

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM
OF CHURCHES



SUNDAY 7th March - Lent 3

Led by the Rev'd David Newton

Opening Words

Welcome in the name of Christ.
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
and also with you.

Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal:
have mercy on us.

**Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal:
have mercy on us.**

Eternal God, source of all blessing,
help us to worship you
with all our heart and mind and strength;
for you alone are God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Meditation

Using a simple mantra...

Begin by centring yourself and focus on your breath.

When you are calm and fully present begin repeating this simple Christian mantra:

[As you breath in, slowly say] 'Lord Jesus Christ'

[As you breath out, slowly say] 'Saviour of the World'

We repeat this over and over, sensing God's presence in the stillness and silence, and letting our heart take in this truth.

Song

'Light for the World' The Poor Clare's of Arundel.

You are love, you are wisdom, you are charity. You are patience, you are sweetness, you are beauty . . .

Prayer of Confession

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. Let us confess our sins remembering before God the times when we have fallen from temptation into sin.

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:

fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our faith:
fill us with your Spirit.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust:
fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Readings

Ann Roebuck

I Corinthians 1.18-25

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the

wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 2.13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection

*By the Rev'd Priscilla Slusar, interim lead minister in Haslingfield.
[Priscilla steps down from this role today as Claire is licenced as
Team Vicar this evening. We are delighted that Priscilla will
continue to minister amongst us across the Lordsbridge Team]*

I wonder how you are feeling about the impact of lockdown on our worship. I know that I am missing worship in church – there'll be quite a celebration when we are able to return to services together in church! However, we are fortunate to have so many alternative ways of meeting together and sharing worship. In the past we would not have thought of having zoom services or pre-recorded audio services. We have been encouraged to be more creative in worship, but we have also learnt to appreciate our church buildings even more. We have learnt to value the beauty and peace they contain, and the sense of prayer which is embedded in the stones from generations of worshippers. Maintenance of churches can be a headache for PCCs and a drain on parish finances but that is outweighed by the atmosphere created in acts of praise and worship drawing us into the presence of God.

All of this makes the reading of today's Gospel even more shocking. Jesus is angry, even aggressive, in his response to what he sees in the Temple. This is not our usual image of Jesus – Jesus as compassionate healer, Jesus as teacher, Jesus who loves the innocence of little children.

For the Jewish people the Temple was the sign of the presence of God; God's dwelling place among them. But what does Jesus see in the Temple? People selling cattle, sheep and doves and money changers sitting at tables.

People had changed his Father's house into a place of commerce. Jesus was enraged!

Instead of worshipping God, people were making an idol of money. They were selling animals for sacrifice at an unjust price. The money changers were taking a commission on all their transactions, exploiting people who were already poor because they had to pay temple tax with temple money rather than Roman coins. It was not a place of tranquillity and prayer that we usually associate with worship.

Then the scene changes as Jesus responds to what he sees. Imagine the commotion: the screaming and shouting, the noise of the animals, the sound of money falling to the ground, and people running in all directions. The money changers and those trying to hold on to their animals shouting in fury and the whole place in chaos! Jesus is horrified that "His Father's house", this holy place, has been turned into a place of commerce, a marketplace.

Then the Temple priests enter the scene – they've either been summoned by the affronted merchants or they have responded to the noise of the commotion. They challenge Jesus, asking on what authority he has done these things. Jesus' response is the crux of this gospel story. He says that the sanctuary will be destroyed and he will raise it up again in three days. We know that he is referring to the sanctuary of his body because we know the full story of his death and resurrection. But the disciples did not realise the significance of his words until after the resurrection.

Jesus is revealing the new order. The Temple is a place of holiness, but now his body is the new Temple, the place of

holiness where God dwells. Jesus has brought a new way of life to those who believe in him. God is no longer a remote being but is now present among humanity in the person of Jesus. God with us – Emmanuel. This is the good news of the gospel. God dwells in the body of Jesus and Jesus invites us to a closer relationship with God through him.

Jean Vanier, a philosopher and theologian, who established communities for people with disabilities, believed that all human beings are called to be the home or dwelling place of God. We are challenged to value each person as a being where God resides. Our bodies become the new Temple, where God is present. Through this belief we are able to treasure each person and see their individual worth. There is an inner peace in each person where the Spirit of God dwells. It is our mission as Christians to recognise this, and from this flows our love for others – as Jesus taught us.

This belief in God's presence within and amongst us draws us closer to each other. As we come together to worship, we are the body of Christ. We may not be able to worship in a church building but the church is in us and among us. In the midst of the demands and concerns of daily life we can come together with others as a community of believers, to listen to the word of God, to feel the Spirit of God among us, and to give thanks for Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Amen

Hymn

**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.**

Affirmation of Faith

**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

In holiness and reverence, let us pray to the Lord of the Church and of all creation.

Keep your Church secure from the dangers of worldliness and greed. Fill us with a desire to search for your truth, that we may transform the world. Establish in us a community which is a sign of God's love to all people, a source of encouragement and strength, and a beacon of hope to all who are in need. Give grace to your ministers, to preach the Gospel of Christ and to fulfil your commandments both in their words and in their lives.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Pity the world where ignorance and prejudice often rule. Give true wisdom to all in authority so they may work with compassion and justice, to establish and protect the dignity and equality of all in society. We pray for world leaders as they manage the economic challenges of lockdown. We pray for international cooperation to ensure Covid treatments and vaccines are shared equitably around the world, especially around poorer countries. Pardon and cleanse the

individuals and organisations whose goodness has been corrupted by love of gain.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Bless our families and friends and keep them in purity of faith and righteousness of living. Instruct them in ways of goodness; prepare them for both joy and sorrow; provide them with strength and relief in times of suffering; and protect them within your arms of love.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Look with compassion on the sick and the suffering; those undergoing treatments and surgery; those who are lonely and bereaved; those who are concerned over loved ones and those who are anxious or depressed. Bring them healing, comfort and protection. Be their strength, shield and provision. Be their security and close companion.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have died in the body, that they may be raised in Christ. In silence, we remember those we love who are no longer with us.... Bring them to the joy of your heavenly Temple, where worship is perfect and eternal.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We pray that we may be worthy to worship in the Temple of the Lord.

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

The Collect

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 is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

As our Saviour has 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 for ever. Amen.**

Blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

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