

# Lent 6

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## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take our flesh upon him and to suffer death on the cross. Grant that we may share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## Isaiah 50:4-9a

{4} The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens-- wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. {5} The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. {6} I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. {7} The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; {8} he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. {9} It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

The third of the Servant Songs in Isaiah. The word "servant" is not used in this passage, but "the similarity of this passage with the second 'Song', together with the use of the first person sing., leaves no doubt that it belongs to the same series." [1] Whybray identifies the Servant of Yahweh with the author of this part of the book of Isaiah, [2] but in the text the Servant remains anonymous.

4. the tongue of a teacher: Literally, "the tongue of those who are taught." This fits better with the second use of "those who are taught" at the end of the verse. The Servant is a pupil who is instructed by Yahweh each day.

5-6: The lessons learned are lessons in humiliation. He is scourged, humiliated (pulling out or shaving the beard), insulted and spit on by his captors.

7: I have set my face like flint: The Servant is adamant, obdurate, inflexible, rocklike. He declares his confidence that Yahweh will help him, that he will not be shamed.

8-9: "The language of these verses is that of the lawcourt." [3] Verse 8 suggests that the servant "had been arrested by the Babylonian authorities and put on trial.... Deutero-Isaiah accepts his sufferings willingly, does not complain about them.... He is confident that Yahweh is on his side, and that he will vindicate him." [4] No one will dare to declare him/her guilty in the face of Yahweh's help.

## Psalms 31:9-16

{9} Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. {10} For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. {11} I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. {12} I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. {13} For I hear the whispering of many-- terror all around!-- as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. {14} But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." {15} My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. {16} Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

9-12: The singer is in distress. Grief and sorrow rather than physical illness are the cause of his/her misery.

12. a broken vessel: Jeremiah 22:28; 48:38; Jeconiah the king and the country of Moab are likened to broken pots.

13. they scheme together against me...to take my life: The psalmist's enemies plot against his life. terror all around: In Jeremiah 20 "Terror-all-around" is the name Jeremiah gave to the high priest Pashhur, who had put him in the stocks for prophesying against Jerusalem. See also Jeremiah 6:25; 20:10; 46:25; 49:29. The phrase is an expression of pervasive fear.

15. *My times are in your hand*: The singer places him/herself in Yahweh's hand, and prays that Yahweh will deliver him/her.

*deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors*: By acting to deliver the singer Yahweh restores his/her honor.

16. Let your face shine upon your servant: A reference to the Aaronic benediction, Numbers 6:24f. It is a metaphor of Yahweh's saving favor (Pss. 4:6; 31:16; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135; Daniel 9:17).

steadfast love: Sometimes translated "covenant loyalty."

**Comment:** As a response to the first lesson the Psalm pleads for rescue from enemies who are plotting the psalmist's death. The singer put his trust in Yahweh for deliverance and salvation. In the context of worship on this day, it may also convey Jesus' confidence in God's protection the midst of his trial and crucifixion

## Philippians 2:5-11

{5} Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, {6} who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, {7} but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, {8} he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. {9} Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, {10} so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, {11} and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The mind that is supposed to indwell the Christians in Philippi is the mind described in this song, a mind of humility and obedience and self-denial.[5] The ancient hymn, which begins with the words "Christ Jesus, who..." is known as the *Carmen Christi*. (In early Christian worship it referred to a hymn to Christ.)

6. *he was in the form of God*: Greek *morphe*, "form" implies that Jesus had the essential attributes of God. There are similar expressions in 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3.

*something to be exploited*: Literally, "did not regard it as a prize," a treasure to be held on to at all costs, like the treasure in the field in Matthew 13:44. The phrase means protecting something one has, while the translation "exploited" suggests the use of a possession for an inappropriate benefit. The point is not that Jesus was tempted to misuse his deity for selfish ends (though the temptation stories in the Gospels indicate that he was), but that he did not insist on his legitimate, divine prerogatives; instead he "emptied himself."

7. *emptied himself*: Greek *kenosis*, to make empty. Russian Christianity has emphasized this "kenotic" doctrine of the Incarnation. G. P. Fedotov writes, "The ideal of the literal imitation of Christ in his poverty and humiliation on earth is an apprehension of religious genius which was to mold permanently the mentality of the Russian people...." [6]

*being born in human likeness*: In Genesis 1:26 God created humanity in his image and *likeness*. In Christ God was born in human likeness.

*found in human form*: *skemati*, form, external shape and appearance, rather than nature.

8: Even in his death Jesus was in charge.

9. *God also highly exalted him*: The self-humbled, obedient Jesus was highly honored in the presence of human beings by being named, by God, as Son of God.

*the name that is above every name*: A reference to the "name" of God, as in Exodus 3:15. The "name" is the tetragrammaton, [YHWH "Yahweh"]. This name is translated in the Septuagint with the Greek word, [*kurios*, "Lord"]. In verse 11 every tongue is to confess Jesus Christ is *Lord*.

10. at the name of Jesus: Literally, "in the name of Jesus." It is through Jesus that the creation worships the Creator.

**Comment:** "The linguistic agreements between the LXX [of Genesis 2-3] and the Greek text of Philippians ii are impressive; and the conception of our Lord as the last Adam is attested Pauline teaching in Romans v.12-17 and I Corinthians xv.20-49.... The parallelism may be displayed in tabulated form:

Adam

Made in the divine image thought it a prize to be grasped at to be God and aspired to a reputation and spurned being God's servant seeking to be in the likeness of God; and being found in fashion as a man (of dust, now doomed), he exalted himself, and became disobedient unto death. He was condemned and disgraced.

Christ

Being the image of God thought it not a prize to be grasped at to be as God; and made himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man (Rom. viii.3), He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death. God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name and rank of Lord." [7]

**Luke 22:14-23:56**

**Or**

**Luke 23:1-49**

{1} Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. {2} They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." {3} Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." {4} Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." {5} But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place." {6} When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. {7} And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. {8} When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. {9} He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. {10} The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. {11} Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. {12} That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies. {13} Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, {14} and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. {15} Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. {16} I will therefore have him flogged and release him." {17} {18} Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" {19} (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) {20} Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; {21} but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" {22} A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." {23} But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. {24} So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. {25} He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished. {26} As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. {27} A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. {28} But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. {29} For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' {30} Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' {31} For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" {32} Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. {33} When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. {34} Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to

divide his clothing. {35} And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" {36} The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, {37} and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" {38} There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." {39} One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" {40} But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? {41} And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." {42} Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." {43} He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." {44} It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, {45} while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. {46} Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. {47} When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." {48} And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. {49} But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

2. They began to accuse him: The accusations against Jesus are that he perverts the nation, that he forbids paying taxes to the emperor (Luke 20:22-25), and that he claims to be a king (Luke 19:37-40).

4, 14, 22: Pilate declared Jesus innocent of crimes against the empire three times.

8-11. Herod...was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time: There are two times in Luke's gospel where Herod is concerned about Jesus, Luke 9:9; 13:31. Herod implicitly confirmed Pilate's verdict.

18-25: Pilate finally gives the verdict they want, released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

26. Simon of Cyrene: In Mark 15:21 he is identified as the father of Alexander and Rufus. Paul mentions Rufus in Romans 16:13. Whether all these are the same people is not certain. Another person mentioned by name in this chapter (though not in this reading) is Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, and who had not agreed with the plan to kill Jesus (Luke 19:47).

27-35: The crucifixion of Jesus.

35. He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one: The irony of Palm Sunday is captured by the ridicule of the powerful. It is because he declined to save himself that Jesus is able to save others. God's power is made perfect in weakness. Pilate knew that he was innocent, but acted out of expediency (verses 23-24). The criminal (verses 40-43) recognized his power and received his promise. The centurion (47) saw, pronounced him innocent, and praised God. The multitudes who clamored for his death, saw and beat their breasts (in celebration) (verse 48).

49. all his acquaintances, including the women: The language is demeaning of those who had followed him, and now distanced themselves from him. In Luke 24:10 Mary Magdalen, Johanna and Mary the mother of James are identified by name.

**Comment:** "The meaning of this text is peculiarly shaped by the Sunday of the Passion, which tries to embrace all of Holy Week. It's not easy. Lectionary shapers have struggled with where to start and stop.... Both short forms begin in middle, with the trial before Pilate, after the Sanhedrin trial, and obscure much of Jesus' active role in his sacrifice. Nevertheless, given an additional gospel reading used with the Procession with Palms (Luke 19:28-40) and John's Passion narrative read for Good Friday worship, the short forms still carry the story well enough, especially the day's ironic focus on Jesus the King." [8]

## Hymns [9]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), Hymnal Supplement 1991 (e.g. 725s) and LBW (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

105 --D--A Lamb Goes  
124/5 --D--The Royal Banners  
754s --II--Jesus! Name of

740s --G--Jesus, Remember (740v)  
661v --G--My Song Is  
101, 108, 121, 741s, 631v, 668v

## Prayers of the People [10]

P or A: Walking with Jesus into Jerusalem where the story of his passion unfolds, we pray to God, saying "Hosanna to the Lord!" We respond, "**Hosanna in the highest!**"

A: Almighty God, the story of Christ's passion fills us with wonder--a story in which a triumphal entry is a march toward death and an executioner's cross is a symbol of life. In humility we thank you for inviting us into this transforming story through our baptism into Christ. Hosanna to the Lord! **Hosanna...**

A: God of all, you desire that every knee bend and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Inspire us to proclaim faithfully the truth of Christ's death and resurrection to those in need of the good news. May our proclamation arise from lives devoted to serving others, as Christ was the servant of all. Hosanna to the Lord! **Hosanna...**

A: God of the suffering, in scripture we see your mercy for the sick and dying. Be with those who suffer in our midst, especially \_\_\_\_\_. Hosanna to the Lord! **Hosanna...**

A: God of love, as we enter Holy Week and its many opportunities for worship, keep our hearts focused upon you in the business and haste of our lives. Ever remind us that this day and all days are made by you, our Lord, and not by human activities and desires. Hosanna to the Lord! **Hosanna...**

P: Let your face shine upon your servants as we go from this place into the world, proclaiming your gospel of love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Notes

[1] R.N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*. Greenwood, SC, 1975, p. 150.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[5] For a detailed examination of the song, and its interpretation, see R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians ii.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*. Cambridge: University Press, 1967.

[6] Quoted in F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1959, p. 82.

[7] R.P. Martin, *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164. See pages 161-163 of Martin's book for a brief history of this interpretation. Gordon D. Fee says there is no linguistic basis for the idea that Paul intended this connection: *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, p. 209.

[8] Jean Larsen Hurd, "Luke 23:1-56," *Lexegete*, 1992, p. 1.

[9] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[10] [http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter\\_c.txt](http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt)