

**HOLY WEEK  
2026**

**THE PERFECT SACRIFICE**



**Monday 30 March to Saturday 4 April**

## **Introduction**

As the end of Lent merges with the final approach to Easter, we return to some of what has been read in the letter to the Hebrews and reflect upon it through the lens of some of the moments the synoptic gospel writers relate to the final period of Jesus's life when he and the disciples were in Jerusalem. Over the week, we will see why the Church calls Jesus, "Saviour", for he did not just come into the world to be another mediator between us and God. He came to be the perfect sacrifice, so that above all things we might know the love, grace and mercy of God, which is for all.

The booklet offers scripture, prayer, and a reflection, of some form, from Holy Monday until Holy Saturday. Audio-visual versions of these reflections are also available on the Bromley URC YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/@bromleyURC>).

Daily there is a verse from Timothy Dudley-Smith's hymn "A purple robe". On Friday and Saturday are reflection on the scriptures are the hymns "Come and See" by Graham Kendrick and "Sing, my soul, when hope is sleeping" by John Bell and Graham Maule, plus the Taizé chant, "Within our darkest night."

All written reflections and prayers are by Stephen Fellingham (Local Church Leader of Bromley URC) and Elaine Colechin (Minister of Bromley URC).

# HOLY MONDAY

30 March



## Matthew 21:12-16

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, “It is written,

‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’  
but you are making it a den of robbers.”

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did and heard the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became angry and said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies  
you have prepared praise for yourself?’”

With palm branches waving high,  
we have cried with the children,  
“Hosanna to the Son of David”, Lord.

In our minds eye, we have seen your triumphant entry  
into Jerusalem and thought again  
how good it would have been to be part of the crowd.

Yet, what would we have made of the scene in the temple?  
Would we have been shocked by your actions?  
Would we have tutted at the children and said  
“but this is the house of God!”  
Would we have seen the hypocrisy?

As we walk the road of the cross with you this week,  
Lord, we will wrestle  
with how the attitude of the people changed;  
how they went so quickly  
from shouting “hosanna” to shouting “crucify”,  
how we too can get so easily caught up by the crowd.

Help us come aware of that inadvertent duplicity  
that can fall from our lips or be betrayed by ill-thought actions.  
Help us to stay true, even when we do not fully understand,  
for you did not just come in the name of God,  
you are the sovereign one, our Lord,  
who reigns forever. Amen

### **Hebrews 3:1-4**

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also “was faithful in all God’s house.” Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)

What happened in the Temple, although the place where God was thought to reside, was controlled by the priests. The law of Moses did lay out ritual acts and who could go where, to some extent, in the Temple's different sections. But ultimately, it was the priests who governed the day-to-day life of the Temple courts.

Then Jesus strolled in, turning everything upside down. Not only did he throw out the business that was keeping the roof from leaking, but he also let the children run wild, shouting "Hosanna!" And let's not mention the healing of those who gathered daily to be healed!

What had been under their control, suddenly was not for the priests.

We may never have thought of this story in this way, because we do tend to turn to Jesus's outburst in the Temple as we look for the evidence that leads to his crucifixion. But what the priests were feeling has probably been experienced once or twice in our churches. The Church Meeting where someone suggests the Christmas Fayre should not be labelled as missional—it is just the chance for us to raise a bit of ready cash! The service where the minister responds in an encouraging way to the child who will never sit still or be quiet. And then, let us not mention the challenge that we might just need to change how we do or are church!

When control feels threatened within the church, the question of authority often arises. The snippet from the letter to the Hebrews answers that question regarding with what authority Jesus did what he did in the Temple as recorded in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus as High Priest had the authority to do all that he did on that day. Yet there was more to this than position—Jesus had that authority because his actions were born out of

being faithful to God, the one who sent him and the one who was him.

Jesus had a distinct advantage being God Godself. If we remember, though, that the church is God's not ours, then maybe we can sacrifice what does not glorify the one who made us.

*A purple robe, a crown of thorn,  
a reed in his right hand;  
before the soldiers' spite and scorn  
I see my Saviour stand.*

## HOLY TUESDAY

### 31 March



### **Matthew 24:9-13**

Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Loving God,

We are here, weary yet hopeful, burdened yet trusting. Your Word reminds us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses—those who have run the race before us, who have endured suffering, and who now cheer us on. Lord, in the face of trials, betrayal, and the hatred this world sometimes offers, give us the strength to persevere.

When we are tempted to give up, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. When the road is long and the path unclear, remind us that endurance is not just about surviving but about running with purpose, trusting in Your promises.

In a world where many turn away, where love grows cold, and where faith is tested, fill us with Your Spirit. Teach us to stand firm, to love boldly, and to hold fast to what is true. May we not grow weary in doing good, but instead, find our hope renewed in You.

We pray for those who suffer for their faith, for those who feel abandoned, and for those who struggle to keep believing. May they know they are not alone. May they feel Your presence, Your strength, and Your peace.

And when the way seems too hard, remind us that You are with us—always. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## **Hebrews 12:1-2**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

These passages speak directly to the reality of suffering and endurance in the life of faith. Hebrews 12:1-2 paints a vivid picture of the Christian life as a race, one that requires perseverance, focus, and the inspiration of those who have gone before us. The “great cloud of witnesses” is not just a historical footnote; it is a living reminder that we are part of a story much bigger than ourselves. We are called to “run with perseverance,” stripping off the sin and distractions that weigh us down, and fixing our eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him.

Matthew 24:9-13, meanwhile, offers a stark warning: the path of discipleship is not easy. Jesus speaks of betrayal, hatred, and the cooling of love. Yet, in the midst of these challenges, He offers a promise: “The one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” This is not a call to passive endurance but to active, intentional faithfulness. It’s a reminder that our faith is tested not just in grand moments of trial but in the daily choices to love, to trust, and to remain steadfast.

For us today, these passages challenge us to ask: What is weighing us down? Is it fear, distraction, or the lure of comfort? And how can we, like Jesus, endure with our eyes fixed on the joy of God’s kingdom? In a world where division and despair can feel overwhelming, we are called to be people of hope—people who love boldly, stand firm, and trust that God is at work, even when we cannot see it.

*He bears between the Roman guard  
the weight of all our woe;  
a stumbling figure bowed and scarred  
I see my Saviour go.*

# HOLY WEDNESDAY

I April



## **Matthew 26:6-12**

Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, “Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum and the money given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial.

What is an appropriate sacrifice, God?

Something that is costly and could be used for other, maybe better, things?

Something that of ancient times represented cleansing?

Something that is of service, not for ourselves, but for another who too will be of service to others and the coming of your kingdom?

As we step closer to the cross  
to look again at your sacrifice upon it  
and the pouring out of Christ's blood  
for the redemption of the world,  
we wonder on that sacrifice.  
We give thanks for what it means in our lives:  
your grace and mercy upon us.

Should we, though, accept that as enough?  
As you made that sacrifice for us,  
should we not make a sacrifice in return?

Nothing we can offer may seem sufficient  
to honour all that you have done for us.  
With the aid of the Holy Spirit, though,  
our lives can be a sacrifice of praise.  
Help them to be so, in your name,  
our Saviour and Lord. Amen

### **Hebrews 9:11-14**

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

In this segment of the letter to the Hebrews, the author was bringing together much of what they had already said about Jesus and his relationship to the Temple and ultimately the people's covenant with God. As High Priest, Jesus is framed as the one who mediates the relationship of the people with God. However, Jesus, the author says, is more than just the one who can go and stand before God. Jesus, through the pouring out of his blood, is the perfect sacrifice, atoning for the sins of the world: yesterday, today and tomorrow.

It could be very easy to read the rhetoric of the letter writer as condemning the practices of the Temple. Sacrifices are called inadequate and not how the people would obtain redemption. Although there is an element of truth in that, the author was not trying to rubbish a faith or rules of practices that were deeply rooted in who the people were and where, in a time of persecution, they felt safest. The author was trying to encourage the people to see afresh all that they had come to know about Jesus. This was not, though, without sacrifice, because they had to proclaim Jesus's death and the grace and mercy of God that Jesus's death speaks off.

In a time of persecution, that is a costly sacrifice to personally make.

The anointing of Jesus, though, shows us how important that sacrifice is. If we want to serve the living God, we have to be prepared to make the proclamation—stand out in the crowd—even if it leaves us vulnerable and open to slander.

*Fast to the cross's spreading span,  
high in the sunlit air,  
all the unnumbered sins of man  
I see my Saviour bear.*

# MAUNDY THURSDAY

2 April



## **Matthew 26:36-45**

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not what I want but what you want.” Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Now the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Gracious God,

We are here in the quiet of this moment, aware of our own frailty and the weight of the world around us. Your Word tells us that even Jesus, in His humanity, cried out to You in loud cries and tears, praying for deliverance yet submitting to Your will. Lord, teach us to pray like that—to bring our fears, our sorrows, and our deepest longings to You, trusting that You hear us.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus faced the agony of the cross. He asked His disciples to watch and pray with Him, yet they fell asleep. Forgive us, Lord, for the times we, too, have slept—when we have failed to stand with those who suffer, when we have turned away from the hard work of love, or when we have let weariness dull our spirits.

Give us the courage to say, as Jesus did, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” Strengthen us in our weakest moments. Remind us that even in our struggles, You are near, turning our sorrow into hope and our tears into trust.

We pray for those who feel alone in their suffering, for those who are exhausted by the weight of life, and for those who long to hear Your voice. May they know Your presence. May they find rest in You.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### **Hebrews 5:7**

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Hebrews 5:7 offers a profound glimpse into the humanity of Jesus: “During the days of Jesus’s life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death.” This verse reminds us that

Jesus understands our struggles. He knows what it is to feel the weight of suffering, to plead for another way, and to ultimately surrender to God’s will. His prayers were not passive; they were raw, honest, and deeply human.

In Matthew 26:36-45, we see this struggle unfold in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow, yet He prays, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.” His disciples, meanwhile, cannot even stay awake to pray with Him. This scene is a powerful reminder of the tension between our human desires and God’s purposes. It also highlights the importance of community—even when that community fails us.

For us, these passages invite reflection on our own prayers and struggles. Do we bring our true selves to God, or do we hide behind polished words? Are we willing to surrender our will to His, even when it is painful? And how do we stand with others in their suffering, even when it is inconvenient or difficult?

In a world that often values strength over vulnerability, these texts remind us that true faith is not about having it all together. It’s about honesty, trust, and the courage to say, “Not my will, but Yours.” It’s about knowing that even in our weakest moments, God is with us—and that His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

*He hangs, by whom the world was made,  
beneath the darkened sky;  
the everlasting ransom paid,  
I see my Saviour die.*

## **GOOD FRIDAY**

**3 April**

### **Matthew 27:25-31, 33-25, 45-51, 54**

Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" So he released Barabbas for them, and after flogging Jesus he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"



*Come and see, come and see, come and see the King of love;  
see the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears.  
Soldiers mock, rulers sneer, as he lifts the cruel cross;  
lone and friendless now he climbs towards the hill.*

*We worship at your feet, where wrath and mercy meet,  
and a guilty world is washed by love's pure stream.  
For us he was made sin. Oh, help me take it in!  
Deep wounds of love cry out, 'Father, forgive!'  
I worship, I worship the lamb who was slain.*

*Come and weep, come and mourn  
for your sin that pierced him there;  
so much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail.  
All our pride, all our greed, all our fallenness and shame;  
and the Lord has laid the punishment on him.*

*Man of heaven, born to earth to restore us to your heaven,  
here we bow in awe beneath your searching eyes.  
From your tears comes our joys,  
for your death our life shall spring;  
by your resurrection power we shall rise.*

*We worship at your feet, where wrath and mercy meet,  
and a guilty world is washed by love's pure stream.  
For us he was made sin. Oh, help me take it in!  
Deep wounds of love cry out, 'Father, forgive!'  
I worship, I worship the lamb who was slain.*

### **Hebrews 10:1-14**

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body you have prepared for me;  
in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘See, I have come to do your will, O God’  
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,” and since then has been waiting “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

*He shares on high his Father's throne,  
who once in mercy came;  
for all his love to sinners shown  
I sing my Saviour's name.*

In the solemnity of this day,  
we worship the lamb who was slain,  
the one who took the sin of the world upon his shoulders  
so that vain offerings no longer need to be offered.

The consciousness of our sin, though, remains  
so that we do worship at the foot of the cross  
with an openness of heart  
that lets your Spirit work afresh in us—  
renewing us in our relationship with you, day after day.

Forgiving God, may we remember,  
despite that cry of Jesus in the anguish of death,  
you did not forsake the world that day;  
you showed us again your majesty and might,  
as well as your love that is far beyond our understanding.

Therefore, as we sit with our sin,  
as we become shrouded by the darkness of death,  
may we worship you, who through Jesus made the perfect  
sacrifice,  
one that is glorified by us offering our lives to you  
and saying, “your will be done.” Amen

# HOLY SATURDAY

4 April

## **Matthew 27:57-60**

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who also was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.



*Within our darkest night,  
you kindle the fire that never dies away,  
that never dies away.*

## Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

*Sing, my soul, when hope is sleeping,  
sing when faith gives way to fears;  
sing to melt the ice of sadness,  
making way for joy through tears.*

*Sing, my soul, when sickness lingers,  
sing to dull the sharpest pain;  
sing to set the spirit leaping:  
healing needs a glad refrain.*

*Sing, my soul, of him who shaped me,  
let me wander far away,  
ran with open arms to greet me,  
brought me home again to stay.*

*Sing, my soul, when light seems darkest,  
sing when night refuses rest,  
sing though death should mock the future:  
what to come by God is blessed.*

Gracious and Merciful God,

We come before You today with hearts full of gratitude and awe, for You have opened a new and living way for us to draw near to You. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, the curtain has been torn in two, and we are invited—boldly, confidently—to enter Your presence. No longer do we stand at a distance, but we come as Your beloved children, washed clean by grace and filled with hope.

Lord, in a world that so often feels divided and weary, remind us of the confidence we have in You. When doubt creeps in, when fear threatens to silence us, or when the weight of life's burdens feels too heavy, help us to hold fast to the hope we profess. Let us never forget that we are not alone—You are with us, and we are surrounded by a community of faith, a body of believers who spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

We thank You for the example of Joseph of Arimathea, who, in the face of darkness and despair, stepped forward with courage to care for Jesus' body. In a moment when so many turned away, he acted with love and devotion. Lord, give us the same boldness—to stand for what is right, to care for the broken, and to love even when it is costly. Help us to be people who do not shrink back but who live out our faith with conviction and tenderness.

As we gather—whether in person or in spirit—stir in us a deep sense of purpose. Let our meetings be more than routine; let them be moments of encouragement, challenge, and renewal. Teach us to spur one another on, to bear one another's burdens, and to live as people who are marked by hope, even in the face of uncertainty.

And as we look to the day drawing near, fill us with anticipation—not of fear, but of the joy that comes from knowing You are faithful. You who began a good work in us will bring it to completion. You who raised Jesus from the dead are the same God who walks with us today.

So, Lord, we pray for the courage to live boldly, to love deeply, and to hold fast to the hope we have in You. May our lives reflect the truth of Your gospel, and may we be a people who inspire others to draw near to You.

In the name of Jesus, our great high priest, we pray. Amen