



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2021**  
**PASSION SUNDAY & 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT**

**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.

**Psalm 51.1-13**

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; ♦  
according to the abundance of your compassion  
blot out my 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 you only have I sinned ♦  
and done what is evil in your sight,
- 5 So that you are justified in your sentence ♦  
and righteous in your judgement.
- 6 I have been wicked even from my birth, ♦  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 7 Behold, you desire truth deep within me ♦  
and shall make me understand wisdom  
in the depths of my heart.
- 8 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; ♦  
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, ♦  
that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

10 Turn your face from my sins ♦  
and blot out all my misdeeds.

11 Make me a clean heart, O God, ♦  
and renew a right spirit within me.

12 Cast me not away from your presence ♦  
and take not your holy spirit from me.

13 Give me again the joy of your salvation ♦  
and sustain me with your gracious spirit;

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is included here, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2000 and published by Church House Publishing.*

### **Jeremiah 31.31-34**

31 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. 32 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. 33 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. 34 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

### **John 12.20-33**

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 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. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. 27 "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. 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

## Reflection – this week from Peter

*Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12.24)*

This little verse is one of the magical moments in the Gospel. It occurs only in John, but it immediately calls to mind the famous parable of the sower and the seeds that is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. In that parable, all the emphasis is on the new growth - how much will the grain produce? And it explores the importance of the quality of the soil, and the absence of competition, like weeds. Here, in today's verse, the emphasis is on the grain itself. Jesus talks about the grain dying in order to bring new life. We don't normally think this way. If we buy a packet of seeds we don't think of them as dead, but as containing the potential for life, just waiting to spring forth. Jesus says rather, 'No: casting the seed into the ground is the end of its life as a seed. It could have been grain turned into flour and eaten, but it has been put back in the ground. That's the end of it as a grain of wheat: now it has a new life, and it will be the source of lots of new grain.'

This gives us a new way of thinking about life and death - a way that is at the heart of the Gospel. Jesus died on the cross, but God raised him to new life. In the light of the resurrection we no longer think of death as the end, but as a new beginning.

Traditionally, this verse has been associated with the rite of profession in monastic communities. When a brother or sister makes their life commitment it is understood as a moment of dying: dying to an old life, and being born to a new one.

In our experience this is not simply a once-in-a-lifetime thing. There are some big lifetime moments, but it is also something we experience daily. Every morning is a new beginning. Each day is an invitation to let go of the deadness of the past and to begin again, to be bathed in the light of Christ and to discover new life in God.

In a year that has seen so many tragic endings it is a source of immense joy that we can say, "O death, where is your sting? - Thanks be to God who has given us the victory!"

Peter