



The Church of England
in Essex and East London

Diocese of Chelmsford

Passion Sunday

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

Sunday 29 March, fifth Sunday of Lent

At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

Dear Lord,
weave a silence on to my lips;
weave a silence into my mind;
weave a silence in my heart.

Calm me as you stilled the storm.
Still me, and keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease
Enfold me, Lord, in your peace.

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!

² O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplication

³ If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins
O Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can with reverence serve you

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits
and in his word I hope;

⁶ my soul waits for the Lord
more than the night watch waits for the morning,
more than the night watch waits for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is unfailing love,
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray.

That is the heart of today's psalm on this 5th Sunday of Lent - Passion Sunday. That is the ongoing task for us all at this time of deep need and anxiety in our communities, locally, nationally and globally.

We don't know the exact background of the Psalmist's situation, but clearly it is very severe, for he says, '*Out of the depths have I cried to you O Lord, hear my voice.*'

We are beset by a new virus that threatens us all.

It is time to connect with our loving God more than ever, to cry out daily in our prayers, but our cry, as the Psalmist's, is not a forlorn or uncertain one. Rather, it is a cry of sure and certain hope that the God who came to us in Jesus Christ is in the midst of our sufferings, our grieving, our worries and our serving: for he is our hope and we who are in Christ are the hope of the world, now and always.

So, we wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

Like the Psalmist we wait for the Lord *more than watchman for the morning*. For most of us the waiting is hugely frustrating: I know it is for me! We know we are only at the beginning of this demanding journey of restriction; we do not know when it will end or what the new normal of life will be when we come out the other side.

Though our church buildings are closed, and we are waiting and worshipping at home very differently to normal we remain united in Christ: praying and serving differently. Through our care for the isolated and vulnerable and daily prayers we must be beacons of light and hope as that wait continues. The real necessities of life are now more apparent than ever: love, kindness, human contact and serving one another, especially those in need.

Over the next two weeks we go 'back to the future'; we are invited to walk with Jesus the way of the cross, to see again the whole of his life, the whole of our lives, the whole of the world's life telescoped into 14 days: Passion Sunday to Palm Sunday to Good Friday to Easter Day; Jesus weeping at a graveside, joy at his coming into the city, terror at his arrest, suffering on a cross and a mighty resurrection.

This year we cannot make that journey as we have done in the past, but let's all know afresh that the crucified and risen Jesus comes to us and walks with us ... as **we wait, we watch, we hope, we pray.**

Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that you are the Holy One of God. **Amen.**

John 6:68

A Postscript *Written by Laura Kelly Fanucci*

When this is over
may we never again
take for granted:
a handshake with a stranger
full shelves at the store
conversations with neighbours
a crowded theatre
a Friday night out
The taste of Communion
A routine check up
The school run each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends
May we find
That we have become
More like the people
We wanted to be
We were called to be
And may we stay
That way- better
For each other
Because of the worst.

Peter & Ellen Hill Passion Sunday 2020

