

## Fifth Sunday of Lent- Reflection Service



(image pursued promise)

We take a breath and come into God's presence.

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us.

May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen.**

God of mercy and compassion, your Word calls us home to faith and love.

Accept all we offer you this day. In the name of Christ. **Amen.**

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;

**O my God, in you I trust.**

You are the God of my salvation;

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

In you I hope all the day long.

**O my God, in you I trust.**

Remember, Lord, your compassion and love,  
for they are from everlasting.

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;**

**O my God, in you I trust.**

### **Bible Reading: Matthew 10:26-33**

So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

### **Reflection – Alastair France**

I found out something about myself the other day. When Nikki asked me if I could preach this weekend (we plan these things in advance – this was before it was clear that we were not going to be able to meet in Church) I looked at my diary and saw it was the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent – the Sunday before Palm Sunday, and I thought that was Passion Sunday. Well – our Lord's Passion is something interesting to consider but I knew something else about this Sunday too. I'll come on to that.

It was interesting – I looked up in various reference materials thoughts for Passion Sunday, and none of them had it for the fifth Sunday in Lent. It apparently used to be in many denominations but even in the Roman Catholic Church that stopped in the late 1950s (and according to some of our younger worshippers I may be old ... but I'm not quite that old – but only just).

My paternal grandparents though were Methodists, and I realised that I must have remembered more from the teachings of my Grandma than I realised as the Methodist Church still does call the Fifth Sunday Passion Sunday...

Nowadays we tend to remember our Lord's Passion as part of the liturgy of Palm Sunday and Holy Week; so I can't really talk too much about it this week. Actually I'm going to go a bit "off-topic" this week because of something else that this Sunday is...

There are a few things that happen every ten years – the Passion Play at Oberammergau is one of them (although the 2020 performance has slipped two years because of Covid-19) but the Census is another thing that comes every ten years. It's funny to think back over those ten year gaps – in 1981 I was still at school; by 1991 I had passed my driving test, moved five times, graduated twice – and the first time I was responsible for the completion of the Census form we were married, and living in Stetchworth... thirty years later we still are (on both counts). A colleague of mine once told me that I had a passion for statistics. I'm not sure that's entirely true (and it certainly wasn't in my 1981 schoolboy existence), but it certainly can be fascinating looking at how populations have changed.

Censuses (I did wonder whether the plural should be censii, but apparently not) had a pretty bad press in Biblical times. King David performed one (2 Samuel 24) but realised he had sinned in doing so. Probably the best known is talked about in the Gospel according to Luke (the decree from Augustus that the world should be registered, which took Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem), and a census is again mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 5:37) although the Pharisee is talking about an event in the past so it may have been the same Census.

Nowadays Governments use the Census mostly for planning – looking at how population trends are changing, understanding more what transport and education facilities are likely to be needed in years to come, and hopefully to know more about those people that they govern (i.e. us). The Census information at a personal level is confidential for a hundred years; interestingly the 1921 census will be published online early next year and will give us a fascinating insight into the lives in our country back then. I'll certainly be interested in looking up the records of some of my ancestors. Back then the questions were a bit different (and actually looking back over the questions that were asked over the years is in itself a fascinating reflection on social history). The published records from more than a century ago are typically written in the handwriting of the householder – if they were able to write. It's incredible looking back on the handwriting of your ancestors – in a hundred year's time our responses will just be a collection of binary digits as most of us will complete it online. But anyway...

As Christians we might look at the Bible and be less willing to engage in the Census. It might maybe ask us some questions that we feel uncomfortable about answering – or even possibly questions that some might find insulting. From our reading today we know that God knows everything that there is to know about us, and therefore why should the government, but speaking personally (and as someone with, apparently, a passion for statistics) I know that the better the data that is provided the better informed the decision-making process will be. We can feel comfortable (or possibly uncomfortable) that we have a God who knows us so well, one "from whom

no secrets are hid" (from the Collect for Purity) – but definitely comfortable in the knowledge that God loves us whatever we are. God has whatever God needs in terms of information about us; yet governments don't. I for one will be completing the form to the best of my ability, difficult questions and all (and I'm writing this without having seen it yet). There is certainly a question on religion (which I believe is optional) but for me, the very last sentence of our reading is relevant and I will profess my faith in the relevant online box. At least this time we don't need to go to the ancestral home of our forefathers to complete it (apparently Mirfield in the historic West Riding of Yorkshire for me). Mind you – there are times that getting any trip out of our corner of rural Cambridgeshire seems attractive and we really look forward to meeting in person in Church soon.

## **Worship Music**

Count your blessings

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqjU\\_\\_r6x9g&ab\\_channel=StrangeLyrics](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqjU__r6x9g&ab_channel=StrangeLyrics)

You laid aside your majesty:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFICAbI xv\\_M&ab\\_channel=WorshipVideos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFICAbI xv_M&ab_channel=WorshipVideos)

When I survey the wondrous cross:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MF9tVFTMXs&ab\\_channel=ChetValleyChurches](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MF9tVFTMXs&ab_channel=ChetValleyChurches)

Blessed Assurance: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE&list=RDrDeiy9-t2GE&start\\_radio=1&ab\\_channel=SilentVoiceTV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE&list=RDrDeiy9-t2GE&start_radio=1&ab_channel=SilentVoiceTV)

Immortal Invisible – Lucy Gibson attached

## **Prayers of Intercession**

May my prayer be set before you like incense;  
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice  
*(Psalm 141:2)*

Almighty God, we praise you for your majesty and great love for the world and all you created.

Open our eyes to the wonders of your love and enfolding healing grace.

Equip us with your Spirit to proclaim your love, justice and mercy in the world.

For this privilege of service we thank you. **Amen.**

We come before you now to pray for the needs of the world:

For healing from the pandemic.

For all hospitalised with Covid and other serious illnesses, and those who care and worry for them.

As we slowly reopen calm those who are anxious, protect those who are vulnerable and may there be joy in being gathered communities again.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

For the Church, Government and all world leaders.

For peace where there is conflict.

For provision where there is hunger and homelessness.

For relief for those in financial difficulty and opportunities for those looking for work.

Encircle those who are fearful of today and the future.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for one another and those we hold dear.

For those in pain, and who await treatment.

For those in recovery.

For those who are unwell.

For those who are depressed.

For those who are anxious.

For those who feel alone.

Breathe upon them your healing grace, and give hope and peace beyond our understanding.

For hospitals, care homes and carers everywhere we give you thanks and pray for their wellbeing.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We commend to your eternal keeping those who have died over the last year.

And all whom we have loved.

Those whose anniversaries we remember.

Hold and comfort all who grieve.

And reassure us all of your eternal care, outside of time, for us all.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

*We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God ....*

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven;**

**hallowed be thy name;**

**thy kingdom come; thy will be done;**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,**

**As we forgive them that trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,**

**for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Celtic Blessing**

*God to enfold me, God to surround me,  
God in my speaking, God in my thinking.*

*God in my sleeping, God in my waking,  
God in my watching, God in my hoping.*

*God in my life, God in my lips,  
God in my soul, God in my heart.*

*God in my sufficing, God in my slumber,  
God in mine ever-living soul,  
God in mine eternity.*

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

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