

Liturgy in a Dangerous Time



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

#9

simonjcross.com/dangerous-liturgy

Sunday 14th June

Hello friends, and welcome to this penultimate edition in this series of liturgies in a dangerous time. In this series of small publications, we have tried to address, briefly and inadequately, some of the very real ‘dangers’ of our time, the pandemics of disease, fear, and injustice which have swirled together to make some sort of ‘perfect storm’ in just a few short weeks.

There has been something truly apocalyptic, something genuinely revealing, about this whole dreadful situation, revealing of power structures and decision making, revealing of the way in which our nature is shaped and modelled by the institutions we inhabit. Revealing of the love and kindness that we can show each other when we are in need.

In this edition we have stripped things back, returned to a gentleness which is perhaps missing from some of our lives, reminding ourselves of the primacy of love – which is the ‘greatest of these’.

Once more as you read, listen, watch and even play – take your time. Observe and absorb. Breathe in and out, don’t rush. Times remain dangerous. Know peace.

Simon

An opening

Matthew Chapter 11, verses 28 – 30.

A saying of Jesus:

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

In a time of turmoil piled upon
turmoil,

Where careless words are instantly
publicly regretted,

When private thoughts are relentlessly
internally interrogated,

While one set of overwhelming
worries are added to another,

May we know some peace.

A prayer

Restore.

Oh God.

Restore my soul.

Oh God.

Restore my soul and refresh my heart.

Oh God.

Restore my soul.

Oh God.

Restore.



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A moment

[Listen to this glorious rendition](#) of Qui Habitat (the 91st Psalm) by Josquin Desprez

Let it wash over you.

A stilling

With great **gentleness**, and with the intent of **peacefulness**, return your **attention** to your breath.

Feel the air enter and leave your lungs.

With **deliberate slowness**, breathe in for a count of five.

When you have breathed in, hold your breath in your lungs for a further count of five.

When you have held your breath, slowly exhale for a count of ten.

Repeat this **circular** pattern.

As you breathe in, note any areas of **tension** in your body, and allow them to relax.

Breathe in peace.

As you breathe out, allow all the tension and worry to **flow** out of you with your breath.

Breathe out tension.

Repeat this circular pattern.

Cultivate a **softness** of heart.

Allow your eyes to **rest**.

Continue to breathe in for five, hold for five, out for ten.

Know that peace is found in the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual senses.

A meditation

Psalm 91 – v5-6

Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day.

Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday.



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A poem

I saw on the branch
a white dove sat still
at rest
while at work.

Wings folded and smoothed
feathers all in alignment
ready to harness the breeze, to lift and
soar.

‘What are you doing there?’

I asked.

‘And what do you represent?’

‘I’m a symbol’ it said
in its silence.

‘The opposite of the eagle.

A bird of peace

who flies in the face of empire’s sharp
talloned raptor.’

‘I am a gatherer of olive twigs
a nest maker

see here beneath my wing

is my safe place

careful in its fragility

relentless in its generosity.’

A forgiving

Take a moment to remember someone who you have a grudge against.

Hold their name tightly in your mind, and consider – what would it require for you to forgive them?

Forgiveness is powerful, but we can't take it lightly.

If it is in your power, then relax your grasp on that name, and utter the words:

“I forgive you.”

Hold the name gently, knowing it to be precious.

If forgiving wasn't in your power today pray for restoration, or reconciliation, or whatever would bring forgiveness closer to you.

Hold your name gently, knowing it to be precious.

A game



[Go here to watch a video](#) made by Andy Robertson, which is a reflection on and inspired by the very simple but deeply moving and meditative game 'Passage' by Jason Rohrer.

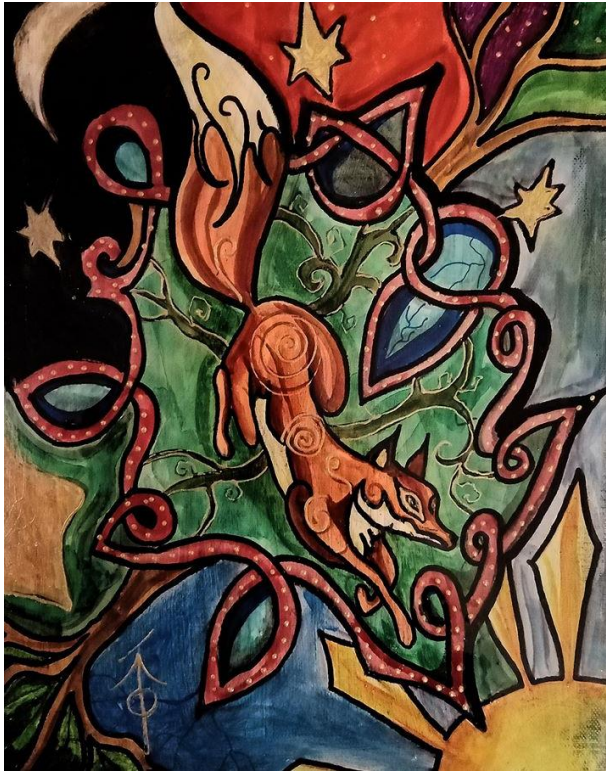
You can [go here to play the game itself](#).

If you happen to have two screens available to you, then you could watch the video while playing the game, alternatively you could play the game while you listen to the audio from the video, by opening it in another tab or window.

[\(Andy Robertson\)](#)



(Mark Kensett)



[*\(Emma Moreton\)*](#)

A levelling

The wonderful Roo Bramley has a short reflection on Acts chapter 2, British history, and land reform – which ends in a song.

[Watch it all here.](#)

[*\(Roo Bramley\)*](#)

A quote

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths you take but by the moments that take your breath away.”

[*\(Source disputed\)*](#)

A reading

Matthew 9:35 – 10:23

[Go here to see a version.](#)

A reflection

At the beginning of the tenth Chapter of the book of Matthew, we have a glimpse of Jesus at his subversive best.

“Shake the dust off your shoes...” he advises of any town where the disciples aren’t welcomed. ‘Just move on. Leave it all behind.’ He warns too that they should expect trouble: “...beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. ...”

Not exactly words that seem designed to comfort and encourage.

But then the context of the commissioning of Jesus’ twelve disciples wasn’t all that encouraging.

The time they lived in was one of

oppression and injustice. So he is quite clear that he sends his followers “like sheep among wolves...”

“Be wise as serpents”, he recommends, but also “innocent as doves”. And there we get a glimpse of Jesus as something other than the messianic guru of popular imagination, here is Jesus the subversive strategist. The man who many felt would bring about lasting social and political change in their time. ‘You’re going to get into trouble, so you may as well make an absolute nuisance of yourselves... but stay within the law. If they don’t like you in one place, just get up and move on, don’t dwell on it... and when you get in trouble, take it as an opportunity to spread your message.’

Makes sense.

If you are going to be arrested, brutalised, and generally badly treated, people will at least see that you are being treated unjustly.

And eventually, they may be inspired to make a change too, as they witness the clear corruption of the regime.

“...all nations will hate you because you are my followers...”

‘There will be plenty of haters’ Jesus points out, just in case he hadn’t already made it quite clear. ‘If the internet was invented, they’d be posting on there...’

Those of the disciples who were in the gang thinking it would be a nice way to spend some time, and a good way to win friends and influence people must have begun to blanch – ‘hated by **all the nations**? What, everyone?’

Yes. Everyone.



([Nick Fewings on Unsplash](#))

Such is the lot of the truth teller – the person who comes with the news of the upside down nature of God’s commonwealth. We’ve seen it happen time and again recently.

That there is a way of thinking and living which says that the poor are already blessed, and the rich should be super-duper careful isn’t a popular message. Except at the margins. This isn’t the American dream.

It is the Nazarene dream.

This reckless, hopeful dream of a different world, a ‘dangerous vision’ of a topsy-turvy way of living: where enemies are beloved, prisoners are set free – sometimes literally, sometimes while still in their chains – where the sick and the disabled are proclaimed clean and welcomed in, and where it’s easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle, than it is for a rich man to enter God’s commonwealth. That last one must have always gone down a treat. Still does.

But Jesus was no stranger to this kind of upside-down talk, his habit or

reversing, or subverting the expectations of his listeners was at least consistent – if not a little infuriating. His stories consistently defied conventional explanation, his answers were elliptical and designed to draw his interlocutors deeper into a debate from which they couldn’t hope to emerge looking good.

“What shall we do with this woman caught in adultery?” The authorities might demand, knowing all too well what the law prescribed, knowing too that this is how the patriarchal order is maintained in society – you can’t have women dishonouring their parents or their husbands, society will fall. They have dragged her from the cell into the temple courts. “Oh... is it just the woman?” Jesus might have said, instead judiciously pausing instead to draw on the ground. No man involved may have meant that this was a woman who had been found to be less than virginal on her wedding night.

Then looking up: ‘Go ahead lads, you know what to do. Oh, just a reminder, obviously the first stone should be thrown by the person who witnessed the event, and that should also be someone who has not had his paws on this “criminal” woman...’ Or as the book puts it a little more pithily: “Let the one without sin cast the first stone...”

And so the lynch mob is undone, their plan is foiled, and they grudgingly disperse, until only the woman herself is left behind, waiting to learn her fate.

Jesus’ refusal to condemn, his refusal to uphold the social controls which maintained the social structures of his time speaks volumes. “There are more important things than ensuring a consistent line of inheritance ...”

Innocent as a dove, wise as a serpent. Hated by those determined to uphold the patriarchy, loved by those on death row.

“You will stand trial before governors and kings ...” A time would come

when his words would seem deeply prescient.

A recording

[Go here to see and hear](#) another part of Justin Grounds’ extraordinary lockdown project based on the writing of Teilhard De Chardin.

“Reflection is as the word indicates the power required by a consciousness to turn itself upon itself...”

[\(Justin Grounds\)](#)

A blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you

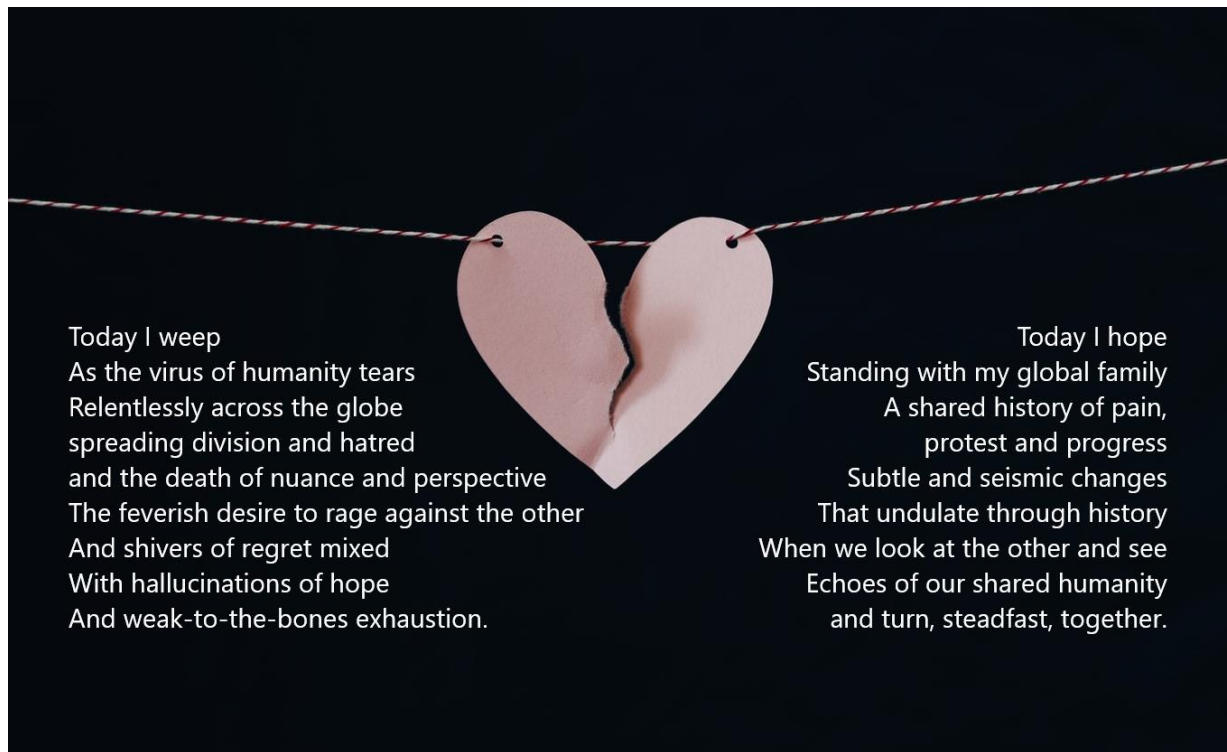
Deep peace of the flowing air to you

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you

Deep peace of the shining stars to you

Deep peace of the Son of peace to you.

Deep peace.



Today I weep
As the virus of humanity tears
Relentlessly across the globe
spreading division and hatred
and the death of nuance and perspective
The feverish desire to rage against the other
And shivers of regret mixed
With hallucinations of hope
And weak-to-the-bones exhaustion.

Today I hope
Standing with my global family
A shared history of pain,
protest and progress
Subtle and seismic changes
That undulate through history
When we look at the other and see
Echoes of our shared humanity
and turn, steadfast, together.

(Words: [Andy Campbell](#))

(Image: [Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash](#))

A closing

Know the truth of peace

And it will set you free

Know the truth of freedom

And you will be at peace.

This series is curated by [Andy Campbell](#) and [Simon Cross](#). This edition features contributions from: ***Roo Bramley (they/them, folk musician, people's historian & amateur carpenter), Andy Campbell (life coach & poet), Liz Chart (observer, sense-tester & way finder), Simon Cross (writer), Justin Grounds (violinist, composer, music producer), Mark Kensett (photographer), Emma Moreton (artist, activist & agitator) & Andy Robertson (writer, broadcaster & ultra-runner).***