



*St* NICOLAS' CHURCH  
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

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# THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT Passion Sunday

## A Service of the Word



Image: Lampedusa Cross, the British Museum

**Sunday 21 March 2021**  
**Led by the Revd David Bevington**



## **The Lampedusa Cross The British Museum**

The Lampedusa cross is a recent acquisition by the British Museum, made and given by Francesco Tuccio, carpenter on the tiny island of Lampedusa, between North Africa and Sicily. In the early hours of an October day in 2013, a fishing boat packed with refugees from Eritrea and Somalia sank off the Island. 155 were rescued; tragically at least 359 died. Islanders did what they could for the survivors as they were brought ashore. Francesco Tuccio met some of them, Christians from Eritrea, at his church and made a cross for each of them, using wreckage from the boat. He later made one for Pope Francis, and then one for the British Museum, all still with their original paintwork.

Today is Passion Sunday. I wonder whether the Lampedusa cross can help us as we begin to reflect on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The functional beauty of Francesco's crosses seems far removed from the horror of the shipwreck. We are used to beautifully carved or decorated crosses in churches: they are a precious symbol of the outpouring of God's love in Christ's passion. But the brutality of the instrument of torture used to execute Jesus can feel sanitised out of a beautiful representation of a cross - a brutality which most of us cannot allow ourselves to contemplate very often.

Crises bring out the best and worst in human nature: people traffickers exploiting the desperate, and volunteers sharing food and clothing. As we re-read the Passion story, we will see acted out hatred, love, cowardice, faith, courage, indifference, compassion, and be challenged to ask God's grace to be faithful disciples.

The British Museum's Lampedusa cross will soon be exhibited in museums and cathedrals around the country (though sadly not in Oxford\*), helping to bring issues of failed states, migration and people trafficking to us who can feel very distant from it. What happened just outside Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon – and on a Sunday morning - some 2,000 years ago can feel very distant. But Christian faith believes that those events have totally transformed the meaning of human life.

**David Bevington**

\*The cross will visit Manchester, Hastings, Derby, Ipswich, Bristol and Rochester, later this year.

**Introductory Music**  
**Psalm 51: 1 – 13**  
**Have mercy upon me, O God**

1. Have mercy upon me O God after thy great goodness :  
according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.
2. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness :  
and cleanse me from my sin.
3. For I acknowledge my faults :  
and my sin is ever before me.
4. Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight :  
that thou mightest be justified in thy saying,  
and clear when thou art judged.
5. Behold I was shapen in wickedness :  
and in sin hath my mother conceived me.
6. But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward parts :  
and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.
7. Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean :  
thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8. Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness :  
that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
9. Turn thy face from my sins :  
and put out all my misdeeds.
10. Make me a clean heart O God :  
and renew a right spirit within me.
11. Cast me not away from thy presence :  
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.
12. O give me the comfort of thy help again :  
and stablish me with thy free Spirit.
13. Then shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked :  
and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

taken from the Book of Common Prayer; chant by Matthew Camidge  
Sung by a quartet from the Choir of St Luke's, Chelsea, London, UK:  
Jeremy Summerly, Dennis Cook, Billie Hylton, Bethany James  
Directed and edited by Jeremy Summerly, 3 January 2021

We meet in the presence of God  
*All* **who knows our needs,**  
**hears our cries,**  
**feels our pain,**  
**and heals our wounds**

O Lord, open our lips  
**and our mouth shall proclaim your praise**

### **We sing the praise of him who died**

**CP 125**

We sing the praise of him who died,  
Of him who died upon the cross;  
The sinner's hope let men deride,  
For this we count the world but loss.

Inscribed upon the cross we see  
In shining letters, 'God is love';  
He bears our sins upon the tree;  
He brings us mercy from above.

The cross! It takes our guilt away:  
It holds the fainting spirit up;  
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,  
And sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave,  
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;  
It takes its terror from the grave,  
And gilds the bed of death with light:

The balm of life, the cure of woe,  
The measure and the pledge of love,  
The sinner's refuge here below,  
The angels' theme in heaven above.

Thomas Kelly 1769 – 1855  
The Church of England,  
working with St Martin-in-the-Fields and the Royal School of Church Music

## Prayers of Penitence

Christ himself carried up our sins in his body to the tree,  
so that, free from sins,  
we might live for righteousness;  
by his wounds we have been healed.  
Let us confess our sins.

Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin:  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight.  
Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

cf Psalm 51

## Promise of Forgiveness (Absolution)

May God, who loved the world so much  
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour,  
forgive you your sins  
and make you holy to serve him in the world.

**Amen**

## The Collect

Most merciful God,  
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ  
delivered and saved the world:  
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross  
we may triumph in the power of his victory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

## The Word of God

Jeremiah 31:31-34

### First Reading:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

### Second Reading:

John 12: 20 - 33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

<sup>27</sup> 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' <sup>29</sup> The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' <sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

When I survey the wondrous cross,  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ my God ;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down ;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?

His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads o'er his body on the tree ;  
Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small ;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

*Galatians 6. 14*  
*Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*  
*King's College Cambridge 2011*

## **SERMON**

### **Affirmation of Faith**

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,  
he did not cling to equality with God,  
but made himself nothing.  
Taking the form of a slave,  
he was born in human likeness.  
He humbled himself**

and was obedient to death,  
even the death of the cross.  
Therefore God has raised him on high,  
and given him the name above every name:  
that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bow,  
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

*cf Philippians 2.6-11*  
**The Intercessions**

*At the end of each bidding when the leader says:*

Lord in your mercy,

*Please respond:*

**Hear our prayer**

*At the end of the prayers we say the Lord's Prayer together.*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

In times of hope, in times of trouble, in times of sorrow, in times of praise,  
as our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

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.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **My song is love is unknown**

**CP 112**

My song is love unknown,

My Saviour's love to me,

Love to the loveless shown,

That they might lovely be.

O who am I, that for my sake

My Lord should take frail flesh and die?

He came from his blest throne,  
Salvation to bestow;  
But they made strange, and none  
The longed-for Christ would know.  
But O my Friend, my Friend indeed,  
Who at my need his life did spend!

Sometimes they strew his way,  
And his sweet praises sing;  
Resounding all the day  
Hosannas to their King.  
Then 'Crucify!' is all their breath,  
And for his death they thirst and cry.

Why, what has my Lord done?  
What makes this rage and spite?  
He made the lame to run,  
He gave the blind their sight.  
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these  
Themselves displease, and 'gainst him rise.

They rise, and needs will have  
My dear Lord made away;  
A murderer they save,  
The Prince of Life they slay.  
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes,  
That he his foes from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,  
My Lord on earth might have;  
In death, no friendly tomb  
But what a stranger gave.  
What may I say? Heaven was his home;  
But mine the tomb wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing,  
No story so divine:  
Never was love, dear King,  
Never was grief like thine!  
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise  
I all my days could gladly spend.

*Samuel Crossman (1624 – 1683)  
St Helen's Choir, Abingdon*

## **Closing prayer**

**Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us  
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters  
we do also for you:  
give us the will to be the servant of others  
as you were the servant of all,  
and gave up your life and died for us,  
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## **The Blessing**

Christ crucified draw you to himself,  
to find in him a sure ground for faith,  
a firm support for hope,  
and the assurance of sins forgiven;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

## **Concluding music**

**We shall keep the Zoom session open if anyone wants to stay online  
and chat – don't forget to un-mute.**

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