

Worship at Home for Ash Wednesday 17th February 2021

Opening Prayer:

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, since the early days Christians have observed, with great devotion, the time of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection and prepared for this by a season of penitence and fasting. By carefully keeping these days, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel, and so grow in faith and devotion to our Lord. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the church, to the observance to a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy word.

The Collect:

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

The Gospel of John. 8: 1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again".

Reflection on the Gospel

This story tells of people who came to Jesus from different perspectives. The Pharisees and scribes were certain that they were right, and the woman caught in the act of adultery, knew she had done wrong. Their meeting with Jesus proved to be a catalyst for all of them. The Pharisees and scribes, through the words of Jesus were able to see that they too were sinners, like the woman they were accusing; none of them were perfect. The woman, expecting punishment for what she had done wrong, was told by Jesus to turn away from what was bad in her life and start anew, which must have left a lasting impression on her. We all like to think we are perfect, it is only others who do wrong, that is our first sin, but when we meet with Jesus in prayer and presence, we too can be the receivers of a life-giving experience. As he himself has said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God:

God the Father, **have mercy upon us**

God the Son, **have mercy upon us**

God the Holy Spirit, **have mercy upon us.**

Trinity of love, **Have mercy upon us**

Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we have sinned in thought word and deed.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

Lord have mercy.

We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Lord have mercy.

We confess to you Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

Lord have mercy.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our exploitation of other people.

Lord have mercy.

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

Lord have mercy.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

Lord have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship and our failure to commend the faith that is within us.

Lord in your mercy.

Accept our repentance Lord for the wrong we have done, for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

Accept our repentance Lord.

For all false judgements, for uncharitable thoughts towards our neighbours and for our prejudice and contempt towards those who are different from us.

Accept our repentance Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

Accept our repentance Lord.

Restore us good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

Favourably hear us for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

that we may show your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,

bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly, with you our God. Amen

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.”

God our Father, the strength of all who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness, we can do nothing good without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing:

Christ gave you grace to grow in holiness, to deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow him; and the blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those you love, this day and always. **Amen**

Reverend Irene