

It is a strange name for the day in which we remember the most awful events for Jesus - Good Friday.

Jesus has spent time with His disciples, praying for them – wonderful prayers of promise for all who will follow Him – (please read this in Chapter 17 of John's Gospel) and then He goes out with them for walk in a garden – a place of peace and contemplation.

Then the day goes wild – betrayal by Judas and arrest by the Romans – interrogation by the high religious authorities – accusations of blasphemy – betrayal three times by Peter, his closest friend – mockery and abandonment by Pilate – rejection by the crowds – Crucify Him!

Stripping, scourging, beating, whipping – stumbling under a heavy wooden cross.

Hammering, nailing, hanging, pain and weakness, shortage of breath, agony, forgiving, dying.

Good Friday? Jesus turns the ways of the world upside down. Jesus turns this day of suffering and death into the ultimate beacon of life and hope. This day through which he staggered and died, is actually the day through which he conquered and lives. His plan of self sacrifice, His father's plan of recovery and forgiveness for us all,

Now we know that in our darkest times, there is a beacon of light, and in our worst conditions, when we find it hard to forgive ourselves, we are loved, and wanted and forgiven. We have a life in all its fullness won for us on Good Friday.

I suggest we sit quietly, read the story of that day in John's Gospel Chapters 18 and 19 and give thanks, that for us today, it is indeed "Good Friday"

Catherine has sent us all this lovely message for Easter:

"The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays." — Soren Kierkegaard

Passion Week is something I can personally relate to. I watched my husband over several years succumb to Guillain Barre Syndrome and Motor Neurone Disease, both incurable, attacking John's peripheral and central nervous systems and slowly stripping him of his dignity to be independent, robbing him of movement, swallowing and speech.

All the family could do was care for him and bring comfort in as many ways as we could.

What a blessing that the last words the Consultant who told John his diagnoses were,

"There is nothing on earth can be done." It struck us both at the same time. While Hugh could offer no hope, we knew who could.

For the first time in my life, I knew the end before it happened. I had asked John if he thought God would heal him and he blinked once – meaning no. I asked him if he minded me praying every day for a miracle. Again he blinked once.

Yet the first time I started that prayer, I was reminded of Jesus in Gethsemane praying for the cup to be taken away, yet I loved Jesus so much for adding the codicil, "yet not My will, but Yours be done" and I added that same codicil to my daily prayer and also, "not one extra day for my sake".

How could I pray for John, whom I loved very much, to continue with this humiliation in having everything done for him by his wife or sons. He drew a line with our daughter for her benefit, but she was upset and said there's nothing I don't do looking after horses that I can't do for Dad and I want to help him, but I tried to get her to understand he loves you and you're his wee girl.

7 weeks after his death and I had dealt with most of the business that has to be done – in its own way a huge distraction, it hit me. I sat, then lay on the couch and sobbed from a place I didn't know existed in my body. I went on to tell God, I didn't just love John, I am still in love with him, what do I do with that love?

Now, nearly 22 years after John's death, I am learning what to do with that love and the love I have for Jesus. It's in loving everyone, just like Jesus did. It's in serving God, just like Jesus did, and it's in knowing, that no matter what happens on earth, He's got the whole world in His hands – just like Jesus did, and I'm happy staying here for as long as He wants.

I am happy re-reading the words of Passion Week knowing that all Jesus said and did was to pay my debt and present me faultless one day before our Heavenly Father. No wonder we all love Easter!

Wee silly PS – on our first date, John had booked 3 of the most expensive restaurants in Glasgow – I chose the most expensive one, and we had a lovely time. I told him I was a Christian and he said he would love to believe and I said I'd pray for him.

Next day, I started a dreadful bout of food poisoning, lost half a stone, was off work for nearly 3 weeks and on returning the first day back, found my parents' porch full of daffodils – my favourite flower, and a card saying, Hope these make you feel better, love John. We married 2 and a half months later on the 19th April 1973. The day before Good Friday.

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." — Søren Kierkegaard

Here is a hymn for Good Friday:

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 may live.

There is the garden of tears,
My heavy load He chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn,
“Yet not my will but yours” He said

Come see His hands and His feet,
The scars that speak of sacrifice.
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve,
And in our lives enthrone Him;
Each others needs to prefer,
For it is Christ we are serving.

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

Here is the Prayer from Presbytery for Easter:

Almighty God, Your people live in fear and we look to you for comfort knowing
that You are our salvation in living our lives on earth.

As we approach the Friday that changed the world we are walking with sad
and heavy hearts, not meeting together as usual, but still facing up to our
Saviour’s death and the joy of his resurrection. As we walk with Jesus and
His disciples travelling to Jerusalem where despair and suffering awaits their
Master. Lord in these times of isolation and in some cases grief we can know
that despair and feel that loss; yet we know that you are there for us to rely on
and to feel the love You have for each one of us.

We are grateful for all our nurses and Doctors who are working tirelessly to
beat this disease. For them to work so hard there is a chain of people keeping

the wheels of the NHS turning and also food in our shops. Lord, sustain and strengthen them at this time and when the epidemic lessens let us be more supportive and more caring of one another.

We pray for the people of the world facing this disease irrespective of colour or creed. Countries who have little resources and who struggle to keep their people safe. Our prayers go out to those in refugee camps who have little access to medical help, food and clean water. These situations we bring before you in concern and care for others and with loving hearts.

Our worshippers are scattered and the ministers in Argyll are turning to new ways of keeping us all in their pastoral care and in praying together. We thank them for their endeavours and ask your support of them.

This Easter prayer is full of the sadness of today's situation, but also the promise of the joy of Easter Day, knowing that the Risen Lord is giving us hope for the tomorrows ahead.
Lord hear our prayer.

Amen

The following services are being provided online for local congregations and those who wish to log in from places further afield:

West Kintyre and Gigha – Rev Scott Burton -<https://www.westkintyreandgighachurchofscotland.org/> Worship

The United Church of Bute – Rev Owain Jones - <https://www.unitedchurchofbute.org.uk/>

The Shore Kirk – Rev Janet MacKellar –
<https://sites.google.com/view/theshorekirk/home>
or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/345399762209092/>

Ardchattan lw Coll lw Connel – Rev Willem Bezuidenhout <https://www.ardchattanchurch.org.uk/>

West Cowal – Rev David Mitchell <https://www.westcowalchurches.org.uk>

South Kintyre – Rev Steve Fulcher www.kintyreparishes.org.uk

Netherlorn Churches Worship Team <http://www.netherlornchurches.org.uk/>