

Quiet Time Service – Wednesday 12th January 2022

Good evening, and a warm welcome to our evening time of reflection which is coming to you from Orchardhill Parish Church in Giffnock. Whether you're near or far, a regular or first-time attender we are joined together not only by technology but by the Spirit of the Risen Lord!

This evening we are going to try and think what it must have been like for Mary, mother of Jesus. Of course, we can never fully know, but whatever else, during her lifetime Mary must have experienced as few others the full gamut of human emotions – from indescribable joy to inexpressible sorrow. Hers was the experience of bearing god's son, but also the horror of watching him die. For Mary life must have been like a roller coaster – up one minute and down the next. How did she cope with it all? How did she begin to make sense off all she went through? What did Jesus mean to her? This evening we think about these questions, not because we can give definite answers, but because asking them, we also ask “What does Jesus mean to us today?”

Let us pray together:

Lord Jesus Christ,

Of all the things we could ask of you, most of all we would ask to know you better – not simply to know of you, or about you, but to know you as a friend, as someone real and important in our lives.

And probably there is no one who knew you better than Mary, your mother – the woman who bore you in her womb, who cared for you as a child, who watched you grow up into maturity.

Lord Jesus Christ,

There are surely few people who could have loved you more than Mary – few who would have rejoiced more at your birth , or grieved more at your death.

Help us this evening to imagine what she must have felt as she watched you grow, as she watched you live, as she watched you die, and help us through picturing that to understand what you meant to her, and what you can mean to us.

Amen.

Let's hear now the reading from Luke Chapter 2, verses 33 to 35:

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

And from John Chapter 19, verses 25 to 27:

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, ^b here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

A reflection from Mary:

What was it that Simeon said – "a sword will pierce your soul"?

I spent so long wondering what that meant, tossing and turning on my bed, brooding and fretting when I had a moment to myself.

It seemed such a strange thing to say, especially at what was meant to be a time of joy.

We'd only had Jesus a few days, and my heart was still bursting with happiness. We were both over the moon, Simeon too, that's the odd thing – he was almost dancing with delight.

But then his expression clouded, and he gave that awful warning which has haunted me ever since. I just haven't been able to forget it, try as I might.

Always the question has been there, nagging away at the back of my mind, even in the brightest moments: what did he mean?

And if you'd asked me as little as a week ago, I still would not have been sure.

Oh, I'd a fair idea by then, of course – the fears were mounting up – but I'd still keep in hoping, praying that I might be wrong.

Now I know though. All too well.

My heart is not just pierced – it's broken!

For I've stood here today and seen my son die. I watched him cursed and ridiculed, scourged and beaten. I watched as they hammered nails through his hands and lifted him on to a cross.

I watched as he twisted in agony and cried out in despair. And a moment ago I watched as they plunged a spear into his side.

At least he didn't feel that – thank God he was dead by then – but I did.

It thrust deep inside, running me through without mercy. I'd never known such pain, such agony, such horror.

And now life has gone for me too. I feel it has nothing left to offer.

Yet he's given me joy, no one can take that away. He was with me for thirty wonderful years, everything a son could be – not many mothers can say that.

I've had joy, and now I have pain. Maybe that is the way it had to be, the way it must be, if there is to be any joy at all.

Let us pray:

After joy comes sorrow;

After laughter, tears;

After pleasure, pain.

Deep down we know that we cannot have one without the other.

But sometimes when life is dark we find that hard to accept, even wishing we experienced no joy at all if it would save us pain afterwards.

Yet you were there equally, O God, in the joy of Jesus' birth and the sorrow of his death.

Teach us we pray, to live with both the good and the bad, the times of celebration and the times of despair, realising, though we may not see it, you are present in both.

Amen

Let's listen now to I Know that my Redeemer Lives

Now let's share in our prayers for ourselves and others:

Heavenly Father, as we bow our heads before you in prayer for the world near and far, we often find it difficult to know where to start and what to pray - but we know that you want us to pray and so in confidence we venture before your throne this evening. Hear us and help us, we pray.

We offer our prayers for the world. We hold before you all those places far from here, known to us only through our television screens, where there is suffering and strife. We hold before you all those children, women and men whose lives are marred by war, disease and poverty. For countries with surging Covid cases, for those with poor infrastructure and resources, for countries with little PPE and no vaccines and no realistic prospect of national immunisation any time soon. For those engaged in trying to resolve such issues no matter what faith, colour, creed, it is their need that needs to be met along with providing sufficient food and housing, safety and stability.

All these people unknown to us but each known by name to you. Each made in your own image and for who your Son died.

And we pray Lord, 'that the world might taste and see the riches of your grace'.

We offer our prayers for the world nearer to home. We hold before you our government, national and local, our parliament and all those who exercise power in our land. We pray that they will acknowledge that their power comes from you and that it is your will that they should strive to do.

We hold before you all those marginalised and ignored in our society. Those who fear the loss of their jobs, their homes, their security and those for whom those losses are already a reality. We pray for those, young and old who do not feel loved or wanted.

And we pray Lord, 'that all might taste and see the riches of your grace.'

We hold before you those who are ill in body, mind or spirit and we pray for your healing touch. Loving God, we place into your care all our doctors, nurses and healthcare workers. Give them courage of heart and strength of mind and body. Keep them safe from harm. May they know our deep gratitude for all they are doing to heal and help.

We remember all who grieve for the loss of loved ones, family or friends, near or far away. Especially those who are bereaved a long way from family who can't travel to be with them to offer comfort and support. In their loss, in their grief, in their solitude may they find a calm centre and be upheld by their faith, their friendship and their neighbours.

In the silence we bring before you those who are on our hearts and minds this evening.

Silence

And we pray Lord,

‘That those we pray for might taste and see the riches of your grace.’

And lastly, we hold ourselves before you. We offer you all our hopes and fears. We thank you that you are ever with us and pray that you will help us to know and to feel your presence with us more each day.

And we pray Lord,

‘That we might taste and see the riches of your grace.’

We pray all our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, and we share now in saying the prayer he taught his followers:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

As we prepare to go our separate ways, let's receive God's blessing:

The peace of God be in your heart

The grace of God be in your words

The love of God be in your hands

The joy of God be in your soul and in the song that your life sings.

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, this evening hour and forevermore. **Amen.**