

Liturgy in a Dangerous Time



[\(Sapphira Olson\)](#)

#1

Sunday 19 April 2020



(Jesus Appears to the Disciples © Ed de Guzman, 2013)

This liturgy is a free resource for you to use on your own, with those at home, or perhaps in an online group. We'll sometimes give some suggestions about how things could work, but you are of course entirely free to do things in a way that seems right and meaningful to you. We suggest that as you go, you remember the green cross code: stop, look, listen and think.

The people who have contributed to this come from different backgrounds they have different perspectives and ideas – we hope that there will be things here that encourage you, nourish you, and make you think.

Oh, and why 'Liturgy in a Dangerous Time'? This title 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."

At the very least, we can give the darkness a sore shin.

Would you like to contribute to future editions of this liturgy? Word, pictures, sounds, videos... email mail@simonjcross.com to let us know what you have to offer.

An opening

We who read this, together and
apart,
are united in having taken the risk of
living,

And loving,

In a dangerous time.

We are dwellers on a threshold

Caught between birth and death.

Together we will raise our eyes to the
mountains,

And wonder where our help comes
from.

pause



(Sunyu on Unsplash)

A prayer

Wish you were here

So often I have wished for a bit of
alone time – for some quietness
among the noise.

But now I wish you were here.

So often we have wished for a bit of
distance – for some space amidst the
crowd.

But now we wish you were near.

Sometimes I'm tempted to trade
what I have for what I imagine,
To be better.

**Sometimes I'm tempted to exchange
my walk on part,**

For a lead role.

Grant that we would learn the
wisdom of stability,

To treasure what we have.

**As if it were the very best thing in
the whole wide world, which it may
well be.**

Amen.

A song

I can't make you walk

[\(click here to see the video\)](#)

I will build for you a road
Lay the tar and break the stone
I'll dig the dirt up golden brown
Until the road has been laid down
But I can't make you walk
No, I can't make you walk

I will lay for you a path
Through the woods to greener grass
Across the moorland and the down
And take you onto higher ground
But I can't make you,
I can't make you walk
I can't make you,
I can't make you walk
That's up to you

I'll make a stair for you to climb
Close to Heaven's highest heights
Far above the darkest clouds
And the storms of life itself
But I can't make you, I can't make
you walk.

I can't make you, I can't make you
walk

And I can't make you walk, I can't
make you walk

No, I can't make you, I can't make
you walk. (Oh that's up to you)

And I can't make you walk,
I can't make you walk

I can't make you,

I can't make you walk

And I will lead you on your way

Change your darkness into day

Whisper gently in your ear

Words that chase away your fear

And I can help you dream of things

That make you want to live again

And I will even hold your hand

And give you strength to make you

stand

But I can't make you,

I can't make you walk

I can't make you,

I can't make you walk (x3)

That's up to you ... (Oh that's up to
you)

[\(Rob Halligan\)](#)

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A thought

A large number of people today reject the idea God is causing the current pandemic. Unfortunately, a large number believe God allows or permits it. Does that make sense?

Those who say God allows evil imply God could stop it singlehandedly. If God wanted, God could end this pandemic with a solo act of control. For some reason, say these people, God is allowing death, illness, and widespread harm.

Suppose one of my kids began strangling another of my children. Suppose I could step in and stop this act of violence. But suppose I allowed it – and the death of my child – saying, “I didn’t cause this killing, so don’t blame me!”

No one would consider me a loving father if I failed to prevent the evil I could have prevented. Fathers who allow their kids to strangle one another are not loving.

Those who say God permits the Coronavirus make a major mistake. They undermine our belief in a perfectly loving God. Just as a loving father wouldn’t allow his kids to strangle one another, a loving God wouldn’t allow a virus to wreak widespread death and destruction. It makes no sense to say, “It isn’t God’s will, but God allows it.”

(Thomas Oord)

Q: Does this make sense to you?

Q: What is your experience of the ‘nature’ of God?



(photo: Jon Tyson on Unsplash)

An activity

Find a matchbox, and tip out the matches (keep them safe, you can put them back in again later). Take your matchbox on a little wander with you- outside if you can get outside, or around the scruffy edges of your flat or house. See how many different tiny things you can find to fit inside. If there are more than one of you, maybe you can see who can find the most? Or you can share what you've found in a non-competitive way, if some of you find competition triggers a tantrum!

What do you identify with most? Is there something you found, that was busy being free and is now restrained within a box? Or maybe you feel like the box itself, bursting full of a huge amount of different stuff- not just everything you've eaten in quarantine! But ideas and dreams of places to go and people to see that you simply can't realise right now.

Hold your matchbox treasures carefully and reverently. Allow yourself to notice tiny details, small beauties. To wonder at the stories they could tell. To know them, completely, in your hand. To feel yourself known and loved, completely, with all your tiny details, your small beauties, with all the stories you could tell.

[\(Rachel Summers\)](#)



A sound

"Lean on me"

Why not use this as a time of meditation: Close your eyes – what do you see? What do you feel?

[\(Ooberfuse\)](#)

A quote

“If the only prayer you said in your life was ‘thank you’ it will be enough.” Meister Eckhart

A prayer

Thank you.

Amen

**pause* Take a moment to reflect with gratitude on things, people, and times you are thankful for.*

A poem

How can this be?
How is he here?
Our eyes must deceive
Our ears wrongly hear
"Peace be with you"
I can barely comprehend
"Peace be with you"
Oh Jesus my friend

[\(Emma Major\)](#)

A reading

John 20: 19-31

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

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A reflection

Any Distinguishing Marks?

Introduction

There's been lots of discussion about 'Passports' over the past few years; mostly about what colour they should be and whether I'm entitled to get an Irish one because I once had a Guinness. But do you remember how on British passports there used to be a section for mentioning any distinguishing marks – tattoos and birthmarks and suchlike? I remember being absolutely gutted when I got my first passport and under distinguishing marks it said none. NONE! What about the small triangular scar under my left eye where I'd picked chicken pox as a baby. Birthmark on my left wrist. Birthmark on the right side of my neck, that only becomes apparent in the summer and the scar on my left knee – which happened when I ripped my knee open playing chasies around Mr Proctor's car – and I caught my knee on the bumper, the

days when bumpers were metal and jagged. No distinguishing features. Goodness me!!

Our Gospel

In our Gospel when Jesus appears to the disciples it says, 'he showed them his hands and his side.' It's always seemed rather odd to me that this whole passage seems to concentrate on the wounds of Jesus (though I see Candida Moss in her brand new book argues for a translation of 'scars' rather than 'wounds' here) than on the resurrection. Of course we remember this passage because of Thomas rocking up and wanting to touch the wounds/scars/marks. I think it's fair that these wounds (let's stick with wounds) are here the 'distinguishing features' of the risen Jesus in John.

Why? Why does a story about the risen Christ have this focus? The Roman Catholic theologian, Timothy Radcliffe's answer, and I can't get it out of my head as I never thought of it in this way before is that it is

'because he is wounded and raised.' For Radcliffe: when we think of the resurrection, we might be tempted to think it is a stage in Jesus' life. He died, and then he rose and put hurt and death behind him. Maybe you like me have just taken for granted that being wounded and dead are things of the past after the resurrection, just episodes from an earlier moment in the story. The resurrection trumps everything!!?? Or does it??

Radcliffe goes on to point out that in the resurrection the Father gives back to Jesus the whole of his life, all that he has lived. He is now the wounded and risen Christ. You might even say that he is the killed and risen Christ. That might sound a bit odd, a bit paradoxical but it is really important. In an old Latin preface used at Eastertide it says that Christ lives *semper occisus* 'for ever slain'.

For Ever Slain

As I write this I've just seen pictures of mass graves being dug in New York

for the, ever increasing, victims of Covid 19. Of course the victims of poverty and conflict continue to die as well. This passage reminds me of my favourite quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed 75 years ago on Maundy Thursday, that 'only a suffering God can help'. John's Jesus 'for ever slain' is so important because it means that the risen Lord is still in touch with wounded humanity. Radcliffe argues if the resurrection was simply Jesus putting all that behind him, like someone leaving hospital recovered from their wounds, who is now grand, then they would have nothing to do with us now. We might long and hope for resurrection as future comfort, for a God will keep us safe and protected in this life and if that doesn't work there's the guarantee of pie in the sky, opium of the people, roses on the chains whatever, but the reality is we are stuck in the hurt and the pain of life and as remote from God as ever.

I'm sure a number of you have read The Shack, or at least heard of it. whatever the issues in it and there are many, people responded positively to The Shack, I think, because it at least tried to touch the wounded places in our lives. The moment when Papa (God) allows Mack (the main character in the book) to touch the scars on her wrists and says, "I never left him, and I have never left you." I might have many doubts and questions around many of the concepts of God, but the one thing I do think as a Christian is somehow woundedness and scars are integral to the Divine life. Bonhoeffer says this is actually a help : in these really strange and anxious days we are living through, it is good news for people like me and maybe you who lug around with us the scars and wounds of our own experience, that Christ is both risen and wounded.

Amen.

[\(Noel Irwin\)](#)

A poem

Gathered in fear

Isolated from the community that
once nurtured

Each desperate to find a clue

A key

A cypher

To re-create something tangible

To re-enter the world so
unexpectedly

Carpet-pulled from them

To make sense of the impossibly
shattered dreams

To re-connect with hope

And possibility

And life to its fullness...

And here He enters.

(Andy Campbell)

A closing

Let nothing disturb you;

Let nothing frighten you,

All things are passing.

God never changes.

Patience obtains all things.

They who have God,

finds they lack nothing.

Alone, God suffices.

(Prayer of St Teresa of Avila)

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

Andy Campbell (poet & life coach), Simon Cross (writer), Rob Halligan (musician), Noel Irwin (theological educator), Emma Major (lay pioneer minister & poet), Sapphira Olson (trans woman, poet, illustrator), Thomas Oord (theologian & author of 'God Can't'), Ooberfuse (alternative electro-pop band), & Rachel Summers (educator & writer of names of trees on pavements).

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