

2026 08 30 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

So here we are at the end of August – and what a summer it has been! So much heat for such a long time – though seeing clear blue sky is lovely. Today's offering brings home to us that following the way of Jesus is not always easy but can become a bit rocky. Jesus tells his friends what kind of king he will be: one that suffers. And he tells them that they too will suffer if they come after him; it is the only way to find the life that they seek. We are invited to share in Jesus' story, which is as tough as it is wonderfully good. Every blessing to you all – Margaret.

Call to worship:

Come and hear the words of Jesus:

some are hard,

some are for us as individuals,

some are for us as a community;

some are challenging, some are reassuring,

some are difficult to understand and some we would rather not hear.

But come to Jesus as you are and be bold, for he wants to speak to you today words of truth – words of direction – words of love.

Jesus our Saviour, as we stand before the cross to worship you, remind us of the costliness of your ministry and of the enormity of your love.

And protect us from being hindrances to others in their journey of faith. Amen.

We follow in your footsteps, Lord Jesus: you who knew what it was to be betrayed and misunderstood; you who had to bear the knowledge that you were to suffer; you who had to walk alone.

Strengthen us, that we might strengthen one another, and go before us as we seek to live lives that reflect your compassion and love. Amen.

The words to 'Beneath the cross of Jesus' by Keith Getty [b. 1974] & Kristyn Getty [b. 1980] StF 442

1 Beneath the cross of Jesus, I find a place to stand;

and wonder at such mercy that calls me as I am.

For hands that should discard me, hold wounds which tell me: 'Come'.

Beneath the cross of Jesus my unworthy soul is won.

2 Beneath the cross of Jesus his family is my own;

once strangers chasing selfish dreams, now one through grace alone.

How could I now dishonour the ones that you have loved?

Beneath the cross of Jesus see the children called by God.

3 Beneath the cross of Jesus, the path before the crown,

we follow in his footsteps where promised hope is found.

How great the joy before us – to be his perfect bride.

Beneath the cross of Jesus, we will gladly live our lives.

Prayer including the Lord's Prayer:

We thank you, gracious God, for Jesus: for his confidence that beyond his suffering would be glory and beyond his death would be new life.

Keep us firm in our hope that he is both Saviour and Redeemer, and that your kingdom is both here among us and yet to come.

Help us to let go of our fear of the costliness of following his way, and to trust that although, like Peter, we get so much wrong, you will not give up on us. Amen.

How easy it is for a rock to become a stumbling block – for our encouragement to become criticism – for friends to become strangers.

Forgive us, gracious God, when we hinder instead of help – when we put down instead of lift up – when we let go instead of holding on.

Forgive us, we pray, in the name of Jesus, who took up the cross. Amen.

Jesus, you gave up so much to bring salvation, enduring your body being broken and being placed on the cross to pay for our sins. But death was overcome – life polluted by sin is now debt-free – and forever more we are washed clean with loving forgiveness. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 16: 21-28 taken from the Holy Bible – The New Testament [A New Translation] by William Barclay Copyright William Barclay 1968

From then on Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and that he must undergo many sufferings at the hands of the elders and the chief priests and the experts in the Law, and that he must be killed, and that he must be raised to life again on the third day.

Peter caught hold of him and sternly forbade him to talk like that. 'God forbid, Master!' he said. 'This must never happen to you!'

Jesus swung round: 'Get out of my sight, Satan!' he said to Peter. 'You are doing your best to trip me up! Your ideas are not God's, but man's!'

Gaze, Consider and Contemplate – taken from Gazing on the Gospels Year A by Judith Dimond Copyright Judith Dimond 2010

Gaze: gaze on Peter dragging Jesus off to a corner of the room where they are lodging, and Jesus and Peter with their backs to the rest of the group, as Peter berates him! Or perhaps this episode took place as they were walking along on their return from Caesarea Philippi, and a confused Peter drops his impatient step to keep pace with Jesus, pulls him by his sleeve and whispers urgently. Like in a silent film, see their expressions – Peter's earnest bluster and bad-tempered rebuke – you shall never be defeated! See Jesus' face change from an open, concerned listening, to anger. Then Peter steps back as though slapped in the face: for his Master to reject him like this and label him his adversary is more than his passionate nature can bear.

Consider how many of Jesus' parables are about loss and search. The story of the lost sheep and the lost coin are all about someone searching for love's sake – the shepherd and the old woman stand in

for God. These stories we are happy to read to children , for they both have happy endings – the sheep is recovered, the coin found, all is restored and the world goes on as it did before. But now Jesus is not talking in parables, and instead of a sheep or a coin, it is a life that is to be lost; first of all Jesus' own and then his disciples. This is less comfortable and no wonder Peter exploded with outrage. He is focused on the fear of loss and forgets what it is that Jesus wanted them for.

Here Jesus is announcing the destiny which has slowly become clear to him; but the disciples can't take it in and don't seem to remember these predictions till sometime after the crucifixion and resurrection. Though Jesus spoke in simple terms, their hearts would not accept what they heard. We cannot blame them for misunderstanding, for they just could not tally such disgrace and tragedy with their understanding of God's ultimate victory and glory. Nothing in their lives or religion had prepared them for this reversal – and, in truth, we are still trying to unravel this mystery today.

Jesus accused Peter of being a stumbling block – and when we trip over a stumbling block, we lose our footing. Jesus had kept upright when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Perhaps that's what he was remembering when he called out: 'Get behind me, Satan!' Surely, he must have thought, he had passed beyond temptation – yet temptation can appear in many guises.

Contemplate your soul: what do you mean by the word? Are you a divided self, body and spirit?

Surely, the purpose of Jesus' saving work was to integrate the body and soul into one complete self who truly reflects the nature of Jesus and image of God, who so truly imitates him in faith and actions that she or he will be willing to give their life away.

Prayer as you desire to imitate him:

Dear Lord, put into my mind the things of God
And banish the misunderstandings of human beings;
May I never be a stumbling block to the faith of others,
But be willing to exchange the temporal for the eternal
And give up my profit for the kingdom's gain. Amen.

Prayer: Lord God, you reproached Peter because he had only human concerns, but Peter just wanted to protect the one he loved.

We pray for people the world over who find themselves in difficult situations that they would all have someone to care for them and lift them before you.

We pray for all who are persecuted for their faith – for all who are misunderstood – and we pray for those who work tirelessly to address wrongs.

We pray for people whose lives don't always work out right – whether through their own fault, or through no fault of their own.

We pray for the people in our lives who need your protection, Lord, that we will always be faithful in prayer for them and that you guide us as to how best to help them.

Merciful God, hear our prayers for we ask them in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Close: Lord God, you knew what was going to happen to you but you didn't flinch or back away but calmly told the disciples – and us – what to expect. As we go into the week ahead, remind us constantly to look to you in the good and in the tough times. Amen.