

# Liturgy in a Dangerous Time



(© Mark Kensett)

# #2

# Sunday 26 April 2020



*(©Mark Kensett/Amos Trust)*

This is the second liturgy in a series of free resources for you to use on your own, with those at home, or perhaps in an online group. However you choose to use this, we would suggest that as you go, you remember the green cross code: stop, look, listen and think. We've deliberately tried to include voices from across the church, so we hope you'll find some familiarity and some newness here.

This edition has some themes of light and shade, which seems familiar. Our reading is the road to Emmaus – which is full of dusty texture and gives plenty of pause for thought. Once again lots of generous people have contributed, all from different backgrounds, and with divergent perspectives and ideas, which seems familiar too.

Oh, and in case you're new here and you're wondering why 'Liturgy in a Dangerous Time', this refers to a brilliant song by Bruce Cockburn, 'Lovers in a Dangerous Time' which has the wonderful line: "we're going to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight."

Right now there's a nasty bruise developing.

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## An opening

We are travelling together to a new place –

separated not by stones on a path,  
but by electrons flying through the ether.

And, like those journeying to Emmaus all those years ago,  
we talk about everything that has happened,  
trying to comprehend things taken from us,  
and new things yet to be given.

We welcome the Christ, as he walks with us,  
even as we fail to recognise his presence.

*[\(Andy Campbell\)](#)*

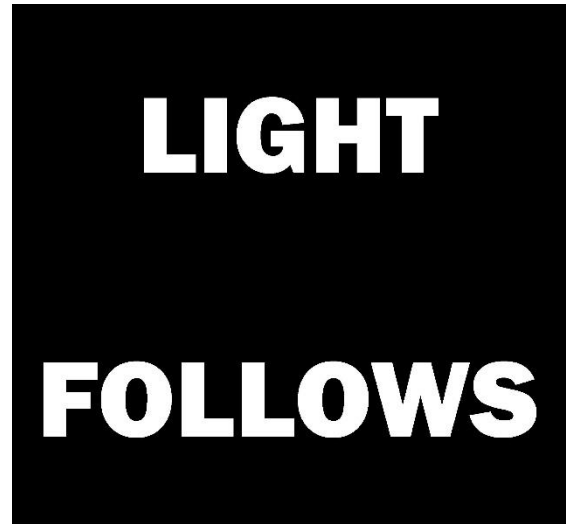
## A sound

[Listen to this](#) beautiful setting of Psalm 18 in Punjabi.

How does it make you feel?

What comes to mind as you listen to it?

*[\(Nabeel Masih\)](#)*



# DARK

*[\(Tim Watson\)](#)*

## A thought

[Have a listen to this](#) thought from Lorraine Cavanagh.

Questions:

What do we fear the most?

What resources do we have to draw on?

*[\(Lorraine Cavanagh\)](#)*

## A song

### *Were you there?*

[Click here to hear it.](#)

Were you there when they crucified  
my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified  
my Lord?  
O sometimes it causes me to tremble!  
tremble! tremble!  
Were you there when they crucified  
my Lord?

Were you there when they nail'd him  
to the tree?  
Were you there when they nail'd him  
to the tree?  
O sometimes it causes me to tremble!  
Oh to tremble!  
Were you there when they nail'd him  
to the tree?

Were you there when they laid him in  
the tomb?  
Were you there when they laid him in  
the tomb?  
O sometimes it causes me to tremble!  
tremble! tremble!

Were you there when they laid him in  
the tomb?

Were you there when the God raised  
him from his grave?

Were you there when the God raised  
him from his grave?

O sometimes it causes me to tremble!  
tremble! tremble!

Were you there when the God raised  
him from his grave?

Trad arr: [\(Lee Bains III\)](#)

# LIGHT

# FOLLOWS

# DARK

[\(Tim Watson\)](#)

## An activity

Tie a piece of string into a loop.

Throw it down at random onto your floor, or a patch of your balcony or garden. Now, in my house, this task is easy- your house is probably kept cleaner and tidier than mine, but roll with it. Get down close and personal to your loop. What can you see? **Be still. Look closer.** What do you see? Close your eyes. **Breathe.** Open your eyes and really notice. What do you see now? If you're with others, you can take it in turns to name what you notice. If you're alone, phone someone who won't think you're crazy and tell them what you've seen in your loop.



*(Herbert Goetsche on Unsplash)*

Sometimes in a patch of busyness-grass or a really messy carpet- it can take a while for you to notice specifics in amongst the muddle. The patch of yellow on the grass stalk. The trapped dandelion seed. The little bit of white fluff. The tiny lego brick. In a patch of peaceful serenity, where at first glance there is nothing of note, you still find things to surprise you- the way the light and shade move, the texture of the lino, the way the carpet fuzzes.

These places of our refuge at this time, we are learning to know closer and deeper than our own hands. In the years to come, we will be able to dredge them up from our memories in intricate detail. But as with everything and everyone we know, how much do we really see them? Not just the extraordinary in the ordinary, but **the familiar in the strange**. As the disciples found, finally noticing Jesus in the breaking of the bread, the extraordinary in the ordinary, the familiar in the strange.

*(Rachel Summers)*



## A prayer

In these days when 'all shall be well'  
feels at odds with grievous reality,

**God be with us.**

In these days when enormity becomes  
a distraction, and small things claim  
our focus,

**God be with us**

In these days when our inner solitude  
is too loud, and outside is unnervingly  
quiet,

**God be with us.**

In these days when our fear contracts  
us, and stretches our hope,

**God be with us.**

In these days when routines are  
snatched from us, and we drift from  
our groove,

**help us to know** how shallow was  
the groove of habit, and how the drift  
is toward centre.

In these days when we extend our  
distance from others,

**help us to know** how tensile are the  
invisible ties that bind

In these days when inequalities  
unleash their deadly effects,

**help us to know** that God loves  
justice, and it will prevail.

In these days when activity is frenetic,  
uncomfortable or unavailable

**help us to know** that the God who  
dwells in us does the work.

*(Alison Webster)*



*(Casey Horner on Unsplash)*

# A poem

## Ivanka Trump Studies Greek Mythology

You think you are getting a bit of rain  
your way

and then a thunderstorm appears out  
of nowhere.

And everything  
stops.

Homer employs deus ex machina,  
the unexpected intervention of a god  
to save a seemingly hopeless situation.

Ivanka Trump reads his work with the  
intent  
of escape.

Others cryptically embed The  
Odyssey  
and the ancient stories that follow  
into religious walls  
and claim, God has brought this  
storm upon us.

But you my friend,

know better than this.

You hear the songs of immortal gods  
and goddesses

playing from balconies.

You transcend your anxiety  
through

collective applause.

Imaginative,

symbolic creations

save you from Polyphemus's jaws.

Your mind searches for answers,  
for retribution, for stability.

But your heart is strong.

You will endure.

Employ, as Homer did,  
the unexpected.

Remould the tales of old  
and journey safely home.

[\(Sapphira Olson\)](#)

## A quote

Life without love is like a tree without blossoms or fruit.

*(Khalil Gibran)*

## A prayer

Let love seep out of me like sap from a tree.

Let love flow through me like wind through branches.

Let love nourish me like an underground spring.

Amen



*(Middlewick on Morguefile)*

## A reading

Luke 24: 13-35

[\(click here to see a version\)](#)

## A reflection

It's interesting to speculate what those two disciples might have said exactly, as they accompanied each other deep in thought about such huge, life-mangling events. It may not have had much in common with the things that rattle round my head as I walk metaphorically from Jerusalem, the site of crucifixion and resurrection, to my own personal Emmaus. But I'm certainly aware that as I ponder these things, I too have gone 'on a bit of a journey' with regards to these things, whether or not I've remembered, let alone recognised, those strangers *en route* who have helped to open my eyes.

After growing up without really considering the questions which resurrection might generate, I then



became defiantly pro-Good Friday, insistent that the resurrection is more like icing on the cake, at risk of being too easily triumphalist in a world of pain, while the true nourishment is found in God's 'Good Friday-shaped' solidarity with the suffering ones of the earth. That's where our faith should be rooted.

But then voices from the Majority World helped me to see how much the resurrection matters, for the sake of those very same suffering ones. It expresses God's victory over systems of violence and injustice. It represents the overcoming of Good Friday, the 'insurrection' against the very powers which belittle and scapegoat swathes of our fellow humans. That's where our faith derives its energy.

But more recently, I've walked a little further along this Emmaus Road of interpretation and discovered something slightly different, perhaps a way of reintegrating the two realities: now, for me, resurrection isn't a victory in the sense of bringing a

conflict to its resolution; it's not the overcoming of the Good Friday world; it's not 'the fix' but is a crack in the glass, the earthquake underneath our foundations, the stranger who startles us, the thief breaking in.

It's not a resolution but an invitation to live in two worlds: the Good Friday world which remains, undefeated, as we know too well while we endure this pandemic crisis, a world that lingers inconveniently and painfully, and a world of new creation, which functions according to strange rules, like the last being first and the first being last.

***Resurrection is the crack between these worlds, like an intruder breaking in – into the world we took for granted.***

This is precisely why it's hard to recognise. We might have generally thought that *God* kept them from recognising the risen Jesus, perhaps so Jesus would have the opportunity to interpret events for them, unhindered by their dumbfoundedness, but what if



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it was not God who prevented them – I certainly don't find it easy to comprehend that God prevented comprehension – but rather, simply, the weight of past experience prevented them from seeing something in front of them?

This crisis today has helped me see that more clearly: it takes time to orientate ourselves to a strange new world. It's disorienting and destabilising. The experience can be disturbing, unsettling, like an earthquake; and so it was for those first witnesses: they experienced fear as well as joy, terror

as well as amazement, because it was not part of their normal mental or social landscape:

***Resurrection wasn't a feature of how people saw the world or constructed it, but was a new revelation; an apocalypse.***

This is, for me, very much how it feels: both this pandemic crisis and my Easter faith, not that they both share the same source at all, but they both represent a strange revelation, a crack in the system, a crisis, an apocalypse,

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inviting a response: will we dare to live differently, by different rules, facing up squarely to the realities of our Good Friday world, with its profound inequalities, while also offering a vision of an alternative, in which bread is shared with strangers?



*(Fleur on Unsplash)*

What's also going on here, for me, is a rediscovery of the 'smallness' of Good Friday and Easter – rather than the church's more familiar proclamation of these events as vast and universal in scope. What I mean is: the crucifixion of Jesus was one crucifixion amongst many, at the hands of a vast empire; it was an apparently marginal and commonplace event, at the edge of an empire, unnoticed, not widely recognised; and so the resurrection was also 'small' – an early morning,

under-the-radar, awakening, quietly stepping into a garden and meeting people, but slowly spreading, slowly catching on, and meeting people again on an evening road, hard to recognise. This is how really significant change happens: like a gentle butterfly flapping her wings, like yeast hidden in dough, like a buried gem, or a child at play, or another prophet dying at the hands of a ruthless regime, or a quiet crack in the glass of the system ... inviting us to see the same old world as our eyes are gradually opened, daring to trust that this local earthquake, this obscure apocalypse, might catch on and the new world flourishes ...

*(Graham Adams)*

## A poem

On the road to Emmaus  
Jesus appeared to them and spoke  
Yet it took breaking of bread  
For these men to see and proclaim  
Would you recognise Jesus  
If he walked with you today?  
Would I recognise Jesus  
If he called me by my name?

*(Emma Major)*

## A closing

Notice where your hearts burn,

Dare to walk to the new place,

For the Christ steps with us,

And will greet us there,

With bread, and wine,

Laughter and song,

And we will never wish to return

To how things were before we knew.

[\(Andy Campbell\)](#)

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*This liturgy has been compiled by Andy and Simon and features contributions from:*

*Graham Adams (theological educator), Lee Bains III (musician), Andy Campbell (poet & life coach), Lorraine Cavanagh (priest & author), Simon Cross (writer), Mark Kensett (photographer), Emma Major (lay pioneer minister & poet), Nabeel Masih (musician & educator), Sapphira Olson (trans woman, poet, illustrator), Rachel Summers (educator & writer of names of trees on pavements), Tim Watson (priest, illustrator & poet) & Alison Webster (writer & social justice advisor).*

*[simonjcross.com/dangerous-liturgy](http://simonjcross.com/dangerous-liturgy)*

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