

Sunday Worship at Home, 21st March, 5th Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayers:

God meets us in our scattered lives,

Let us worship him together

Hear our voice, O Lord, according to your faithful love,

According to your judgement give us life. Amen

A Prayer of Confession:

God shows his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Let us then show our love for him by confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

In a dark and hurting world, we have not held out the light of life. **Lord, have mercy.**

In a hungry and despairing world, we have not shared the bread of life.

Christ, have mercy.

In a cold and loveless world, we have kept the love of God to Ourselves.

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**

The Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passion Sunday)

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world:

lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace

through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and

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

Bible Reading: John 12:20-33

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. ²⁷ 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' ³⁰ Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people[Ⓜ] to myself.' ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Reflection on the reading:

Today is Passion Sunday, and Passion actually means suffering. As the Gospel writer said, Jesus's words this morning were to indicate the manner and reason for his death. He says: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains just a single grain but if it dies it will bear much fruit". Without that sacrifice it will not fulfil its potential and its mission and the reason for the seed's existence will be no more than a wasted opportunity. His death on the cross will save humanity but will cost him everything. This passage, like so many in the bible has multiple layers, more than one meaning and more than one target audience. Jesus is talking to his disciples and the other listeners about his own path but notice that he is also talking about their path.... And ours. "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am there will my servant be also". There is both good and bad news in the verse. The good news is that we don't have to come up with the good ideas and plan how to go forward. It's up to Jesus to lead the way, and it's up to us simply to follow and do as he wants us to. The bad news is that following means walking the way of the cross, and that means the way of sacrifice. COVID has dramatically changed the way we do church and it will almost certainly change some more before journey is over. The temptation for us is to slip back into our old comfortable ways of doing church as soon as we can. The challenge is to honestly, and painfully, look at what we have put down and now need to allow to die, knowing that it may be the things we love or used to love that need to give way, in order to allow new growth in Christ's Post COVID church. In Lent we have prepared ourselves to meet the risen Christ on Easter Sunday morning. But if can rise to the challenge, of building a new and different church over the months to come, one more relevant to our 21st century post-COVID society, we will find and meet the risen Christ there too. **Amen.**

The Creed

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Be still and pray:

In your prayers, include prayers for the church, the needs of the world and our local community. Particularly pray for: Our churches as we emerge from lockdown; Our Prime Minister, the Government and all world leaders they struggle to control COVID-19, manage infection control and vaccination programmes, and plan the relaxation of lockdowns; for healing and peace for those who are ill; and for the souls of those who have recently died and comfort for those who are mourning their loss. ***Finish with The Lord's Prayer:***

Conclusion

May God our Redeemer show us compassion and love,
and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, remain with us always. **Amen**

Reverend Eddie