



Morning Worship
Sunday 6 February 2022
The Fourth Sunday before Lent
Led by Michaela McNeill, ALM

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you
and also with you.

Opening Prayers

Let us pray.

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful people,
and kindle in us the fire of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Special Prayer for the Queen's accession

Bountiful God, giver of all good gifts,
we give thanks for the many years and long reign of our Queen;
Bless our food, our neighbourhood,
and our enjoyment of each other's company.
Help us to learn from Queen Elizabeth's commitment
to her people,
so that our community may be strengthened
and all may flourish.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the King of love. **Amen.**

Hymn – Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven

sung by St Martin's Voices

- 1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?
Alleluia, alleluia,
praise the everlasting King.

- 2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to our fathers in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless:
Alleluia, alleluia,
glorious in his faithfulness.

- 3 Father-like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes:
Alleluia, alleluia,
widely as his mercy flows.

- 4 Angels, help us to adore him,
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space:
Alleluia, alleluia,
praise with us the God of grace.

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

Prayer of Penitence

The Spirit of truth will convict the world of guilt about sin, righteousness and judgement.

We have grieved the Holy Spirit,
In sorrow we confess our sins.

‘I was hungry and you gave me no food,
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.’

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

‘I was a stranger and you did not welcome me,
naked and you did not clothe me.’

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

‘I was sick and you did not visit me,
in prison and you did not come to me.’

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Meditation on Psalm 138

1 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods will I sing praise to you.

2 **I will bow down towards your holy temple
and praise your name,
because of your love and faithfulness;
for you have glorified your name
and your word above all things.**

3 In the day that I called to you, you answered me;
you put new strength in my soul.

4 **All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.**

5 They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,

that great is the glory of the Lord.

**6 Though the Lord be high, he watches over the lowly;
as for the proud, he regards them from afar.**

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you will preserve me;
you will stretch forth your hand against the fury of my
enemies;
your right hand will save me.

**8 The Lord shall make good his purpose for me;
your loving-kindness, O Lord, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.**

Bible readings by Rick Nelms

Genesis 4.1 – 9

Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced a man with the help of the Lord.” Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”

Luke 10.25 - 37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Sermon by David Newton

In this period between Epiphany and Lent we have 4 weeks to go off-piste and explore something that is less of direct re-telling of the Gospel narrative. And so, for these 4 weeks we are heading to Genesis, to the book of beginnings, and specifically that early section of Genesis which sets down those crucial myths that have for millennia undergirded our sense of who we are.

The first 12 chapters of Genesis – the chapters that take us from Creation right up to the calling of Abraham – set down the foundations of all that is to come in the rest of the great narrative ark of scripture.

Traditionally Genesis was seen to have been written by Moses, but most modern scholars suggest that Genesis was probably written quite late in Israel's history. That should be of no surprise, nor should it pose much of an issue for us. The idea that those foundational narratives took centuries to form might in fact help us to have confidence in them.

You can imagine generation after generation re-telling these ancient stories, and over time the narratives change a little to become 'more true', to reflect reality as it is experienced by people a little bit more faithfully.

And then at some point, perhaps around 500 BC these myths were written down. They went from oral tradition to scriptural form, shaping our understanding of who we are and what it means to be creatures of the creator.

These myths are – I believe – absolutely crucial for our sense of identity, for our understanding of what it means to be human. Indeed, it seems to me that the loss of these corporate myths in our society is a catastrophic loss for us all. Without the ancient stories about humanity that ground us, that give us foundations, how are we meant to understand our place in the world? Are we simply to make it up as we go along? Do we define our own identity, place, and meaning?

Our society tries to do just that, but I'm not convinced by its efforts, and I would rather turn to these ancient myths to begin to understand ourselves a little better.

The first myth of course is that of Genesis 1, of the creation. And really, it doesn't get any more fundamental than that. It poses the question to us: do we perceive ourselves as creatures or as self-made?

As a creature (ie one who is created) we understand life to come to us as a gift, we understand our dependence on other creatures and the rest of creation, we see ourselves as belonging to the earth. From dust we come and to dust we shall return. Alternatively, we could see ourselves as just a blob of proteins spontaneously appearing without meaning and without purpose. We make ourselves what we will. We have no particular purposeful connection with other blobs of proteins, and we do what we can to escape the dust.

The myth of creation begins it all. We start with the foundation that we are creatures – gifted, dependent, and of the dust. Then, of course, we come to Genesis 2 and 3, to the myth of the 'fall'. Here we begin to understand that the world is not as it should be. It was made good, but it is not good, or not purely good, anymore. Our desire to be gods got the better of us. Again, what a basic and crucial foundational myth for understanding who we are. We are creatures, but we don't want to be creatures. And our desire to be something other than a creature has made a mess of our relationship with Creator, fellow creature and the rest of creation.

As we look around us today, that myth – it seems to me – interprets the world we see and live in very well. Climate change, precarious peace, horrendous inequality. We have tried to forget our identity as those who are gifted, dependent, and made of dust. So then, with those foundations laid we turn to Genesis 4 and to our foundational myth for the day. The story of Cain and Abel.

This myth is, I think, exposing the same reality as we met in Genesis 2 and 3, but giving it a new gloss, a new perspective. It is like a second (or third) painting of the same scene, but with different colours.

This story paints a picture of another dangerous desire. Instead of the desire to be the Creator, in this story we meet the desire to be better than our fellow creatures. We meet the problem of jealousy. Cain, who grows fruit and vegetables just can't compete with his brother who has lambs baaing and cows mooing. And so, in a fit of jealous rage he disposes of his brother.

And then comes the fateful question, the one question that hangs over the whole of the scriptures, that haunts every page, and indeed should be a spectre that follows us each and every day. 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

Cain's rhetorical question is obviously trying to suggest that the answer is NO, of course not. Except, one can hear in Cain's voice that even he doesn't believe that.

Cain knows the answer. Cain knows the answer is yes, and he's pretending to himself, hiding behind a bravado of self-preservation.

Am I my brother's keeper?

And so the question comes back again and again throughout the scriptures until it is picked up and given a decisive answer in Christ. Am I my brother's keeper? Or, as the Pharisee asked, 'Who is my neighbour?'

In Luke 10 we have the counter-myth to Cain and Abel. The story of the outsider, shunned, and excluded person who understands

that the man he meets on the road is indeed his brother. And that story itself points us to the Christ. The one who was rejected, hung on a tree, and when the nails were driven in, still cried out from the cross, 'I AM my brother's keeper'. Amen.

Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
**maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father.

**God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,**

begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made,

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried.**

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living
and the dead,**

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

**With the Father and the Son
he is worshipped and glorified.**

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Intercessions by Fiona Whelan

Dear Lord, as we gather together this morning to give You thanks and praise, we offer up our prayers of thanksgiving for her Majesty the Queen on this the platinum anniversary of her accession to the throne and as Head of the Church of England.

At her Coronation, as she made her vows to serve the country she declared “God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it”

We give You thanks for her strong faith which has guided her, and us, through so much over the last 70 years.

We remember and give thanks for the life of her father, King George VI, on this the anniversary of his death. Let light perpetual shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

And we pray for her successors Princes Charles, William and George. May they, in the future, serve with her faith, values and commitment to duty.

O Lord our God arise,

Scatter her enemies,

And make them fall:

Confound their politics,

Frustrate their knavish tricks,

On Thee our hopes we fix:
God save us all.

Thy choicest gifts in store,
On her be pleased to pour;
Long may she reign:
May she defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the Queen!

Lord of all faithfulness, **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord, we pray for peace throughout the world this morning. For peace at home, in the Commonwealth, for peace throughout all the countries where her Majesty is Head of State, and for all countries where there is unrest. We pray in particular for the people of the Ukraine, Russia, Syria and Myanmar currently facing such hardship and difficulties. May Your love shine a light on their darkness. And may the Holy Spirit guide those seeking to find a solution to the political unrest in these areas.

Lord of all faithfulness, **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord, You have bountifully provided so much for us, help us to be worthy custodians of this beautiful planet. We pray for the scientists and ecologists seeking to prevent more damage. We pray for those currently affected by climate change as it changes their living environments. And we pray for those affected by natural disasters - in particular the people of Tonga as they recover from damage caused by the recent earthquake and Tsunami. Closer to home we pray for the families of those killed or injured in the recent storms, and for those rebuilding after the damage.

May we cherish and protect all that You have provided us with.
And may we ceaselessly strive to make sure that the needs of all,

rather than the few, are met with all that You have provided us with.

Lord of all faithfulness, **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord as we come to the end of another turbulent week of politics we pray for Your wisdom to guide our politicians locally, nationally and internationally to act in the best interests of those they serve.

May Your love and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit guide them to make the right decisions to benefit the lives of those they represent.

Lord of all faithfulness, **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord we give you thanks for our Ministry Team who provide so much and help us to worship You in ever more creative ways. For Stephen and Dagmar our Bishops, for David and all who lead our services of worship. For our ministers, LLMs, ALMs and all the many volunteers. For those who make the house groups and prayer circles possible. In particular we give You thanks for the freedom to publicly worship You, and for her Majesty who leads our Church.

As we continue with our period of Interregnum, we ask for Your guidance and wisdom for those who may be drawn to apply to join the team, and for those who will be called upon to interview and select a new minister. May the Holy Spirit guide them in all that they do.

Lord of all faithfulness, **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord, as we emerge from the long darkness of winter, spiritually, physically and emotionally, we pray for all those who have found it a hard and lonely time. And we remember all those we have lost during this time.

Especially those for whom we now pray:

Silence is kept

As we start to emerge into the light of spring with give You thanks for all that is to come and ask for your strength to guide and strengthen all those who are troubled.

We pray to you in silence now for all that troubles us, and for all that we give You thanks for. Your love is without limit and You know all that we hold in our hearts

Silence is kept

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

The Collect for the Accession of Queen Elizabeth II

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and all who are in authority under her; that they may order all things in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace, to the honour and glory of your name and the good of your Church and people; 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

As our Saviour 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.**

Hymn – The Lord's My Shepherd

- 1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want:
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.
- 2 My soul he doth restore again,
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his own name's sake.
- 3 Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,
yet will I fear none ill;
for thou art with me, and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.
- 4 My table thou hast furnishèd
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.
- 5 Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me;
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.

Francis Rous (1579-1659), William Whittingham (1524-1579), Scottish Psalter (1650)

National Anthem to celebrate the accession of Queen Elizabeth 70 years ago today.

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,

God save the Queen.
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save the Queen.

Conclusion

The almighty and merciful Lord,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
bless us and keep us.

Amen.