

Lent 5 - Sunday 21st March

Opening Hymn

All people that on earth do dwell
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,
come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost
the God whom heaven and earth adore,
from us and from the angel host
be praise and glory evermore.

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Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

Confession - we acknowledge our sins, and pray for healing and forgiveness

Summary of the Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all. (Pause for reflection)

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion, and acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

Lord, wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me: *cf Psalm 51*
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw *us* to himself
and cleanse *us* from all *our* sins,
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Response to God's mercy and forgiveness:

**Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.**

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.**

*Thomas Obediah Chisholm, William Marion Runyan © 1923.
Renewed 1951 Hope Publishing Company CCLI SONG # 18723*

Collect

Most merciful God,

**who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen**

1st Reading: Hebrews 5.5-10

5 In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

“You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.”

6 And he says in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”

7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. **8** Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered **9** and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him **10** and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Response:

**There is a Redeemer
Jesus, God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.**

**Jesus my Redeemer
Name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Oh, for sinners slain**

**Thank you, oh my Father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done**

**When I stand in glory
I will see His face
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that holy place**

**Thank you, oh my Father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
'Til the work on Earth is done**

*Melody Green Ccli song #11483 © 1982 Universal
Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing*

Gospel Acclamation

**Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
The Lord is a great God, O that today
you would listen to his voice.
Harden not your hearts. (cf Psalm 95.3,8)
Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.**

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord.**

John 12.20-33 (NIV). Jesus Predicts His Death

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. **21** They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." **22** Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. **25** Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

27 "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." **29** The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine.

31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Today's service moves us on towards the solemn events that we know are to come before Easter.

Until this moment John's Gospel has been peppered with the words "My hour has not yet come". Indeed in Chapter 7 and

Chapter 8 the leaders attempted to arrest him but failed
“Because his hour had not yet come’.

Now suddenly, abruptly, Jesus makes the pronouncement
that “The hour... the time... has come”.... “This is the
moment”...

He must have been aware that his own life was going to be
cut short:

Firstly there were the things he said, the things he did, the
people he consorted with, his outspoken attacks on religious
and political authorities - making jealous enemies in powerful
places means that he is unlikely to reach old age!

Secondly - he is a rabbi and a scripture scholar and he knows
well the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. We heard him read from
it in the Synagogue in Chapter 4 of Luke - remember?

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and
on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his
custom. He stood up to read, **17** and the scroll of the prophet
Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place
where it is written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners,
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant
and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were

fastened on him. **21** He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus used Isaiah to announce that he was the Messiah - he must also of been aware of what else it said about the Messiah (Isaiah 53: 4-6)

"Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.
And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!

But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the Lord laid on him
the sins of us all."

Thirdly, I guess that it's once again how it was in the beginning: offered life in all its fullness with God - in a love and intimacy that allowed us to walk with God in the cool of the evening - we chose disobedience and death, and gave death a power over us that ***we ourselves were powerless to break.*** And now we seemingly make the wrong choice again.

Jesus came to show us how to live and how to die, and more. He came as we are, knowing that he would have to go through the valley of the shadow of death - to die for us - but then - for us, to refuse to allow death to hold him!

He tried to explain it to his disciples in those words about the single grain dying in order to make many seeds - a whole harvest. His effect on the world so far *is dramatic*, but confined mostly to those who he has touched directly, those who have met him, heard him speak. However, his death (and resurrection) will effect a change that will affect the whole world - all of creation - for ever.

So in this moment Jesus chooses to accept that his life will mean death - death on a cross.

Jesus says "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." And in the words of Luke - he is steadfast, resolute - as he turns his face to wards Jerusalem and the cross.

In this moment we hear him: "Now I am very troubled. Should I say, 'Father, save me from this time'? No, I came to this time so I could suffer."

Why?

Because God so loved the world...

Because Jesus loved us with his Father's love...

Because we could not free ourselves from the power of sin and death...

Because his obedience, his submission is the way to freedom for us all...

Because only he - fully human and fully divine - could do it for us...

Because this shame is the way to glory...

Because this death is the way to life, life in all its fullness eternal life...

Because God so loved the world...

Response:

**Here is love, vast as the ocean
Loving kindness as the flood
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom
Shed for us His precious blood
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
Throughout Heaven's eternal days.**

**On the mount of crucifixion
Fountains opened deep and wide
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide
Grace and love, like mighty rivers
Poured incessant from above
And Heaven's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love**

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Our Declaration of Faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Amen.

cf Philipians 2.6-11

Intercessions: Pat Goulding - Church Warden and LLW at St Michael's Shefford.

Let us pray.

We pray for the church.

Lord give courage to all Christian leaders, that the sacrifice of Your Son and the good news news of Your love and forgiveness will be loudly proclaimed and heard locally, nationally and internationally.

We pray especially for health and stamina for our local leaders in this busy and challenging period of Passiontide.

We thank you that, in this nation, we are free to worship. In so many places this is not the case. We think especially of those who are persecuted or alienated for their beliefs - Lord be with them and give them strength and fortitude.

Lord in Your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for the world.

Generous God, You created a bountiful and beautiful world with plenty for all, forgive us our greed, our posturing and our intolerance.

We ask You to raise up leaders who will work for peace and justice. We hold before you all areas of conflict, there are so many but we think especially of Mozambique, Yemen and Syria.

Raise up leaders who will work for equality; for women, for minorities, for the disabled and disadvantaged.

Leaders who will enable a world where all are empowered to achieve their full potential.

Lord in Your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Lord we give thanks for your healing power and the miracles of modern medicine. We bring to You those sick in body, mind or spirit, those who are known to us or who have asked for our prayers, may they know the comfort of Your healing touch. (pause)

We we ask for wisdom and compassion for all those involved in the delivery of care.

Lord in Your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Lord with thank You that the number of people in this country dying from Covid-19 is falling and pray that this will happen more globally. Each life was precious and known to you. We

thank You for the lives of all those who have died recently or whose anniversary falls at this time. Be with their families and friends as they grieve their loss. (pause)

Lord in Your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves

“it was for this very reason I came to this hour”

Lord we are so humbled as we acknowledge the price Jesus paid for our redemption. We ask that You would help us to walk evermore closely with You, letting Your light shine through us in our daily dealings with others.

Merciful Father, **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and forever. Amen.

Notices and Birthdays

The BLESSING

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,

to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing ...

Final Hymn

**From heaven you came, helpless babe,
Entered our world, your glory veiled;
Not to be served but to serve,
And give your life that we might live.
This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.**

**There in the garden of tears,
My heavy load he chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.
This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.**

**Come, see his hands and his feet,
The scars that speak of sacrifice,
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered.
This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.**

So let us learn how to serve,

**And in our lives enthrone him;
Each other's needs to prefer,
For it is Christ we're serving.
This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.**

Graham Kendrick. CCLI SONG #. 78897 © 1983 Thank you Music

Heading Out Prayer

As we go, may...

The strength of God. **Guide us**
The power of God. **Preserve us**
The Wisdom of God **Instruct us**
And the Spirit of God...

be within us this day and ever more.

**Let us go out in the power the Spirit
to live and work to His praise and glory. Amen**

To James and Miriam Read our grateful thanks.

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The Power of His Love

"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John 12:32 (NIV)

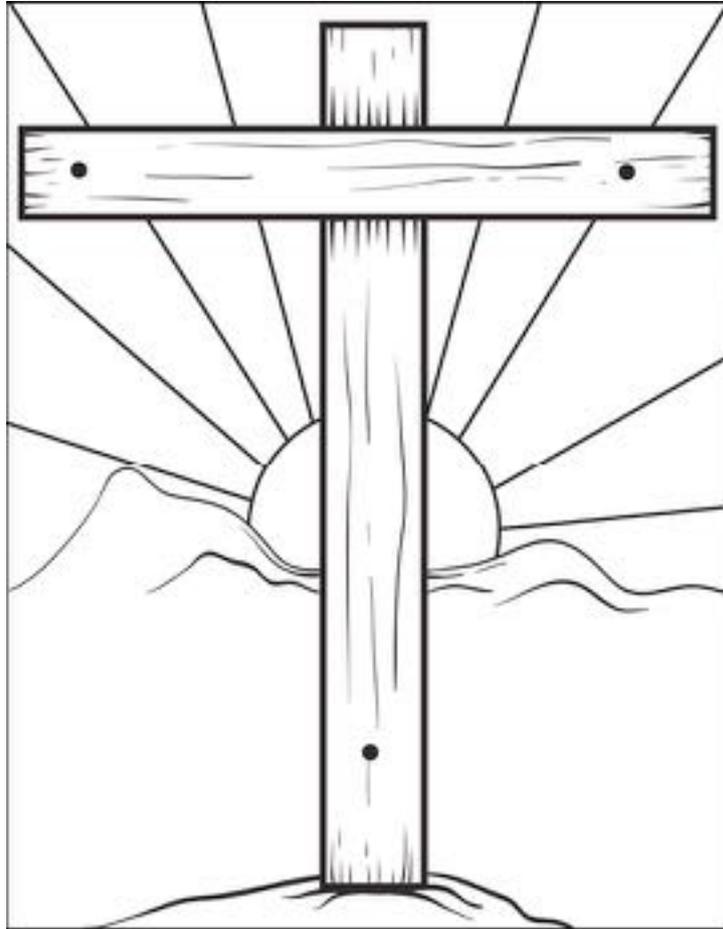
Based on John 12:28-33 (NIV)



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WORLD	DIE	TIME	HEARD	CROWD
ANGEL	HEAVEN	MYSELF	LIFTED	MEN
VOICE	FATHER	GLORIFY	PRINCE	SHOW
JUDGEMENT	DRAW	EARTH	THUNDER	NAME

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
will draw all people to myself."
John 12:32



(Add pictures of some of the people Jesus is calling - you could draw them - or cut and paste from a magazine!)