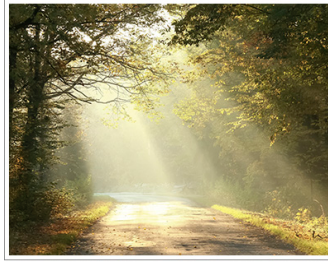


The Third Sunday in Lent- Reflection Service



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: John 2:13-22

Jesus Clears the Temple Courts

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

²⁰ They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection

This is a fitting passage for Lent as Jesus like fellow Jewish pilgrims have travelled to Jerusalem and its holy place – the Temple because of spiritual preparation for the Passover.

Theologian Dr Alicia D. Myers helps us to visualise the scene in her commentary 'Merchants bustle among their animals, moneychangers busily exchange coins, and pilgrims peruse the stalls, bartering with the tradespeople and seeking priests to complete sacrificial rituals. Moneychangers exchanged denarii into half-shekels so pilgrims could pay the temple-tax, while animals were offered in sacrifices for ritual purity from daily life so they could participate fully in the Passover'.

The people are seeking to honour God with the rituals. Yet Jesus is angry. Creating his own whip, he chases out the animals, sending the merchants after them. He "pours out the coins" and turns over tables, causing the once "seated" moneychangers to scatter. He commands the dove-sellers: "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market!" (verse 16).

Rather than being a place of spiritual preparation and prayer, Jesus instead sees a place that is focused on monetary exchange and retail, no different from a bustling market place and his anger overflows. Interestingly, he is challenged on whose authority he has done such a thing, not 'why' he has done such a thing – it feels that they were probably already aware that all wasn't as it should be. Jesus cries out "Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up." The people there are incredulous as I am sure we would be "This sanctuary has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?!" Dr Meyer suggests that John's writing here draws attention to the notion that Jesus' body is 'itself the sanctuary of God's presence, and not the centre of the temple which once held the ark of the covenant. Jesus is not just any righteous sufferer; he is the location of God's glory rather than the temple building in which he stands. Jesus' disruption of the worship practices, therefore, is God's own critique (of what is seen).' And how the death and resurrection of Jesus becomes the fulfilment of what he says here.

This fits with the theme of St John's Gospel where Jesus is introduced as the Word made flesh. Jesus is God's glory dwelling with humanity. For John, when people focus too much on a physical location, they miss out on God's glory standing right in front of them.

With many churches and places of worship closed this feels particularly important to remember - that God is in our midst wherever we are. For many, looking at the stars, walking in God's creation draws us closer to the Creator, and the wonder of God. But God of course is in our midst everywhere. In the busy hospital ward, in the noise or quiet of our streets and homes, in war torn cities and refugee camps, in the joyful and in the painful times of our lives. In Lent we are encouraged to 'STOP' to pause with the everyday for a moment... To give precious time to be open to connect with our spiritual self, to connect with God. To seek to allow and experience God's presence and glory in our life - even if it feels deeply hidden from us.

May we be like Samuel 'Speak Lord for your servant is listening.' Amen.

Worship Music

Oh worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBEmXFkwcOE&t=22s&ab_channel=HIMaachen

And can it be:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMCOyY0Rlus&ab_channel=SESamonte

You are beautiful beyond description:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbxOJ03wASo&ab_channel=WorshipGodAlmighty

Tell out my soul: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vz-FkqobgXY&ab_channel=ChetValleyChurches

Think of a world – 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 people you created.

Open our eyes to the wonders of your love and 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.

For teachers, staff and pupils as they return to full teaching. Calm those who are anxious, protect those who are vulnerable and may there be joy in being a gathered community 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 those in financial difficulty and those looking for work.

For those fearful of 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.

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

We commend to your eternal keeping those who have recently died.

And all whom we have loved.

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.**

Blessing

God, who from the death of sin raised you to new life in Christ,
keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his glory;
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.**