



Sunday 21st March 2021 – Lent 5

Led by Michaela McNeil (Authorised Lay Minister based in Hardwick)

Opening Words

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Hymn

1. My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O, who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh, and die?

2. He came from his blest
throne,
Salvation to bestow:
But men made strange, and
none
The longed-for Christ
would know.
But O, my Friend,
My Friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!

3. Sometimes they strew his
way,
And his sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!'
Is all their breath,
And for his death
They thirst and cry.

4. They rise, and needs will
have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they save,
The Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he
To suffering goes,
That he his foes
From thence might free.

5. Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King,
Never was grief like thine!
This is my Friend,
In whose sweet praise
I all my days
Could gladly spend.

Opening sentences

One thing I have asked of the Lord, this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my
life; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His
temple.

Who is it that you seek?

We seek the Lord our God.

Do you seek Him with all your heart?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek Him with all your soul?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek Him with all your mind?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek Him with all your strength?

Amen. Christ, have mercy

Confession

God of mercy,

we acknowledge that we are all sinners.

**We turn from the wrong that we have thought
and said and done,**

**and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.
For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past,
and help us to live each day
in the light of Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

A Centering Prayer

Said slowly...

May the Strength of God pilot us.
May the Power of God preserve us.
May the Wisdom of God instruct us.
May the Hand of God protect us.
May the Word of God direct us.
May the Shield of God defend us.

May the Host of God guard us.
Against the snares of the evil ones.
Against temptations of the world.
May Christ be with us!
May Christ be before us!
May Christ be in us!
Christ be over all!
May thy salvation, Lord,
Always be ours,
This day, Lord,
and evermore.
Amen.

Scripture Readings

Read by John Barker

Hebrews 5 vv5 – 10

That is how it was with Christ. He became a high priest, but not just because he wanted the honour of being one. It was God who told him,

“You are my son, because today I have become your Father!”

In another place, God says,

“You are a priest for ever just like Melchizedek”.

God had the power to save Jesus from death. And while Jesus was on earth, he begged God with loud crying and tears to save him. He truly worshipped God, and God listened to his prayers. Jesus is God's own Son, but still he had to suffer before he could learn what it really means to obey God. Suffering made Jesus perfect, and now he can save God for ever all who obey him. This is because God chose him to be a high priest like Melchizedek.

John 12 vv20 – 33

Some Greeks had gone to Jerusalem to worship during Passover. Philip from Bethsaida in Galilee was there too. So they went to him and said, “Sir, we would like to meet Jesus”. Philip told Andrew. Then the two of them went to Jesus and told him.

Jesus said,

The time has come for the Son of Man to be given his glory. I tell you for certain that a grain of wheat that falls on the ground will never be more than one grain unless it dies. But

if it dies, it will produce lots of wheat. If you love your life, you will lose it. If you give it up in this world, you will be given eternal life. If you serve, you must go with me. My servants will be with me wherever I am. If you serve me, my Father will honour you.

Now I am deeply troubled, and I don't know what to say. But I must not ask my Father to keep me from time of suffering. In fact, I came into the world to suffer. So Father, bring glory to yourself.

A voice from heaven then said, "I have already brought glory to myself, and I will do it again"! When the crowd heard the voice, some of them thought it was thunder. Others thought an angel had spoken to Jesus.

Then Jesus told the crowd, "That voice spoke to help you, not me. This world's people are now being judged, and the ruler of this world is already thrown out! If I am lifted up above above the earth, I will make everyone want to come to me. Jesus was talking about the way he would be put to death.

Reflection

by Claire Robertson, Team Vicar serving the churches of Barton, Coton, Harlton and Haslingfield

One of my favourite novels is Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre". It tells the story of a young orphan girl, Jane, who is being brought up by her wealthy and heartless Aunt. There are numerous dramatic scenes even within the first few chapters of the book which makes it such an excellent plot for stage or screen.

However, it is not one of these early dramatic scenes but a quiet conversation with a kindly apothecary, Mr Lloyd, that changes Jane's life. Mr Lloyd takes the time to listen to her, which no one else does, and persuades her aunt to send her away to school. Jane is delighted. The Lowood School is far from ideal but, once there, Jane starts to realize her potential.

I first read the book when I was about twelve years old and I have to admit that I was tempted to skip over the conversation Jane has with Mr Lloyd as it seemed rather insignificant, not realizing at that time that that event was crucial to how the story unfolds.

In today's reading from chapter twelve in John's Gospel what appears to be a small insignificant incident, some Greeks asking to see Jesus, signals to our Lord that his death and resurrection are imminent.

Before we look at these verses, in more detail let us glance back to see the context in which this interaction takes place.

The chapter begins six days before the Passover Feast. Jesus and his disciples are at dinner with Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary.

These siblings are close friends of Jesus and live in Bethany just two miles from Jerusalem. When Jesus needs time to relax away from the bustle of that big city at festival time, this is where he comes.

On a previous visit, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead which many had witnessed. His growing popularity after this event has caused the leaders of the Jewish people to conspire to kill both him and Lazarus. They are afraid of the possible

response from the Roman authorities to the gathering crowds who follow Jesus and what this might mean for their religion and their privileged position within it.

At the meal at Bethany, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with a costly perfume and wipes it away with her hair. When she is criticized by Judas Iscariot for her extravagant and, by the conventions of the day, scandalous behaviour, Jesus protects her.

He says, "Leave her alone. She keeps this perfume for the day of my burial."

If you look through the gospels, Jesus is always protecting and defending women in a society that did not allow them a public voice. In fact, Jesus is always protecting anyone who is vulnerable and voiceless and, as his followers, we are called to do the same.

By the next morning, a crowd has gathered and this crowd accompanies Jesus and waves palm leaves as he enters Jerusalem on a young donkey. As time passes more and more people join the crowd to the consternation of the Pharisees. It is at this point, when tensions are running so high, that some Greeks approach Philip in today's gospel reading and ask to see Jesus.

Philip doesn't go immediately to Jesus. First he tells his friend, Andrew, and together they tell Jesus.

From looking through the gospels we can see that both Philip and Andrew are natural missionaries – they are always bringing people to see Jesus. In chapter one of John's gospel,

Andrew spends the day with Our Lord and immediately afterwards brings his brother, Peter, to Jesus. The next day Jesus goes to find Andrew's friend, Philip, who then goes straightaway to fetch Nathaniel and bring him to meet Jesus.

Philip and Andrew are also clearly approachable. When the little boy with five loaves and two fish offers his lunchbox to feed thousands of people it is Andrew he goes to.

Sometimes we can imagine that to be a missionary we have to be a wonderful orator but if we take Philip and Andrew as role models they were just kind and approachable followers of Jesus who listened to people's needs and introduced them to their Lord. That is all we need to do, knowing that the Holy Spirit is working both within the church and outside it.

The Greeks approach Philip because he is Greek and because Philip is a team player he involves Andrew too. Jesus is surrounded by probably hundreds of people so Philip and Andrew could have been tempted to say,

“Jesus is a bit busy right now, could you come back tomorrow?”

But they don't! Together they tell Jesus that the Greeks are asking to see him and in John's gospel, “to see” means “to believe”.

Jesus immediately realizes the significance of this moment. His message of love and peace will now cross the boundaries of culture and race to reach all the world. However, in order for that to happen he must be raised up on the cross and die. It is only after this happens that his resurrection can take place.

This seems a strange way for Jesus to be glorified, but that is the paradox of the Christian faith. As Jesus reminds us, in this passage, to find our life in him we must lose it. This means that little by little, and this is a process not a one-off event, we must all die to our need for admiration, success and power. We must be messengers of peace and a voice for those who are voiceless. One way to do that more effectively is to get better at listening.

Over the next few months, there will be a number of exciting initiatives starting across the Lordsbridge Team to increase our listening skills. Do please read your newsletters from cover to cover so you don't miss out on something Jesus may be calling you to.

During this pandemic we have all become much more aware of the inequalities in our country and in the world between those who have plenty and those who have so little. Jesus came to bring good news to the poor. May we as his followers do all we can to draw people together and help to make God's kingdom come. We might feel that our contribution would be insignificant, but as we have heard today small acts of kindness can have far reaching consequences. Amen

We hold Silence

Declaration of faith

To whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life,

and we have believed and have come to know

**that You are the Holy One of God.
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.**

Prayers

by Clare Crang

We bring our concerns for the world and desire for justice and peace to our Creator God.

Let us pray for the church.

We pray for your church worldwide, especially in those areas where there is conflict and physical aggression. We ask that you will give your people courage and faith.

We pray for those of us who live in places where a life of faith is relatively easy. Help us to grow into the people you made us to be, to use the gifts you have given us well and wisely. so we can encourage each other and bring your kingdom closer in this world...

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

Let us pray for creation, society our Sovereign and those in authority.

We thank you for the world you have given us, and its diversity - the huge sea mammals and tiny microbes, massive mountains and sandy deserts, birds that fly and creatures that live in the depths of the ocean. Teach us what it means to respect and nurture this world that you have given us...

We pray for our government and leaders across the world, and for all in positions of authority, that they will use their power responsibly and to the good of all. We pray that you will bring us soon out of this difficult time of change and upheaval, and that whatever lessons need learning, will be learned for the future...

We pray for our queen and the royal family, their private lives and public difficulties...

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

Let us pray for our local communities.
We thank you for the ways that we have been supported in our daily lives by the kindness of others over the last year. We pray for those businesses that have been hard-hit during lockdown, for people that are working long hours and for those who do not have work. We pray too for those who are caring for others at a time when we are still restricted in what we can do outside of our homes. We pray for children as they continue their schooling and for parents and teachers...

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

Let us pray for those who suffer.
We pray for all who are unwell, at home or in hospital or care homes, for those who are depressed or with other problems that mean coping with everyday life is difficult. We pray particularly for any known to us...
May we all know your life-giving spirit within us.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

Let us pray for the communion of saints
We thank you for the lives that you have given us to live, for
the lives of those who have lived before us and from whom
we can learn, and for those who will come after us to
continue when it is our time to leave.

Merciful Father,
**Accept our prayers for the sake of your son, our
Saviour Jesus Christ**

The 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**

The Lord's Prayer

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

**Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those that sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power and glory
Are yours
For ever and ever
Amen**

Hymn

1 O Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
Be thou for ever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If thou wilt be my guide.

2 O let me hear thee speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
Thou guardian of my soul.

3 O Jesus, thou hast promised
To all who follow thee,
That where thou art in glory

There shall thy servant be;
And Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend.

4 O let me see thy footmarks,
And in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
Is in thy strength alone;
O guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then in heaven receive me,
My Saviour and my Friend.

Final Prayer

Christ, as a light illumine and guide us.
Christ, as a shield overshadow us.
Christ under me; Christ over us;
Christ beside me on our left and our right.
This day be within and without us, lowly and meek, yet all-
powerful.
Be in the heart of each to whom we speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks unto us
This day be within and without us, lowly and meek, yet all-
powerful.
Christ as a light; Christ as a shield;
Christ beside us on our left and our right.

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with us, wherever He may send us.

May He guide us through the wilderness, protect us through the storm.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us this day and forever more. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen