

Journeying Together

Fifth Week of Lent: Wherever I am, my servant will be



Welcome everyone and allow them time to “arrive” after busy days.

OPENING RESPONSES

Reader: We gather in the name of the Father

**All: Who entrusted the salvation of the world
to his own beloved Son –
to live,
to love,
to give his all for humanity.**

Reader: We gather in the name of the Son

**All: Whose life drew people to him
and whose death would draw even more.**

Reader: We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit

**All: Who continually brings forth new life –
enabling our lives to bear the fruits of the Kingdom
continuing the mission of the One who calls us as his disciples and friends.**

Reader: We gather...

**All: (making the Sign of the Cross) in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

GOSPEL READING – John 12: 20-33

Use these or your own words.

Please listen as the Gospel is read. It can help to close your eyes—or look at the person reading—or the image on the screen – whichever suits you best.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, ‘*Sir, we should like to see Jesus.*’ Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

‘Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.

Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’

A voice came from heaven, ‘*I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.*’ People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, ‘*It was an angel speaking to him.*’ Jesus answered, ‘*It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours. Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself.*’

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

PERSONAL TIME WITH THE GOSPEL

Use these or your own words to take people into a time of personal reflection with the Gospel:

Jesus’ teaching and miracles are attracting the attention of people coming from different backgrounds – today, some Greeks approach Philip and Andrew and want to speak to Jesus. Jesus’ words to them are not simple or easy to understand. By this stage in John’s Gospel, Jesus is increasingly aware of the death that awaits him – and trusts that, like the grain of wheat, his death will lead to an abundance of life for others. His human side is afraid but he remains convinced that his death will attract even more people to him and his teaching than his life has.

Jesus knows that the people who follow him will be crucial to this. He will be gone from the world in physical form but will be present in and through those who love and serve him. As he says of those early disciples, “Where I am, there my servant will be” – but, for us, it might also be the other way round, where we are, there our Lord will be. This is profoundly reassuring and encouraging. For his disciples – us – know that we do a certain amount in our own strength but it is God’s love and Spirit that takes it to a whole new level.

Think about the Gospel using these prompts to help your reflection:

- What does the death of a grain of wheat leading to a great harvest mean to me?
- How does Jesus draw people to himself in our own day?
- How do I feel Jesus with me in my everyday life?

GROUP REFLECTION

We are here as followers of Jesus Christ – proof that Jesus’ words about the grain of wheat dying and producing a great harvest came true. It is a reminder that, sometimes, things in our own lives feel as if they are dying but from their death, new growth becomes possible. A key element for us is the belief that Jesus is with us through and in it all – that he will lead us through these little deaths to the new life that they make possible.

Here are some thoughts to help you to reflect together on the Gospel.

- When have we experienced times when things have died but then seen something new and vigorous grow in their place?
- How do we as Jesus’ disciples help to draw people to him – by our own lives and actions?

Depending on the size of the group, you might invite people to share any thoughts from their group discussion.

LISTENING TOGETHER

Here are some thoughts drawn from the Gospel. As you listen or read them, make a note of any that strike you – either because they open up a new idea – or because they challenge you – or... any other reason!

- Jesus attracts people who do not belong to the mainstream of Jewish faith – people who are on the fringes.
- Jesus’ disciples, Philip and Andrew, played an important part in bringing people to Jesus – which is our call too.
- Jesus was afraid of death but sensed that it would lead to even greater life for the world.
- Jesus’ death would be horrific but glorious – how can that be?
- Where Jesus is, there his servants are ... where is Jesus and what does that promise for us?
- Where we are, Jesus is also – in our families, among our friends, in workplaces, shopping centres... wherever we are, Jesus is also.
- Jesus is coming to the fulfilment of his mission on earth – but senses that it is a beginning not an ending.

Give time for people to read through the thoughts and to gather their own reflections. Depending on the size of your group, you might do this as one group or divide people into threes or fours. Invite people to share anything from the Gospel reflection or ‘Listening Together’ thoughts that has struck them using the timers if you have them. Remind people about confidentiality – about not interrupting but listening deeply – and to treat this as time of grace on Holy Ground. Again use very quiet music in the background if this feels helpful.

People might like to share on:

- When have I experienced something dying and new life coming from it?
- What difference does knowing that Jesus is in things with me make to how I live?
- How does Jesus’ anxiety about his death help me when I think about mine?

REFLECTION AND ACTION POINT FOR THE WEEK

Spend a couple of minutes inviting people to share updates on how they got on with their action points last week.

In your journal this week, you are invited to think about what has struck you in today’s Gospel. You may find that the idea of grains of wheat dying and bearing a rich harvest as something to reflect on further. Or Jesus facing the fear of dying but knowing that new life lies beyond it. Or Jesus’ assertion that where he is his servants will be – and vice versa. Note down any thoughts or insights.

As we approach the end of Lent, you might like to look back over your journal – what you have written – drawn – or otherwise recorded. See whether any patterns are emerging – or whether things you noted a few weeks ago seem to have something to say to you now.

CLOSING PRAYER

All: A pure heart create for me, O God.

Reader: Have mercy on me, God in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.

All: A pure heart create for me, O God.

Reader: A pure heart create for me, O God,
Put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

All: A pure heart create for me, O God.

Reader: Give me again the joy of your help;
With a spirit of fervour sustain me,
That I may teach transgressors your ways
and sinners may return to you.

All: A pure heart create for me, O God.

Amen.