

Welcome and Notices

Call to worship

Lord, help us to share the challenges of discipleship
Help us to support each other
Unite us in your steadfast goodness
Strengthen and envision us to face the challenges ahead
And may we faithfully play your part in your mission to this world.

Praise: Morning has broken
Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing
Praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven
Like the first dew fall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass

Mine is the sunlight
Mine is the morning
Born of the One Light Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day

All Age talk

³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

During this period of lockdown one of the things that we've managed to do a lot more of is spend time in the garden having coffee and lunch breaks (and the occasional barbecue!). Very early on we discovered a pair of pigeons building a nest in one of our trees. The process must have taken a good few weeks before the female was satisfied and moved in.

We didn't know if she had laid an egg or not, but one morning when Pat went out she noticed an empty eggshell lying under the tree. A few weeks later we caught a glimpse of her chick, and over the weeks we have really enjoyed watching it grow bigger and bigger until mum and dad were finding it a bit of a struggle to stay in the nest together. We were disappointed to discover a few weeks back that the nest was empty.

Isn't it amazing that God knows exactly how many hairs we each have on our head! This verse reminds us just how much God knows each one of us, and values us. When we are finding things hard, remember that God is with us in the small and big things in life.

Speaking of birds, Philip has compiled a quiz for us where we have to identify different type of birds that we might see in our gardens or on our walks....
Perhaps during our Zoom chats you can tell us about some of the different birds you have seen recently.

Birds video

Praise: When the sun rises on a new day

Offering / Prayer

Prayer / Lord's Prayer

Do not fear to bring your pain to God.

Do not fear to bring your doubts.

Do not fear to bring your lack of confidence.

Do not fear to bring your worst, as well as your best.

Do not fear to bring your memories and your dreams,
your hopes and your anguish.

God knows you and loves you.

God will never give up on you.

Forgive us, God of love, when we tarnish the word family –
when we exclude others without thought;

when we avoid the suffering of those we could help;

when we discriminate between those we want in and those we want out.

Forgive us, and help us to see one another as you see us.

To your glory.

Dear God,

how your heart must break at the suffering you see.

Thank you for showing us that you care.

Thank you for being alongside us in our need.

Thank you that no creature is too small for you to notice or to love.

Thank you for all that you are,
and make us all that we could be.

Amen.

Praise: Beauty for brokenness

Beauty for brokenness

Hope for despair

Lord, in your suffering

This is our prayer

Bread for the children

Justice, joy, peace

Sunrise to sunset

Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives

Cures for their ills

Work for the craftsman

Trade for their skills

Land for the dispossessed

Rights for the weak

Voices to plead the cause

Of those who can't speak

Friend of the weak

Give us compassion we pray

Melt our cold hearts

Let tears fall like rain

Come, change our love

From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars

Havens from fear

Cities for sanctuary

Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise

Reading: Matthew 10:24 - 39

24 “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

26 “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.^[a] 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

34 “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

36 a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’^[b]

37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Sermon: “Don’t be afraid”

Over the past few weeks preachers and leaders of worship have been presented with quite a few challenging texts, and the reading for today is no exception! Most of the texts have been focused on calling and discipleship, and all that it means to be a disciple of our Lord Jesus.

Every Christian disciple knows that along the way of faith, some disciples will suffer as Christ suffered, and that the community of the faithful must seek to persevere even in times of fear and darkness. But in this passage, there are those who insist that Jesus goes too far. The Jesus that we all know comes to bring peace, not a sword.

Most of us have spent enough time around the church to recognize that discord happens within the community of the faithful, but would Jesus ever have encouraged such division in the midst of family.

Here he is Jesus promising to set a son against his father and a daughter against her mother.

“How, did this ever get into the Bible?” This is just one of those questions that makes this text so difficult to understand. The easiest thing is simply to avoid this text or try to explain it away, but neither option would be acceptable.

This text is a fine example of the biblical word’s not saying what, at first glance, it seems to be saying. Jesus is actually addressing the faithful who seek to live into their Christian faith while facing conflict and discouragement, and even the threat to their physical well-being, because of the gospel’s calling.

Sent on a mission of preaching and healing, the disciples have quickly learned what it means to face opposition and struggle.

The cozy days of breaking bread with Jesus seem far distant when in response to the good news of the gospel they are rewarded with persecution. This will be a part of the Christian story in every generation to follow.

“What are we to do when we realize that we are not strong enough to prevail?” Christians will ask. The church will persevere, Matthew declares, in spite of all of the trials of this life. Even in times of fear, the gospel will be true.

Back in 1985 a British singer released a song that captured the imagination of not only the population here in the UK, but all over the world. It reached Number 1 in the UK charts, and made the top 10 in over 20 countries the world over. Its catchy lyrics were “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Nice sentiment Billy, but does it work in reality?

In the OT reading for today Jeremiah lashes out at God, protesting that things weren’t going as smoothly as he had expected, “O Lord, you enticed me, you tricked me, now everybody makes fun of me, thinks I’m crazy for preaching your word.” Jeremiah had responded to the call of God with great expectations.

He thought he would preach, everyone would listen everyone would get right with the Lord, and then everybody would live happily ever after. Instead, when Jeremiah started preaching, people ignored him, he got louder and more insistent and they turned on him, told him to shut up and go away. And Jeremiah was tempted to do just that.

“I don’t need this aggravation,” he thought, “nobody cares anyway, not even God.” But something just wouldn’t let him give up, “The worst of it is, I can’t give up, I can’t shut up. There’s a fire burning in me that I can’t put out and I can’t hold in.” When the going got tough, Jeremiah got going!

The fire of the Holy Spirit burned in Jeremiah's heart; the fire of justice for the poor, the fire of love for the despised and the rejected, the fire of compassion for the oppressed and the downtrodden. The fire of God lived in Jeremiah's heart and would not, could not, be put out.

Jesus warned his disciples that following him will not be easy. That they would be tested, and that testing would arrive when they least expected. How true are those words for us! Just months ago, everything was normal.

We were going about our business as we would normally do. But then everything changed. Change is normal, but this was pretty dramatic. Many questioned "Why", and perhaps even where has God been midst the pain and the suffering, the frustration and the separation.

In this passage Jesus told the disciples, and us, that when we begin to lose hope, there are certain things we must remember. First – We cannot expect to be treated better than Jesus. They called Jesus the devil "Beelzebub" and later they hung him on a cross. Do we have any reason to expect better treatment? We too will be asked to shut up and go away.

Second – Jesus then reminds us that our call is to battle evil, not the pursuit of happiness. "I bring not peace, but a sword," he says, and he means it. Peace is an important value, but peace without justice for the poor and oppressed is not peace, it is capitulation to evil.

Third – Jesus assures us that though we may lose our lives for the sake of the gospel, our eternal destiny is in the hands of God. "Do not fear those who can kill the body, fear the loss of the soul."

Many years I can remember doing a tour of some caves on the west Wales coast. We all got into small boats and were taken through narrow tunnels that were dimly lit, deeper and deeper into the cave.

One stop on the tour was a large interior cavern where they turned out all the lights to give us the experience of total darkness. In the midst of that darkness some of the small children in the group began to whimper and cry. The tour guide gave the reassuring message "Don't worry, somebody knows how to turn on the lights."

When our lives are filled with darkness, when the going is tough, allow that still small voice of calm to speak to your heart, "Don't worry Christian, somebody knows how to turn on the lights." When the lives of those around us are filled with darkness, we are called by God to reach out to them and say, "Don't worry, somebody knows how to turn on the lights."

When the world appears to be full of sin and evil, as we struggle to come out of this period of isolation and restriction, hold on to this fact - we can know and proclaim that somebody, somebody we know, somebody we love and trust, can turn on the lights.

And that somebody is God almighty, who has proven over and over again, that it does indeed, "Only take a spark to get a fire going."

Praise: All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded,
all my trust he shall renew;
he, my guide through changing order,
only good and only true:
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
all that human toil can fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

Day by day our mighty giver
grants to us his gifts of love;
in his will our souls find pleasure,
leading to our home above:
love shall stand at his hand,
joy shall wait for his command.

Still from Earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done;
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son:
hear Christ's call, one and all –
we who follow shall not fall.

Prayers of Intercession

Neighbourhoods, streets, communities

We thank you for the neighbourhood in which you have placed us.

We pray for good relationships, trust and support within this place.

Show us where we can offer ourselves in welcome, friendship and hospitality among these people.

We pray for those who have no homes, no people and no sense of belonging. May they not be forgotten in this time of crisis. Help us to be quick to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

We pray for those who make decisions for this country and this town – for politicians, council members, department heads and public leaders. Grant them with wisdom, compassion, integrity and health.

We pray for unity of purpose. May they not be overwhelmed by the responsibilities placed upon them. Give them eyes to hear the cries of the vulnerable. For your people in these places, strengthen their hands as they seek the welfare of our country at this time.

Schools

We pray for all schools in this time of transition. We pray for teachers providing lessons in new ways. We pray for children and young people studying at home, many at key transition times.

We pray blessing over the formation of young minds and characters in this season. May this generation be engraved with the need to remember their Creator. We pray for families that face additional challenges of disability and special needs – the many parents exhausted and children struggling. Give them your strength, your peace.

Families

We thank you and pray for our families. We pray for those living without family just now, disconnected and missing those they love.

➤ We pray for parents juggling school, work and home in a time of pressure. We ask you to strengthen marriages amid this extra stress.

➤ May we, in your power, offer a spirit of joy, love, peace, harmony, patience and forgiveness.

Local businesses

We bless the local businesses that serve and connect our community day to day.

We pray for business leaders to be creative, compassionate, generous and honest in these challenging times.

We thank you for the government support packages.

We pray for protection on all staff who continue to work. May we be thoughtful consumers, committed to the good of this local community.

Lord, we pray for those furloughed, closed businesses, for the unemployed today, those who face job loss, who live under financial pressure. Help us to see individual needs and lead us into a spirit of radical generosity in this time of crisis.

In Jesus' name, Amen

Legal offices, police, courts

We thank you, God of justice, for the systems of justice in place in this country. We pray for all who work to ensure justice during this time. We pray for police services which seek to protect the good of society. We pray for their protection and their health.

We pray for justice for the oppressed, particularly those who suffer domestic violence. May we be swift to overcome evil with good.

NHS: GPs, chemists, clinics, hospitals

We thank you for the healthcare we enjoy in this country and call out for mercy for those with much less.

We pray for the hands of NHS workers to bring healing and wholeness to body and mind.

We pray for scientific and medical understanding and responses to the virus to be developed quickly.

Lord, we pray for each frontline staff worker who enters this place. We ask for protection from the virus, for wisdom as they care, and for stamina as they face new challenges.

We pray for those undergoing or waiting for healthcare during this time. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, as we pray for our wider world and all its needs, we pray for ourselves as well, that you may continue to use us in whatever way you can, to bring honour and glory to your name.

Amen

Praise: Guide me O thou great Jehovah

1 Guide me, O my great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty;
hold me with your powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,
where the healing waters flow.
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
ever be my strength and shield,
ever be my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever sing to you,
I will ever sing to you.

Children's Blessing Video