come and meet us here, O Lord,
Help us to notice your presence in our midst,
In this holy time and space, and in every moment of our lives.
Come, Lord Jesus, by your Spirit we pray,

Hymn 416 There's a wideness in God's mercy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26cyYoBqiQ8>

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of our mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

Opening Prayers

God of love and forgiveness,

We come before you today bringing all of who we are, all of who we have been and all of who we will be.

We bring our joys, our fears, our pains and our heartbreaks. We also bring all that we have done that we perhaps wish we had not done.

We bring all this to you, Lord, for we know your healing love washes us clean and refreshes us, makes us whole. In you, we are – and have always been – enough.

We ask for your forgiveness, we allow your love to bathe over us and we choose to walk with you as we continue on our journeys this day and always.

Amen.

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Hymn 357 Jesus – the name high over all <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WS86YUTDbQ>

Jesus, the name high over all
In hell or earth or sky
Angels and men before it fall
And devils fear and fly

Jesus, the name to sinners dear
The name to sinners given
It scatters all their guilty fear
And turns their hell to heaven

Jesus, the prisoner's fetters breaks
And bruises Satan's head
Power into strengthless souls it speaks
And life into the dead

O, that the world might taste and see
The riches of His grace
The arms of love that compass me
Would all the world embrace

His only righteousness I show
His saving truth proclaim
Tis all my business here below
To cry "Behold the Lamb"

Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name
Preach Him to all, and cry in death
"Behold, behold the Lamb"

Gospel Reading John 11: 1-45

Hymn 421 Empty, broken here I stand *Kyrie eleison*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdI3F5N_Wdc

Empty broken here I stand, *Kyrie eleison*,
Touch me with Your healing hand, *Kyrie eleison*,
Take my arrogance and pride, *Kyrie eleison*,
wash me in Your mercy's tide, *Kyrie eleison*.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,

You're the voice that calms my fears, *Kyrie eleison*,
You're the laughter dries my tears, *Kyrie eleison*,
You're the music, my refrain, *Kyrie eleison*,
Help me sing your song again, *Kyrie eleison*.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,

When my faith is all but gone, *Kyrie eleison*,
Give me strength to carry on, *Kyrie eleison*,
when my dreams have turned to dust, *Kyrie eleison*,
In You O Lord I put my trust, *Kyrie eleison*.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,

Humble heart of holiness, *Kyrie eleison*,
Kiss me with Your tenderness, *Kyrie eleison*,
Jesus, faithful Friend and true, *Kyrie eleison*,
All I am I give to You, *Kyrie eleison*.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,

When my heart is cold as ice, *Kyrie eleison*,
Your love speaks of sacrifice, *Kyrie eleison*,
Love that sets the captives free, *Kyrie eleison*,
O pour compassion down on me, *Kyrie eleison*.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,

Reflection

In a week where the war rages in the middle East, when the continuing story about the sex offender Jeffrey Epstein continues to unravel and people in positions of power appear to have been involved with the man, when our political systems in the country seem to be unravelling and we have recently marked the 30th anniversary of the Dunblane massacre when 43 year old Thomas Hamilton killed 16 children and their teacher and injured a further 15 children I stop for a moment and reflect on how the actions of a few people can ripple out and affect many others. We tend to hear of the despicable actions of some and the damage they cause, yet as we look at our extremely lengthy Bible reading today, we see how the extremely positive actions of Jesus cause hatred and anger and play a significant part in the horrors of the Easter story.

I would like to suggest that during the season of Lent we should consider carefully our actions. Jesus appears to be good friends with the sisters Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus and when Lazarus is seriously ill, the sisters do the only thing they can think of doing and send a message to Jesus. The actions of Jesus seem quite strange because rather than hearing that his friend is ill and close to death, Jesus doesn't appear to be unduly bothered and lingers where he is for a couple of days.

- Maybe it was important that Lazarus was dead for Jesus to perform his most incredible miracle of all.
- I wonder how often we get our priorities wrong and are not where we need to be at a given time?

Jesus arrives at the tomb four days too late; Martha goes out to meet him and tells him not to bother coming, he is too late. Yet even in this most horrendous of situations, Martha still has faith. If Jesus had been there, Lazarus might not have died, and even though he had died, Martha still retains her faith that Jesus can resolve the situation.

- I wonder what Martha thought that Jesus would do at this late stage when all appeared to be lost?
- With the passage of time, do we get impatient and give up on God?

The story tells us something of the humility of Jesus, we often think of him as being some kind of other worldly deity that is lacking human emotions, we can imagine the pain we might feel if somebody drove nails through our hands and feet, but maybe we feel that that because Jesus is God incarnate that he doesn't feel the pain in the same way that we do. There are times when I found that people have said things to me that they would never dream of saying to somebody else, because I am a minister and don't feel the cutting comments. Jesus weeps when he stands at the tomb with Martha and Mary.

- The gathered crowd seemed to expect something from Jesus and maybe as he stood weeping, they thought that they were witnessing the failure of Jesus.
- How often do we feel that others have failed, either us, or other people and have fallen short of our expectations.

The punchline of the story is that Jesus gets the crowd to roll away the stone and then calls Lazarus to come out of the sealed tomb. Lazarus was bound by the strips of cloth wrapped around his dead body. He had been bound by the stone at the entrance of the tomb, and he had been bound by death itself. Now, in full view of the gathered crowd, this dead man was raised to life and Lazarus was free.

- I wonder what Martha and Mary expected of Jesus. I doubt very much that they expected their brother to be raised to life.
- I wonder what we expect of God when we come to him in prayer, are we ready for God to change the world in response to prayer?

Prayers of intercession

God of life and death we bring our prayers in this season of Lent in the name of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, the living one who was dead but is alive for evermore.

We bring ourselves in prayer - our joys and sorrows, our triumphs and losses, our laughter and lament...

As we open our hearts before you, we pray for grace, for courage, for healing, for peace...

We bring our families and friends in prayer - all we know who are sick or in pain, who are anxious or depressed, weary or despairing...

As we hold them before you, we pray for grace, for courage, for healing, for peace...

We bring all who are facing death in prayer - those we know and those unknown to us in hospitals, care homes, situations of war and violence, praying too for those who support them...

As we hold them before you, we pray for grace, for courage, for healing, for peace...

We bring our church in prayer - this congregation and other congregations in our circuit or ecumenical friends...

As we hold them before you, we pray for grace, for courage, for healing, for peace...

We bring our nation in prayer - the government, the health system, the education system, local leaders...

As we hold them before you, we pray for grace, for courage, for healing, for peace...

We bring our world in prayer - leaders of nations, people experiencing oppression and discrimination, all who work for peace and justice...

As we hold them before you, we pray for grace, for courage, for healing, for peace...

God of life and death we bring our prayers in this season of Lent in the name of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, the living one who was dead but is alive for evermore. Amen.

Hymn 345 And can it be

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dC8HSEKtuio>

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,

And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Closing prayer.

Until that moment, Until we cast our crowns before God,
Lost in wonder, love and praise,
Until then, there is much work for us to do, in service of the Kingdom of grace,
Go out and serve the Lord, Amen.