

# **Sunday 21 February 2021 – Lent I**

Led by Michaela McNeill, Authorised Lay Minister based in Hardwick

## **Opening Prayers**

The Lord our Redeemer be with you  
**And also with you**

**Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## **Confession**

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,  
we have sinned against you and against our neighbours,  
in what we have thought,  
in what we have said and done,  
through ignorance, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We have wounded your love,  
and marred your image in us.  
We are sorry and ashamed,  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,**

**who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past;  
and lead us out from darkness  
to walk as children of light.  
Amen.**

**Hymn**

*played by Nagi*

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;  
Self denying, death defying,  
Thou to Calvary 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.

*So we pray...*

God of our days and years,  
we set this time apart for you.  
Form us in the likeness of Christ  
so that our lives may glorify you.  
**Amen**

*Silence is kept.*

### **Readings**

read by *Dona McCullagh*

#### **I Peter 3.18-end**

Christ then preached to the spirits that were being kept in prison. They had disobeyed God while Noah was building the boat, but God had been patient with them. Eight people went into that boat and were safely brought safely through the flood.

Those flood waters were like baptism that now saves you. But baptism is more than just washing your body. It means turning to God with a clear conscience, because Jesus Christ was raised from death. Christ is now in heaven, where he sits at the right side of God. All angels, authorities, and powers are under his control.

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

#### **Mark 1.9-15**

About that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee , and John

baptized him in the River Jordan. As soon as Jesus came out of the water, he saw the sky open and the Holy Spirit coming down to him like a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my own dear son, and I am pleased with you".

Straight away God's Spirit made Jesus go into the desert. He stayed there for forty days while Satan tested him. Jesus was with the wild animals, but angels took care of him.

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God. He said, "The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and believe the good news!"

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### Sermon

*Written by the Rev'd Priscilla Slusar, interim lead minister in Haslingfield*

I know that I have been very fortunate in my life to be part of a loving and supportive home and family. This background has helped John and I to pass on this experience to our daughter and, she in turn, has created the same secure home for her family. The present lockdown situation has presented challenges but we know that our secure and loving background of family life will help us to face these difficulties and "ride the storm". Not everyone is so fortunate.

I read a novel a little while ago which focused on a young woman who was abandoned as a baby and never knew her parents. She was brought up in a series of foster homes and children's homes. She watched television programmes or adverts which depicted "perfect" family life and was haunted by her lack of background.

She felt that she had no-one to turn to when she faced challenges or when she achieved something positive. She became a social worker so that she could help other young people who faced the same sort of challenges. It sounds like a very depressing story but it wasn't. However, reading this novel made me appreciate the blessings of a stable and loving family.

Today's gospel reading from Mark tells us something about the parent/child relationship between God the Father and Jesus. As Jesus is baptised a voice comes from heaven saying "You are my beloved son; I am pleased with you." It's a wonderful statement of love and pride. Jesus is just about to start his ministry; it's going to be hard, demanding, at times soul-destroying. It must have been so reassuring to hear those words and know that glow of love and pride.

We're not so good in Britain about expressing our feelings or about passing on our sense of pride in our children. But there are times when it is good to be demonstrative.

The Christian gospel teaches us that God feels like that about each one of us, not just Jesus. God speaks to us in the same way that he spoke to Jesus. God looks at us and says "You are my dear child; I'm delighted with you." This is one of the messages that we try to put across at baptism – that God loves us, cares for us, and will remain with us throughout life.

Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one – sent as the Saviour of all people for all time. As the anointed one he becomes a representation of all people before God. What is true of Jesus is true for all his followers.

In Mark's gospel it says that Jesus saw the heavens open and then the Spirit of God descended upon him. It doesn't mean that a

little door in the sky opened up! “Heaven” means God’s dimension beyond the reality of ordinary life. Instead of being aware of the world around him, Jesus became aware of the presence and wonder of God – like a curtain being pulled back so that the glory of God behind the curtain could be revealed.

We can also glimpse heaven opening before us, but it is hard to hang onto that image and that feeling of the wonder of God’s presence. Most of the time we have to live by faith rather than by sight. But today, as we read this gospel story, Mark is reminding us that we can hear the voice of God saying the same thing to us that he said to Jesus. We can listen to the heavenly voice through the ordinariness of our daily lives. We can ponder on those words “You are my dear child; I’m delighted with you” and know that we are precious to God.

After Jesus was baptised he was sent out into the desert to be tempted and then to face the challenges of his ministry. We are also sent out into the world to face the challenges that are ahead of us. There may be challenges in our working lives, challenges in our relationships, financial pressures, or feelings of isolation because of lockdown. Our faith may be tested in a number of ways. There will be times when we have a sense of failure, times when we can’t cope with the challenges of doing God’s will, times when we feel over-burdened and depressed – but then we have to remember the unconditional love of God. “You are my dear child; I’m delighted with you.”

Amen

### **Affirmation 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.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Written by *Rick Nelms*

Heavenly Father, the gospels tell us that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, praying and spending time with You. Give us the courage to pray and to spend time with You this lent, and to think about those words of Peter; to think about what Jesus really did for us on the cross.

Lord, meet us in the silence. **Give us strength and hear our prayer.**

As Christians, give us the courage to look beyond ourselves to use the gifts that You have given us to do the things that You call us to do in Your world. Give courage to Your worldwide Church, to Stephen and Dagmar, our bishops, to the clergy and lay ministers in the Lordsbridge team, and to all of us in the Church of Christ in the communities west of Cambridge. May the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus bring forgiveness to your people and help us to face the cost of proclaiming salvation in our words and actions.

Lord, meet us in the silence. **Give us strength and hear our prayer.**

In all of the nations of the world; give us the courage to give up war, bitterness, bigotry and hatred and to seek peace, unity and reconciliation.

*In a moment of silence we pray for the nations where courage is needed*

May the shoulders of the risen Jesus, once scourged by soldiers, bear the burden of political and military conflict in our world.

Lord, meet us in the silence. **Give us strength and hear our prayer.**

In the areas of our lives where we are prodigal people, carrying around baggage of unforgiveness, anger, conscious prejudice and unconscious bias; give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy in our families, neighbourhoods and communities.

*In a moment of silence we pray for the situations where courage is needed*

May the presence of the risen Jesus, his body once broken and now made whole, bring peace and direction as we live with one another.

Lord, meet us in the silence. **Give us strength and hear our prayer.**

During this time of pandemic, give us the courage to live for others, giving our prayers, our time, our love, our care and our comfort to all those who serve in the community: from the people who deliver mail, empty bins and run the shops; to scientists and vaccinators; to those who have suffered so much stress and risk in caring for people in need. Give us the courage, in our prayers and words and actions, to support people who have physical, mental and spiritual vulnerabilities as well as people who live in care homes, or who are lonely, homeless, trapped in

poverty, discriminated against or who are imprisoned.

*In a moment of silence we pray for the people on our hearts*

May the wounded hands of Jesus bring his healing, and the light of his presence fill the lives of all people.

Lord, meet us in the silence. **Give us strength and hear our prayer.**

As a part of your Kingdom here on Earth, give us the courage to give up our fear of death and to rejoice with those who have died in faith, both those known to us and those whose faith is known only to You. Give us the courage to support, in prayers and words and actions, those who are dying and those who are bereaved.

*In a moment of silence we pray for the people on our hearts*

May the risen Lord Jesus, whose feet were once nailed to the cross, walk alongside dying and bereaved people, and lead them and all your Church through death to the gate of glory.

Lord, meet us in the silence. **Give us strength and hear our prayer, here and in eternity. Amen.**

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

### Collect

Almighty God,

whose Son Jesus Christ did fast forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:

give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to thy Spirit; and as thou knowest our weakness,

so may we know thy power to save:

through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,

who liveth and reigneth with thee,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray  
**Our Father in heaven,**  
**hallowed by 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 for ever.**  
**Amen**

### **Closing Prayer**

God of compassion,  
through your Son Jesus Christ  
you have reconciled your people to yourself.  
As we follow his example of prayer and fasting,  
may we obey you with willing hearts  
and serve one another in holy love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**