

Clincarthill Parish Church: Reflections for Lent #7 – week beginning Sunday 24th March 2024

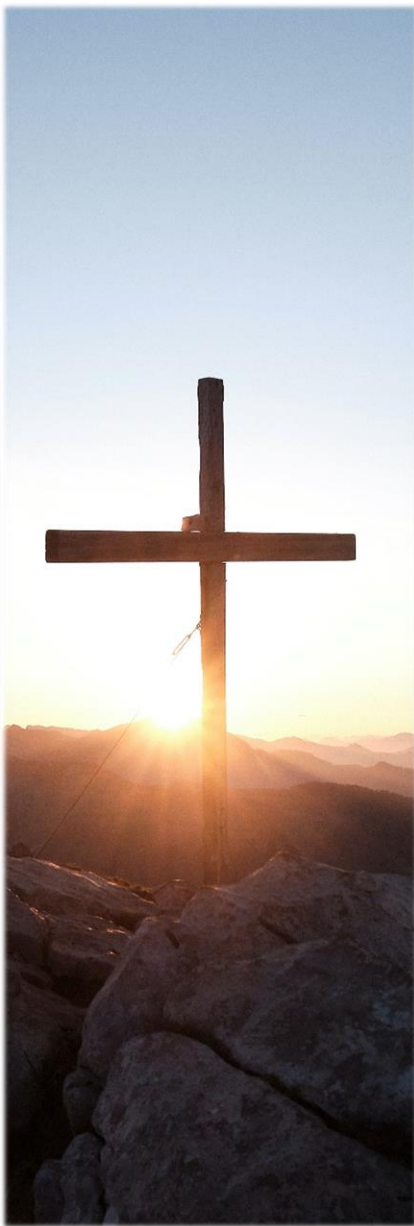


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Before you begin: Take a few slow deep breaths to centre yourself, inviting the Holy Spirit to be present with you as you think and pray.

Read the passage: Luke 19 (NIVUK)

⁴¹As he (that is, Jesus) approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴²and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you.'

Reflection: We have arrived. Lent is over. Holy week is about to begin.

This moment, recorded by Luke, occurs during Jesus' approach to Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday. Given the extent of Jesus' rejection by the power represented by "Jerusalem", we might read His predictions of judgement with a self-satisfaction: you have rejected me, and now you will receive what you deserve for your actions (Jesus' words here do accurately predict the way the Roman Empire will destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD – adding veracity to Jesus' powers of prophecy, as the Son of God).

This cannot, however, be the case; as evidenced by the fact that Jesus weeps. He is heartbroken by the reality that the city of His Father's Temple will one day pay the price for pursuing their own agenda, rather than submitting to that of God.

From this, we can learn at least 2 things.

First: notice Jesus does not prevent the judgement which will fall on Jerusalem. This is an important principle: although Jesus is heartbroken that "Jerusalem" will incur the consequences of their actions, those consequences must be felt. To prevent consequences is an act of injustice; God, and therefore Jesus, are perfectly just. Our action is a rejection of God, which incurs consequences; for justice to truly be done, therefore, the consequences of that actions must be felt.

Second: while being totally just, Jesus still has compassion, through His tears. In His, and God's compassion; He chooses to be the one to experience the consequences of our rejection of God. He carries the burden of God's justice on our behalf. He serves the sentence we deserve, that we might instead be set free. What was hidden to Jerusalem is now revealed to us: that the person who brings us peace with God is Jesus Himself.

Some questions to consider:

1. Jesus is the embodiment of God's Justice and Compassion. What does this mean for me?
2. How do I respond to knowing that, in His compassion, Jesus took upon Himself the justice of God – for me?
3. Jesus calls us to follow Him. This includes working for justice and showing compassion. In what ways can I work for justice and show compassion in my daily life?

Prayer:

- Give thanks for Jesus, for His compassion, and for His standing in our place to receive God's justice.
- Pray that the Spirit would reveal the ways you can live Jesus' way: working for justice, and showing compassion.
- Pray that God would prepare your heart for the coming week, as we remember afresh the events of Holy Week.