

# Man of Sorrows, People of Hope

## Lent 2 2021 (7 March - 3 April)



A man of sorrows who inspired a people of hope...

Jesus meets us in our delight and wonder, our boredom and frustration, our longing and restlessness and in our sorrow and shame. Jesus lived a human life among us and felt the sting of rejection, the heartache of disappointment, and the pierce of loss.

Last month, as Lent began, we looked at [The Parable of Social Distancing](#) — how our current safety measures of ‘social distancing’ can be read as a parable of how we have already been increasingly ‘socially distant’ from one another for years, becoming in many ways disconnected from those around us as we focus on our own individual needs.

Jesus becoming one of us was a phenomenal act of social reconciliation that burst into the normal run of history. Divinity met humanity in a theological, political and cultural kaleidoscope.

Jesus’s life contained sorrow, indignity, oppression, slander, violence and suppression and yet it was also beautiful, daring, loving, inspiring, enriching and vibrant. Christ’s life among us is itself a parable. His life — with all its good, its bad and its ugly mattered and had so much worth. It is a story of darkness and light. Struggle and triumph. In the same way that our lives striving and delighting, laughing and weeping matter and have worth. Jesus’s very life tells us that no matter the cost you can’t put a price on love.

In Jesus’s life, death and resurrection is a fulfilment of a story told again and again through the Bible and human history — of God reaching through the thorns and weeds and branches to tell us we are loved and that we can take hope.

*Each week of the four week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers. This theme runs until Holy Saturday with a new theme commencing on Easter Sunday.*

## A man of sorrows... (7 March)

Jesus speaks with authority in our lives knowing what it is to live life on a human scale. He wasn't disguised as a human, simply appearing as one. Somehow Jesus was *fully* human and vulnerable while somehow still having a divine perspective. His sojourn among us embodied an ongoing divine message that while sorrow comes and night falls, so will our hearts fill again and the sun rise.

Over Lent we will have a series of **Lent Legacy** prompts for action that will be published alongside the daily worship posts each day. They are reproduced below for reference.

1. Isaiah 53: 3-12
  1. **One who knows.** Consider the lengths to which our saviour comes to meet us, to know us. **Lent Legacy: Sit quietly and read Isaiah 53: 3-12 out loud. Pause and reflect on the drama and severity of the words. Read it out loud again. Then say a prayer to God with whatever is on your heart.**
2. Exodus 20: 1-11
  2. **A roadmap from sorrow part 1.** Remember who I am. Remember who you are. Remember to rest. **Lent Legacy: Take some time today to rest.**
3. Exodus 20: 12-17
  3. **A roadmap from sorrow part 2.** These commandments give us a route through the heartbreak inevitable in discordant communities found when intimacy, family, rest, the divine, livelihoods and the value of life break down. **Lent Legacy: Think about the 'alloparents' in your life, the people who were not your parents but who helped raise you and shape who you are. If they are still alive and you are in touch with them consider writing them a note to say you are thinking of them.**
4. Psalm 19
  4. **Honey for sorrow.** In the hurt of life the sweet (and antibacterial) precepts of God bring balm and comfort. **Lent Legacy: Act — To put God's love into action in your life what is something sweet you could do for someone today? Maybe not the first person you think of, cast the net a little wider and see who comes to mind.**
5. John 2: 13-22
  5. **Sorrow of what has become of it.** Imagine stepping into somewhere that's really special to you (perhaps the family home you grew up in, the place you got married, a beautiful hideaway that always brings you back to yourself) and seeing it transformed into a tacky theme park. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — imagine showing Jesus around a place that is meaningful for you. What would you point out to him?**
6. Matthew 26: 36-46
  6. **"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow."** Isolated, lonely, alone — reaching out to God the Father. We have been there. And Jesus has too. **Lent Legacy: Say a prayer for the isolated, the lonely, the alone.**
7. John 14: 1-7
  7. **Take heart.** Jesus knew the sorrow to come and yet took heart in the expansive divine love he was fulfilling. Jesus speaks to our troubled hearts every generation. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — what are the troubles in your heart that you can hand over to Jesus's loving care?**

## Acquainted with grief... (14 March)

Jesus was acquainted with grief but he was on first name terms with feasting and friendship and festivity! Jesus's public ministry that we hear about in the gospels was only a few years and much of that largely consisted of hanging out with people informally — grabbing a bite, telling stories, travelling. He was not aloof, above the crowd, accessible only through intermediaries. His human life was tragically short, but vivid and immediate and immersed in local life and culture. He crossed lines of acceptability and worked across class and gender lines interrupting the way 'things were supposed to go'.

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1. John 2: 1-12
  1. **'Anyone need a top up?'** Why does Jesus's mother make a point of telling him about the wine and why does he rebuff her and yet do something about it anyway... Was this totally 'a thing' that Jesus was known to do? **Lent Legacy: Act — what's something you could do today to 'round up' to be unexpectedly generous to others?**
2. Psalm 107:  
1-22
  2. **A divine interruption.** The mystery of grace can interrupt the path to ruin and despair. **Lent Legacy: What is a song that lifts your spirits? Find a moment today to listen to it, or even play or sing it yourself.**
3. Ephesians 2:  
1-10
  3. **Alive together with Christ.** Miraculously we have an affinity with Jesus through our shared experience of life. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — Think about an everyday thing that Jesus would have experienced on earth — try to enter his first century world.**
4. Psalm 56:  
8-11
  4. **Tears in a bottle.** In the NRSVA translation it says "(you have) put my tears in your bottle" Imagine every tear you cried in frustration, disappointment, fear and despair being acknowledged, recorded, blessed. There's that saying 'If a tree falls in the woods and nobody is there to hear it does it make a sound?' Well if a tears falls down a cheek and no one notices does it count? Yes, yes it does. **Lent Legacy: Symbolic action — take some water and slowly pour it into a bowl, glass or cup. As you watch the water think of the tears you have cried over your life and reflect on the tender love of God who cares for us.**
5. Psalm 126
  5. **Planting tears.** Sometimes our bittersweet tears can be seeds that grow into something wonderful and beautiful to reap. **Lent Legacy: Act — Is there any small step you can take today that could be the start of something new? Ask God to bless your new endeavour.**
6. John 11:  
32-37 (11:  
1-44)
  6. **Jesus's tears.** Jesus knew this wasn't the end of Lazarus's story, that there was a twist coming and yet still he wept. Sometimes it's good to cry. **Lent Legacy: Take a little while simply to 'be' in the presence of God. You don't need to do or say anything, simply take a moment of quiet.**
7. John 16:  
16-22
  7. **Sorrow and joy.** Our lives are lived in little whiles, little whiles of coming and going, rise and fall, presence and absence, distance and reunion. But Jesus says that through pain and difficulty new life can be found. There will be weeping. And then, then there will be rejoicing. **Lent Legacy: Symbolic action — As a time of prayer hold your two hands in front of you — look at your left hand and take a moment to hold the things that sadden you. Look at your right hand and take a moment to hold the things that bring you joy. Then bring your hands together, fingers interlaced, to bring it all before God.**

## The travail... (21 March)

Isaiah 53: 11 in the King James version of the Bible reads: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." That word *travail*, meaning laborious effort, comes from a latin origin referring to a torture implement (*three + stakes*). Travail isn't commonly used in contemporary English but the word 'travel' which we use frequently was originally a Middle English variant of travail and had the same meaning. Imagine if our Sunday newspapers had pulled out 'Travail' supplements and you could go to a 'Travail Agents' to book some arduous effort... It's fruitful to ponder on the links between travails and travels — in either case we find ourselves ending up somewhere new.

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### 1. Isaiah 53: 11

1. **...the travail of his soul...** (as it says in the KJV). Jesus's soul travelled, it went through the darkness and into the light on our behalf. It wasn't instantaneous or automatic, it took effort and love and sacrifice. **Lent Legacy: Choose a Bible verse (it could be Isaiah 53: 11) and make a commitment to read it every morning this week.**

### 2. Jeremiah 31: 31-34

2. **Written on our hearts.** From God's heart to ours. **Lent Legacy: Draw a heart on a piece of paper and write in it the words that represent your relationship with God.**

### 3. Psalm 119: 9-16

3. **Treasuring the words.** What are the cherished words you carry with you that sustain you? **Lent Legacy: Choose a verse from the Bible and over the course of the day have a go at memorising it.**

### 4. Hebrews 5: 5-10

4. **Loud cries and tears.** Through Jesus the Trinity intimately knows what it is to offer vulnerable prayers from the perspective of humanity. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — How can you be a good listener today? Listening to God but also to others around about you?**

### 5. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-9

5. **Overflowing.** As we travel, as we travail, the gift of generosity can burst into our lives. Sometimes when we feel we have nothing left to give we are surprised by grace and find ourselves with a little more. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — How can you surprise others with generosity today?**

### 6. John 12: 27-33

6. **My soul is troubled.** Jesus's life in human form was not devoid of emotion or feeling. As well as his physical health his mental health suffered. **Lent Legacy: Spend five minutes today in silence. You don't need to pray or think about anything specific, just rest. Try to calm your mind and if it wanders gently bring it back to the idea of quiet and silence.**

### 7. Hebrews 9: 11-15

7. **Jesus travelled our road.** Jesus travelled our road, felt our pain, our loneliness and brought about our redemption, our joy and our restoration. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — Imagine going on a walk with Jesus. Where would you take him? What would you show him?**

# Poured out his soul... (28 March, Palm Sunday in to Holy Week)

Each year Holy Week depicts the drama of reality, history, blood and bone all coming together in a cosmic culmination: one soul poured out for all — freely.

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## 1. Psalm 36: 5-9

1. **Taking refuge in the shadow of your wings.** Wings expansive enough for everyone. **Lent Legacy: Draw two wings on a piece of a paper. Inside the wings write the names of those you especially want to feel the comfort of God's presence.**

## 2. Isaiah 42: 1-9

2. **A bruised reed he will not break.** A typical 'man with a plan' barges in trampling over the reeds, making space, clearing the ground. But here we see an alternative approach that works subtly with the surroundings to bring about transformation... **Lent Legacy: What is a transformation you would like to see in wider society? What is something small you could do to help make that change a reality?**

## 3. Psalm 71: 1-14

## 4. John 13: 21-32

3. **Clinging on.** As our own dramas unfold sometimes all we can do is, as we say in Scotland, 'haud on'. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — What are the essential things about God that you haud (hold) on to when you're feeling overwhelmed?**

## 5. 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

4. **"Do quickly what you are going to do."** An electric, nerve jangling moment. **Lent Legacy: Take a few minutes to be mindful of your breath, perhaps breathing slowly in and out. As you do consider the day ahead and think of all the places and situations your breath is going to take you today.**

## 6. Hebrews 4: 14-16

## 7. Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24

5. **Poured, broken.** Remembering, together. **Lent Legacy: Reflect — What have the bread and wine of Communion meant to you in your life?**
6. **Receiving mercy, finding grace.** We can approach Jesus with boldness. He has identified deeply with our sorrow and our hope and through his travail has given us our tomorrow. **Lent Legacy: Pray today for all who suffer, all who have no place to rest or shelter, all who are cast out and alone.**
7. **Holy Saturday the hinge of lamentation on which the world swings.** When all is lost, broken, destroyed, irredeemable and swept away... somehow... by the grace of God finding, mending, healing, redeeming and binding together happens. Gently done by the hands that made the universe. **Lent Legacy: Tomorrow brings the promise of Easter, but there is one more day and night to go. As you look back over Lent this year what have you noticed about yourself or God? Have you learned anything new or reaffirmed anything you felt already? To God be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**