

A Liturgy for Holy Week

Opening Sentences

Jesus said, "If you would be my disciple,
you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me."
—Mark 8:34

Psalm

As the deer desires the water brooks,
so longs my soul for you, O God.
My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God;
when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
while all day long they say to me, "Where now is your God?"
When I think upon these things, I pour out my heart,
when I remember how I went with the multitude, and brought them into the house of God,
With the voice of praise and thanksgiving
among those who keep holy day.
Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul,
and why are you so disquieted within me?
O put your trust in God,
for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance, and my God.

—Psalm 42:1-7, New Coverdale

Poem

The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
the treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

—R. S. Thomas

The Readings

I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."
The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;
it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

—Lamentations 3:17-26, NKJV

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

—Matthew 13:44-46, ESV

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

—John 7:37-38, ESV

Reflection

Now it's night and I am in my room and writing down everything he said before I forget it. He said so little and he explained nothing. He couldn't. But it has come into my mind that what he couldn't explain is that treasure hid in a field in the old story. If one were to spend a lifetime digging for the treasure, and in this time of one's life not find it, one wouldn't have wasted the time. There would be less far to dig in the next time.

Only one must possess the field, whatever it costs to buy it...and though I am able to do nothing else in this life, except only seek, my life seeming to others a *vie manquee*, yet it will not be so, because what I seek is the goodness of God that waters the dry places. And water overflows from one dry patch to another, and so you cannot be selfish in digging for it.

—Elizabeth Goudge, *The Scent of Water*

Closing Prayer

Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may learn to know You in Your humble lowliness and discover You in the sanctifying prose of daily duty. For there, You do truly dwell; it is in this simple duty, whatever may be its form, that we are sure to meet You.

Lord, we are inattentive students and forgetful pupils; it is needful that You repeat to us each day the lesson of Your invisible presence. Increase our love and reverence, that at last we may learn to see You where you are: in ourselves, in our neighbours, in all the events of our life, in our labours, our burdens, our sufferings, and in every sacrifice.

—P. Charles

Benediction

In this Holy Week, may you know the steadfast, sacrificial love of God as revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ, His arms stretched wide in embrace. May He draw you to Himself and satisfy you with the living water, the bright field, the pearl of great price. May you take up your cross with joy and follow wherever He leads. Amen.

Resources:

“The Bright Field” from [R. S. Thomas: Selected Poems](#) (This poem can also be found in [Word in the Wilderness](#) by Malcolm Guite.)

[The Scent of Water](#) by Elizabeth Goudge

Prayer of P. Charles from [Evelyn Underhill's Prayer Book](#), edited by Robin Wrigley-Carr