

12th March 2023 – Morning Service

Third Sunday in Lent

Jill Martin

Call to Worship

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified, mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

StF 462 – Come with me, come wander

- 1) Come with me, come wander,
come welcome the world
Where strangers might smile or
where stones may be hurled;
Come leave what you cling to,
lay down what you clutch
And find, with hands empty,
that hearts can hold much.
- 2) Come walk in my company, come sleep by my side,
Come savour a lifestyle with nothing to hide;
Come sit at my table and eat with my friends,
Discovering that love which the world never ends.
- 3) Come share in my laughter,
come close to my fears,
Come find yourself washed with the
kiss of my tears;
Come stand close at hand while I suffer and die
And find in three days how I never will lie.
- 4) Come leave your possessions,
come share out your treasure,
Come give and receive without
method or measure;
Come loose every bond that's
resisting the Spirit,
Enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.

*Ch) Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools!
Sing hey for the pharisees leaving their rules!
Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets!
Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets!*

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Prayer of Adoration

Glorious King of Heaven, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we worship and adore you. Eternal King of kings, with all your people who dwell on earth we bow in homage at your feet. Almighty King of all creation, with all your wonderful works we bless and praise your holy Name. Immortal King of love and Shepherd of our souls, Lord Jesus who was born for us, and died for us, we humbly offer the songs of our lips, the work of our hands, the service of our lives and the love of our hearts, to your praise and glory. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

We confess Lord, that in our obsession with earthly things and worldly standards we forget you and your kingdom. We take your gifts of Creation for granted; we abuse and pollute them; we use them for our own selfish ends. By our wilfulness, perversity and folly we have grieved your heart of love and added to the sufferings of the world. Yet we come to you in penitence and faith, knowing that you will heal, restore and forgive, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

StF 419 – Almighty God, we come to make confession

- 1) Almighty God, we come to make confession,
For we have sinned in thought and word and deed.
We now repent in honesty and sorrow;
Forgive us, Lord, and meet us in our need.
- 2) Forgiving God, I come to make confession
Of all the harm and hurt that I have done;
Of bitter words and many selfish actions,
Forgive me, Lord, and make me like your Son.
- 3) Forgiving God, I come to make confession
Of all that I have failed to do this day;
Of help withheld, concern and love restricted,
Forgive me, Lord, and lead me in your way.
- 4) Redeeming God, we come to seek forgiveness,
For Jesus Christ has died to set us free.
Forgive the past and fill us with your Spirit
That we may live to serve you joyfully.

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Reading: Psalm 40

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him. Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare.

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire – but my ears you have opened; – burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, ‘Here I am, I have come – it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.’

I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, Lord, as you know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help. I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.

Do not withhold your mercy from me, Lord; may your love and faithfulness always protect me. For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me. Be pleased to save me, Lord; come quickly, Lord, to help me.

May all who want to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. May those who say to me, ‘Aha! Aha!’ be appalled at their own shame. But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, ‘The Lord is great!’ But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay.

Reflection - A Psalm written by David

David calls out to God to save him from his enemies, he feels he is sinking in the mire, drowning in fear and alone and God lifts him onto higher solid ground where he is safe. God gives him a new song to sing from pleading for help he sings a song of praise and joy because of what God has done for him it is for David a fresh start. David says that because of his song of joy others will see and hear what God has done for him. They will acknowledge the power of God alongside his love and forgiveness. He looks to the future and what God will do for all who put aside their false gods and put their trust in the one true God. Looking at the wonders of creation David heaps praise on God and can look forward to a future in God’s hands.

David is aware that God does not demand sacrifices of burnt offerings He asks for hearts of genuine love and so David comes to him in humility ‘Here I am’ as the prophet Isaiah offered himself as God’s servant so David offers his kingship to serve God. He asks that he can fulfil his leadership within the worshipping community and says the law of God is within his heart. David knows that God has answered his prayers on this occasion but there will be times in the future when he will seek out God to save him in other times of trouble and appeals to God that he will always be with him.

Reading: John 2:13-22

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!' His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

The Jews then responded to him, 'What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' They replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection

In John's Gospel the clearing of the Temple courts happened early on in the ministry of Jesus. There have been numerous times in the Old Testament when prophets have told the Jewish people that God is not interested in animal sacrifice. What he desires is justice, mercy, and humility from his worshipping people.

Jesus is in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover with his disciples. He is aware that he is under constant watch from the Jewish leaders, Pharisees, Sadducee's, Rabbi, and the Sanhedrin, who live by the Law of Moses and their adherence to that rather than a heart of love. They believe they are right with God because of their wealth, power and position.

Jesus goes into the Temple courtyard and sees a market. Stalls where men exchange Jewish currency for Temple coins, often giving an unfair exchange rate. He sees men selling live animals, cattle, sheep for animal sacrifice, birds doves and pigeons all at a cost to cater for both rich and poor Jews to pay homage to God with their offering. Imagine the noise of animals bleating, stall holders shouting out their wares encouraging people to buy from them. The smell must have been unpleasant too.

Had Jesus been to the Temple as an adult before this? We know he was presented at the Temple as a baby in honour of the Jewish law and Mary and Joseph sacrificed pigeons for their son. So what was it about this day that Jesus got angry accusing the merchants of changing the Temple courtyard into a market place?

Jesus had reached out to the Gentiles in society telling them they were valuable in the sight of God, that they too were loved. His message was for all people he ate with them, he healed them and offered words of forgiveness and encouragement. Here in the Temple Courtyard a place of sanctuary and prayer there was mayhem, people making money and noise. There was a lack of respect and reverence it was all smoke and mirrors no genuine worship.

God doesn't want sacrifices, in the Book of Hebrews we are reminded of the final sacrifice when Jesus gave himself so we can live - Hebrews 10:5

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, "Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, my God"."

StF 238 – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

- 1) Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but thee,
Yet possessing every blessing
If our God our Father be.
- 2) Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us.
All our weakness thou dost know,
Thou didst tread this earth before us,
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;
Tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,
Through the desert thou didst go.
- 3) Spirit of our God, descending,
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy
Love with every passion blending,
Pleasure that can never cloy;
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,
Nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, Father for the joy of living in your wonderful world, for the love of family and friends and for the sense of belonging to a community, for the privilege of being members of your Church and for your call to service. We thank you for the wilderness experiences when we feel the world is hostile, when those nearest to us let us down, when our fellow Christians misunderstand and when we become uncertain of our calling, your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has experienced and overcome all these things is with us. With awe and wonder we recall the cost of our redemption, when Jesus died on the Cross that we might have life. We humbly pray, that prompted by the Spirit, we may be ready to take up our Cross and follow Jesus and that, sharing in his sufferings, we may experience the power of his resurrection. We ask it in his Name and for his sake. **Amen**

Prayer of Intercession

Loving God, when will we learn true wisdom?

We pray for the world: suffering because too many people believe that to put themselves first is the only wise way; suffering because too many people cannot see the need for justice and the alleviation of want. We pray for leaders and rulers of nations, for those with power and influence in our society, and for ourselves, in our daily lives and work. God of our lives, make us wise, make us loving.

We pray for the church: struggling to cling to its essential faith in you in the face of modern scepticism and scorn; struggling to be a house and people of prayer amid the claims and clamours of everyday. We pray for the church throughout the world, for the congregation here and for ourselves in our daily life and worship. God of our lives, make us wise, make us loving.

We pray for humankind: searching for meaning and hope in lives clouded by want, or suffering, or loss; searching for truth and the right way to live with you, with one another or themselves. We pray for the sick, for the bereaved, for the anxious and for ourselves, in our daily lives and spiritual quest. God of our lives, make us wise, make us loving.

In the name of him who came to turn the values of this world upside down and to establish the values of the Kingdom of love. Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
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.**

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 706 – Longing for light

1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

*Ch) Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.*

2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

3) Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
Shared until all are fed.

4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
Walls made of living stone.

5) Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.

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The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all,
evermore. **Amen.**