

## 6<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – Morning Service

### With privilege comes responsibility

Rev Michael Payne

#### Call to Worship

We have come to praise the Father for his goodness, to thank Jesus for his open hands of love, and to seek the Holy Spirit's blessing. So let us come and worship God as he has invited us to.

#### StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord

- 1) Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy One is here.  
Come, bow before Him now  
With reverence and fear.  
In Him no sin is found,  
We stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The Holy One is here.
- 2) Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire,  
With splendour He is crowned,  
How awesome is the sight,  
Our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around.
- 3) Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place,  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
To minister His grace.  
No work too hard for Him,  
In faith receive from Him;  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

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CCL No. 515642

#### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we praise you that in Jesus you entered into this world, our world, which is indeed your world. In him you have shared as the pressure, pain and temptation that being truly human entails. We praise you that because of this we have assurance that one who is at the heart of God fully understands all that living in this world entails. We know that he has lived life as we do, shared in our emptiness and experienced our limitations; he walked where we walk without stumbling, stood where we stand without falling, and faced our temptations without giving in. We praise you that through the wilderness, Gethsemane and the Cross, he has opened the way to hope and victory. In his life death and resurrection, you offer us a new and full way of living with an assurance of your presence with us forever.

#### Amen

God of all creation, forgive us when we lose perspective and our world shrinks to our size, not yours. Open our eyes to the truth of your grace. Forgive us when we look away from you and so feel empty and seek for fulfilment through taking from others, that which is not ours. Open our eyes to the truth of your grace. Forgive us when the choices we make are self-centred, and do not speak of your generous spirit. Open our eyes to the truth of your grace. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

God of all, who transfigures our smallness with your greatness; unlocks our limitations with your grace; calms our confusion with your faithfulness; assure us that our past is forgiven in Christ and our futures strengthened by his grace and mercy. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

## StF 248 – I heard the voice of Jesus say

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| 1) I heard the voice of Jesus say:<br>'Come unto me and rest;<br>Lay down, O weary one,<br>lay down<br>Your head upon my breast.'<br>I came to Jesus as I was,<br>Weary and worn and sad,<br>I found in him a resting-place,<br>And he has made me glad. | 2) I heard the voice of Jesus say:<br>'Behold, I freely give<br>The living water; thirsty one,<br>Stoop down and drink and live.'<br>I came to Jesus, and I drank<br>Of that life-giving stream;<br>My thirst was quenched,<br>my soul revived,<br>And now I live in him. | 3) I heard the voice of Jesus say:<br>'I am this dark world's Light;<br>Look unto me, your morn<br>shall rise,<br>And all your day be bright.'<br>I looked to Jesus, and I found<br>In him my star, my sun;<br>And in that light of life I'll walk,<br>Till travelling days are done. |
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*Horatius N Bonar CCL No. 515642*

### Reading: Deuteronomy 26.1-11

When you have entered the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land that the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and say to the priest in office at the time, 'I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God. Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians ill-treated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labour. Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.' Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.

### Reading: Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'  
Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."'

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.'  
Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."'

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."'

Jesus answered, 'It is said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

## StF 526 – Lord of all hopefulness

- 1) Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares  
could destroy,  
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break  
of the day.
- 2) Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
Whose strong hands were skilled at the  
plane and the lathe,  
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the  
noon of the day.
- 3) Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
Your hands swift to welcome, your  
arms to embrace,  
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the  
eve of the day.
- 4) Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
Whose voice is contentment, whose  
presence is balm,  
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the  
end of the day.

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## Sermon

All around us in the news over many months, if not many years, we have heard stories of people with privilege abusing their position and not taking their responsibilities seriously. Be they politicians, business leaders, church leaders, sports coaches, youth leaders, parents - the list could go on, many have abused privilege. Be they sporting stars, popular musicians, television personalities, they have a responsibility to be examples of good behaviour and citizenship. With privilege comes responsibility.

We are at the start of lent, a season of reflection and renewal as we journey in our faith once more towards Easter. This journey reminds us of the way of Jesus and his place within a people and a world history. The season begins with us thinking of the Temptations Jesus faced during the 40 days in the Wilderness following his baptism; it ends with us in Holy Week reflecting on betrayal, pain, death and then resurrection.

On Ash Wednesday our focus was upon confession and our seeking God's graceful forgiveness. Where shall we focus our thoughts today, and, as we journey through the next 6 weeks? Can we reflect upon the privilege of being children of God, adopted into his family, and what the responsibility is that is placed upon us.

Many use Lent as a season to give up something, and this can be of use as it encourages self-discipline, but what of our giving generally throughout the year. The reading from Deuteronomy speaks about making an offering to God in thankfulness. The passage, in some Bibles, is titled First Fruits and Tithes. The people of God, Israel, were a chosen people, a privileged people, but they were a people who had a responsibility from God to the nations around them and a responsibility to live according to the guidance and commandments given to them through the prophets. At times they wanted the glory of being a chosen people without the responsibility that went with it. In this passage God's people are, commanded, invited to bring an offering to God and as they give it they are to remember the journey of their people from the days of a wandering Aramean, Abraham, to where they now find themselves in a land of plenty and abundance. In a place of abundance they were to remember from whence they had come and how their individual and community life had changed dramatically; in thankfulness they were to make an offering to God. An offering of the first-fruits an offering of a tithe. They were to remember from where they had come came and all that God had ordained for them and provided for them. In thanksgiving they were to offer to God gifts from the abundance of his provision in this new land of plenty. As those who know more of the story, we remember they were not always good at following the way they were called to go; they were not always faithful to the calling they received, they were not always good witnesses to those about them as to their God's nature. Jesus came to be the new, true, Israel showing how God's people are to live.

The Temptation passage in Luke looks at the challenge of power and the guidance of Scripture. This was near the very beginning of Jesus public ministry. Jesus had just heard himself, at his baptism, declared as the beloved of God; with that high status ringing in his ears how is he to live? Temptations come into his head; he knows who he is and what his calling is but how can it be achieved? In his position of privilege how was Jesus to behave? Was he to take the short cut to temporary glory or the long road to victory? The voice in his head put ideas into his mind but there was a second voice in his head, quoting Scripture, challenging the first and overcoming the first.

What of us in this time and place? We who have faith in Jesus, who have declared allegiance to his way, who have invited God's Spirit into our lives and hearts, have been declared as Peter put it, *"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* (1 Peter 2:9) We who are a people of privilege and calling are also a people with responsibility to those around us and to the God who has called us and set us free in Jesus.

At the start of Lent as we are tempted to think about what we can give up, can we think about making a thanksgiving offering to God. Over the last two years life in Church has changed; in acts of worship the place of our financial offering has changed, many more have transferred to Standing Order rather than using the offering plate or box. But how do we decide what we are to give of our riches and abundance to the work of God's Kingdom? Note I say God's Kingdom and not to the Church. Do we give of what is left at the end of our spending? Do we give what we can afford or do we offer to God a generous thank-offering? Do we give first to God and live off the rest?

At the start of Lent and we think about what we can give up can we think also about our call to generous acts of love to those around us. As we start Lent and think about what we can give up can we think about where God has brought us, from where we have come, and the way he wishes to lead us; not for short-term glory but long term victory.

### **StF 513 – Take this moment**

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| 1) Take this moment, sign,<br>and space;<br>Take my friends around;<br>Here among us make the place<br>Where your love is found. | 3) Take the tiredness of my days,<br>Take my past regret,<br>Letting your forgiveness touch<br>All I can't forget.        | 5) Take my talents, take my skills,<br>Take what's yet to be;<br>Let my life be yours, and yet,<br>Let it still be me. |
| 2) Take the time to call my name,<br>Take the time to mend<br>Who I am and what I've been,<br>All I've failed to tend.           | 4) Take the little child in me,<br>Scared of growing old;<br>Help me here to find my worth<br>Made in Christ's own mould. |  |

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### **Prayers of Intercession & Commitment**

To those who exercise power, to decision makers, to the wealthy and influencers  
**grant wisdom and compassion.**

To the vulnerable and the weak, the hurting and rejected; **grant wisdom and compassion.**

To the oppressed and those imprisoned by life; **grant wisdom and compassion.**

To those just starting and those nearing the end of this earthly life **grant wisdom and compassion.**

To each of us as we look at what we have, and consider what to do with our talents, possessions and time,  
**grant wisdom and compassion.**

In this moment we offer you ourselves, all we have and are, to be transformed by your Spirit into the people you call us to be. We bring our prayers in the Saviour's name; sharing in the words he gave us....

## 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 81 – Now thank we all our God

- 1) Now thank we all our God,  
With hearts and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things has done,  
In whom his world rejoices;  
Who from our mothers' arms  
Has blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.
- 2) O may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in his grace,  
And guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all ills  
In this world and the next.

- 3) All praise and thanks to God  
The Father now be given,  
The Son, and him who reigns  
With them in highest heaven,  
The one eternal God,  
Whom earth and heaven adore,  
For thus it was, is now,  
And shall be evermore.

*Martin Rinkart CCL No. 515642*

## Blessing

As we go from here fill us with joy that we may share hope; Fill us with power that we may proclaim your truth; Fill us with your presence that the world may see Jesus is alive and reigns. **Amen**