

## Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – the Hall



### Susanna 1:1-9, 15-43<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim. <sup>2</sup> He married the daughter of Hilkiah, named Susanna, a very beautiful woman and one who feared the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Her parents were righteous, and had trained their daughter according to the law of Moses. <sup>4</sup> Joakim was very rich, and had a fine garden adjoining his house; the Jews used to come to him because he was the most honoured of them all. <sup>5</sup> That year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them the Lord had said: 'Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people.' <sup>6</sup> These men were frequently at Joakim's house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there. <sup>7</sup> When the people left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband's garden to walk. <sup>8</sup> Every day the two elders used to see her, going in and walking about, and they began to lust for her. <sup>9</sup> They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice. <sup>15</sup> Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, she went in as before with only two maids, and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was a hot day. <sup>16</sup> No one was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. <sup>17</sup> She said to her maids, 'Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe.' <sup>18</sup> They did as she told them: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; they did not see the elders, because they were hiding. <sup>19</sup> When the maids had gone out, the two elders got up and ran to her. <sup>20</sup> They said, 'Look, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you; so give your consent, and lie with us. <sup>21</sup> If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your maids away.' <sup>22</sup> Susanna groaned and said, 'I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands. <sup>23</sup> I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord.' <sup>24</sup> Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her. <sup>25</sup> And one of them ran and opened the garden doors. <sup>26</sup> When the people in the house heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her. <sup>27</sup> And when the elders told their story, the servants felt very much ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

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<sup>1</sup> The full lectionary reading from Susanna is. 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62

<sup>28</sup> The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death. In the presence of the people they said, <sup>29</sup> 'Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of Joakim.' <sup>30</sup> So they sent for her. And she came with her parents, her children, and all her relatives. <sup>31</sup> Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance. <sup>32</sup> As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. <sup>33</sup> Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping.

<sup>34</sup> Then the two elders stood up before the people and laid their hands on her head. <sup>35</sup> Through her tears she looked up towards Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. <sup>36</sup> The elders said, 'While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. <sup>37</sup> Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her and lay with her. <sup>38</sup> We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. <sup>39</sup> Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than we are, and he opened the doors and got away. <sup>40</sup> We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, <sup>41</sup> but she would not tell us. These things we testify.' Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death. <sup>42</sup> Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; <sup>43</sup> you know that these men have given false evidence against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!'

Hallways and entrance ways can be welcoming or dangerous places. Sometimes we know what is ahead of us and at other time we do not. What is ahead of us may feel safe for some people and not for others. Susanna was in a place that had been safe previously, but the Elders made it not safe for her.

We are at the beginning of Passiontide, on a path towards the cross that may feel familiar and safe at times but also we may not know what is ahead of us, no matter how many or few times we have walked the path before.

Making the path ahead safe for yourself and others can involve many actions, thoughts, words and deeds. What are the apprehensions you have in walking the path to the cross in the next two weeks?

As we turn to focus on the Suffering Christ from Returning to God what does this mean as we reflect on those suffering from feeling unsafe in hallways and entrance ways in those places we know well?

*To listen to: The Lord is My Shepherd*

John Rutter performed by the Cambridge Singers <https://youtu.be/COiQRI4dUjE>

Stuart Townend <https://open.spotify.com/track/4mrkvQerNGKU3bMhcxQ6Vm?si=YrnSHtuQQySWb5pHcaty-Q>

WE beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*

*Scottish Prayer Book Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Lent*