

Good Friday Pilgrimage 2025

Rendcomb
North Cerney
Bagendon
Baunton
Stratton



Our meditations this year centre on the invitation “Come and see”. We will think about various aspects of Christ, finishing with the completion of His work.

In each meditation there will be two read readings. The ones from the Scriptures are drawn from complementary passages, rather than following a complete part of the Holy Week story. In addition, there are sonnets taken from “*Sounding the Seasons*” and “*Parable and Paradox*”, both by Malcolm Guite. Also included for private reflection are thoughts from George MacLeod and Chris Haslam.

As in previous years, there is a selection of contemplative music to accompany the meditations. Do use the music as a foil as you meditate on the texts.

Please join with us in saying the prayers.



The music this year is drawn from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the composers being as follows.

Bach, Johann Sebastian (1685 - 1750). Widely regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time. The selections today are taken from his Passions according to St Matthew and St John.

Bach, Johann Christoph (1642 - 1703), an earlier member of the Bach dynasty, whose music showed strong Lutheran influences.

Du Caurroy, Eustace (1549 - 1609). A composer in the French court. The two pieces come from his “Requiem des Rois de France”.

Tallis, Thomas (1505 - 1585). One of the principal composers of the Tudor period, and the author of a considerable body of church music for both Catholic and Anglican liturgies. He survived the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey, Mary I and Elizabeth I.

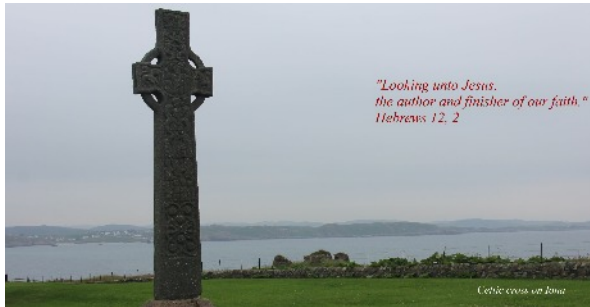
St Peter, Rendcomb

Come and see: The Disfigured King

Scriptures: Isaiah 52, 13 – 15, John 1, 43 – 46, Isaiah 53, 1 – 2

Caurroy: "Agnus Dei"

*Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world
Grant us peace*



Reflection: Dismembering the cross

What has recognisably happened, if the crudity can be forgiven, is that we have dismembered the Cross. Churchmen carry around the vertical beam of Christ, and unconsciously escape the turgid demands of its corollary in horizontal obedience. (Or do we do it consciously when we glimpse the measure of the cost?).

While the world (oh so moral and well meaning!) carries round the horizontal, forever seeking right relations with neighbour or nation, trying to get itself straight without the Bible knowledge about man's condition that humbles, and about the Christ that alone can totally exalt. Because it is not 'engaged', the Faith becomes vacuous. Because it is blind, the world can never glimpse the only way to peace.

It is precisely the conjunction of the vertical and the horizontal that, in every sense, makes the Cross. And it is the Cross alone that can save.

Sonnet: Better to enter life maimed

How much we make of “wellness”, “health” and “wholeness”:
The ideal body, the unblemished form;
How deeply we despise and hide our weakness
And worship all the world thinks strong and firm.
And how each facile, photoshopped appearance
Haunts and accuses children as they grow
Until they pine for their own disappearance
And waste away and never tell their woe.

But you have never fallen for this idol,
You “had no form or beauty”, hurt and shamed,
A stumbling block, a mockery, a scandal,
You lived with the rejected and the maimed.
Don’t count me with the strong and tanned and thin,
Count me with the maimed, but count me in.



Tallis: “Miserere Nostri”

Have mercy on us Lord have mercy on us.

Prayer

Loving Father; You say to me “Come”; help me to come and see how your son, Jesus, was humble and obedient. He fulfilled your will for Him by becoming human and suffering with us and for us. I ask you for the desire to become more humble so that my own life might also bear witness to you. Be merciful to me, break me as you need to so that in this world I can fulfil your purposes and bring you glory. Amen

All Saints, North Cerney

Come and see: The Discerning King

Scriptures: Psalm 139, 1 – 6, John 4, 28 – 29, 42, Jeremiah 12, 3

Bach: “Befiehi du deine Wege”, St Matthew Passion



*Commend your ways
And all that weighs heavy on your heart
To the truest care
Of him who rules the heavens.
He who gives the clouds, air and winds
Their courses, path and orbit
Will also find ways
Where you too can walk*

Reflection: In Christ is yea

You can only find God in the ‘now’. There is an attractive group of Buddhists in Japan who seek to make this point – the Zen Buddhists. They have monasteries to which tired businessmen come to get in touch with God again. The monks have a fascinating way of showing that these men are always in touch with God. Here are some snatches of conversation. ‘Ever since I came here,’ complained a businessman, ‘no one has instructed me in the meaning of reality.’ ‘But,’ said the monk, ‘I’ve been instructing you all the time.’ ‘In what way?’ ‘Well, when you brought me tea, did I not accept it? When you made bows to me, did I not return them? When did I ever neglect to instruct you?’ Seeing the businessman did not understand, the monk said, ‘If you want to see, see directly into it. If you try to think about it, it is altogether missed.’

Another man asked, ‘What is reality?’ The monk replied, ‘Walk on.’ ‘What is realisation?’ asked another. A monk replied, ‘Your everyday thoughts.’ ‘What is the ultimate word of truth?’ asked another. The monk said, ‘Yes.’ Another asked, ‘What are the characteristic features of your school of thought?’ The monk replied, ‘A table, a tray, a chair, a fireplace and a window.’ ‘What is the religious life?’ – ‘In the early morning, good morning: and at night, good night.’ All this is a subtle way of saying where God is contacted. Of saying, ‘God is right now, or not at all.’ Life is right now, or not at all. Of course, we Christians can go further. God is spirit, and no one has seen Him at any time: but we believe Jesus Christ has declared Him.

In Christ we know what life is about: we are to walk on to a goal we know. Our everyday thoughts are what He came to change. But He does so in ordinary life: among the tables and trays and chairs and windows that surround our lives: the innumerable contacts that form our everlasting nows. The one ultimate word of truth is Yes. In Christ is Yea: He has visited and redeemed His people. But the place of His presence is not in the Then but in the Now.



Sonnet: I AM the light of the world

I see your world in light that shines behind me,
Lit by a sun whose rays I cannot see,
The smallest gleam of light still seems to find me,
Or find the child that's hiding deep inside me.
I see your light reflected on the water,
Or kindled suddenly in someone's eyes,
It shimmers through translucent leaves in summer,
Or spills from silver veins in leaden skies.
It gathers in the candles at our vespers,
It concentrates in tiny drops of dew,
At times it sings for joy, at times it whispers,
But all the time it calls me back to you.
I follow you upstream through this dark night
My saviour, source, and spring, my life and light.

Caurroy: Psalm 23
When in the shadow of death
I fear not evil
For thou O Lord art with me

Prayer

Father, you know us better than we know ourselves. Help us not to trust in our own strength or follow our own paths, but to trust in you and walk in your way. May your will be done in us. Make us patient in suffering, obedient in everything, Make us steadfast witnesses of our Saviour's reign, that we may live in the pattern of Christ, who was faithful in all things, even death, and whose darkest hour gives light and hope. Amen.

St Magaret, Bagendon

Come and see: The King of Sorrows

Scriptures: Isaiah 53, 3, Mark 15, 16 – 20, Isaiah 53, 3 – 4
Lamentations 1, 12

Johann Christoph Bach: “Es is nun aus”



*World good night! Take what is yours
And leave me Jesus to be mine.
For I will not abandon my Jesus!
God protect you, my dear ones,
Do not grieve at my death,
For it has brought me much advantage:
My suffering is over, all is accomplished.
World, good night!*

Reflection: Forgiving and forgetting

I was busy. I was writing letters. I was self-important. My little daughter was going to school that morning for the first time. She came into my room, in her first school uniform. I said, ‘Your tie is not quite straight.’ Then I looked at her eyes. She wasn’t crying. She was unutterably disappointed. She hadn’t come for tie inspection. She had come to show she was going to school for the first time. A terrific day, and I had let her down.

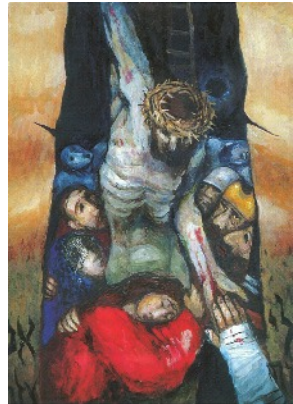
I ran downstairs. I said all the right things. I crossed the road with her. I went to school with her. But I had missed the moment, missed the point. I will always see these eyes. Sometimes when I am very busy. Sometimes when I am writing letters. I am forgiven, but I won’t forget.

If we want to know our forgiveness, we must unfailingly believe that we are forgiven, honest to goodness believe we are forgiven. When we do, we cannot be other than forgiving. The fortune that streams down from the Cross makes rivulets again in the parched earth of our modernity and of our crises, and runs out for the healing of the nations.

Sonnet: So loved the world

The whole world round, in Greek the total *cosmos*,
Is all encompassed in this loving world;
Not just the righteous, right on, and religious
But every one of whom you've ever heard,
And all the throng you don't know or ignore,
For everyone is precious in his sight,
Chosen and cherished, loved, redeemed, before
The circling cosmos ever saw the light.

He set us in the world that we might flourish,
That his beloved world might live through us.
We chose instead that all of this should perish
And turned his every blessing to a curse.
And now he gives himself, as life and light,
That we might choose in him to set things right.



Bach: "O haupt voll Blut und Wunden", St Matthew Passion

*O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.*

*Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee, Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee and flee before Thy glance.
How art thou pale with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy visage languish that once was bright as morn!*

Prayer

Merciful God, help us to come, and see a new vision of your Son; of his suffering and his love for us. Release us from the time of trial and oppression, that we may witness to the eternal hope of grief becoming joy, and life rising from death. Grant us grace to show the love of Christ in all areas of our lives. Amen.

St Mary Magdalene, Baunton

Come and see: The Accomplishing King

Scriptures: Psalm 22, 1 & 14 – 18, Mark 15, 31 - 32, Isaiah 53, 5,
Mark 15, 38 - 39, John 20, 29

Bach: "In meines Herzens Grunde", St John Passion

*May your name and cross alone be written on my heart;
Shining there always to make me rejoice.
When I am in need, console me
With the picture of you so patiently enduring death.*

Reflective poem: Night prayer by Chris Haslam

The village church
I loved in my youth
still draws me back,
not least at Easter,
the great Paschal Festival of Light.

It's darkened now
the night of Maundy Thursday,
congregation gone in silence
like the disciples in Gethsemane,
so just a few remain,
as then.

Words hold the silence,
yet the silence endures
without
after
and beyond them,
a silence of black, green and red...

till
three trees on the skyline
blot out other colour
and
slowly
loom
into
view...



Sonnet: Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross

See, as they strip the robe from off his back
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,
And love is firmly fastened on to loss.
But here a pure change happens. On this tree
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free,
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height,
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true,
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light,
We see what love can bear and be and do.
And here our Saviour calls us to his side,
His love is free, his arms are open wide.



Bach: "Es ist vollbracht!", St John Passion

*It is accomplished
What comfort for suffering human souls
I can see
The end of the night of sorrow.*

Prayer

Christ our God, your love poured out in death has closed hell and opened heaven for us. Hold us in your embrace; comfort us with the promise that no power on earth, not even death itself, can separate us from your love; and strengthen us to wait until you are revealed to us in all your risen glory. We thank you for what you have done for us. Amen.

St Peter, Stratton

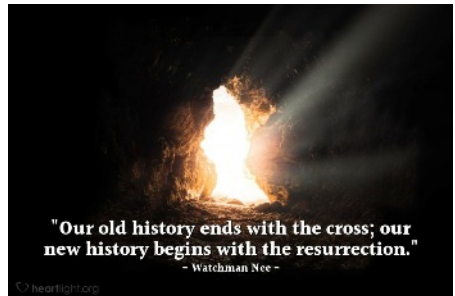
Come and see: Completion

Scriptures: Isaiah 53, 6 & 10 – 11, John 14, 9 – 11, Psalm 66, 5,
John 3, 16 – 17, Revelation 22, 17

Bach: “Ach grosser Konig”, St John Passion

*O mighty king, great for ever,
how can I ever express my allegiance
No human heart can think
Of a gift fit to offer you.*

*Nor can I find anything to compare
With your merciful goodness.
What then can I do to be worthy
Of your loving deeds?*



Reflection: The cross

I simply argue that the Cross be raised again at the centre of the market place as well as on the steeple of the church.

I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap; at a crossroad so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek (or shall we say in English, in Bantu and in Afrikaans?) at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble.

Because that is where He died. And that is what He died about.

Sonnet: Easter dawn

He blesses every love that weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus through her tears,
Or recognize the Gardener standing there.
She hardly hears his gentle question, 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply,
'They took my love away, my day is night.'
And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

*Tallis: "If ye love me,
keep my commandments"*



Prayer

O God our Father in heaven; you are the one who set the universe in place; you are the one who called us into being; you are the one whose love for us was so great that you sent your only begotten Son to die for us. Even when we wander, you still love us and call us back. And as our Father in Heaven we know that we do not pray alone; we are not left alone; we do not struggle alone. We know that in you we have one who cares for us and has the power to help us. Help us now to become more like your Son, showing your great love to all through our lives. Amen.

The Blessing

*Thank you for joining us on the Good Friday Pilgrimage
Do stay and enjoy some refreshments*