

# The Third Sunday before Lent

## 16th February 2025



In the name of the + Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

### HYMN

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great Name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;  
thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and  
love

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish, like leaves on the tree,  
then wither and perish; but nought changeth  
thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;  
all laud we would render: O help us to see  
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

### Introduction to confession

By the mercies of God,  
let us confess our sins and present our bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy and acceptable to him,  
which is our spiritual worship.

Lord Jesus, illuminate the darkness in our hearts:  
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to your saving love:  
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, unstop our ears to hear your living word:  
Lord, have mercy.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
draw you to himself and cleanse you from all your sins, +  
that you may behold the glory of his Son,  
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### Absolution

Glory be to God on high,  
and on earth peace, good will toward men.  
We praise Thee, we bless Thee,  
we worship Thee, we glorify Thee,  
we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory:  
O Lord God, heavenly King;  
God the Father Almighty.  
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ;

### Gloria

O Lord God, Lamb of God,  
Son of the Father:  
That takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer.  
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.  
For Thou only art holy;  
Thou only art the Lord;  
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,  
art the most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

### **The Collect for the third Sunday before Lent**

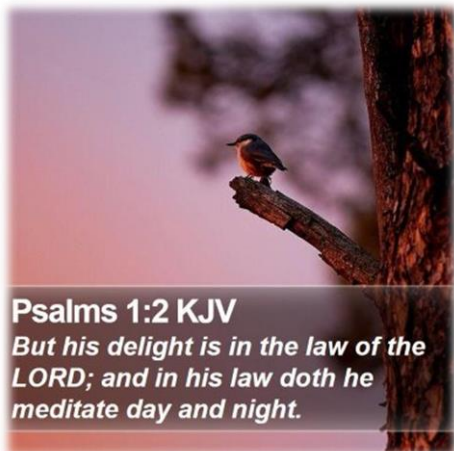
Almighty God,  
who alone can bring order  
to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity:  
give your people grace  
so to love what you command  
and to desire what you promise,  
that, among the many changes of this world,  
our hearts may surely there be fixed  
where true joys are to be found;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

### **A Reading from The Old Testament Jeremiah 17. 5-10**

<sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD says:  
“Cursed is the one who trusts in man,  
who draws strength from mere flesh  
and whose heart turns away from the LORD.  
<sup>6</sup>That person will be like a bush in the wastelands;  
they will not see prosperity when it comes.  
They will dwell in the parched places of the desert,  
in a salt land where no one lives.  
<sup>7</sup>“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,  
whose confidence is in him.  
<sup>8</sup>They will be like a tree planted by the water  
that sends out its roots by the stream.  
It does not fear when heat comes;  
its leaves are always green.  
It has no worries in a year of drought  
and never fails to bear fruit.”  
<sup>9</sup>The heart is deceitful above all things  
and beyond cure. Who can understand it?  
<sup>10</sup>“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind,  
to reward each person according to their conduct,  
according to what their deeds deserve.”

This is the word of the Lord  
Thanks be to God

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one  
 who does not walk in step with the wicked  
 or stand in the way that sinners take  
 or sit in the company of mockers,



<sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
 and who meditates on his law day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
 which yields its fruit in season  
 and whose leaf does not wither—  
 whatever they do prospers.

<sup>4</sup> Not so the wicked!  
 They are like chaff  
 that the wind blows away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup> For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

**A Reading from the New Testament**  
**1 Corinthians 15. 12-20**

<sup>12</sup> But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup> More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup> If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

**HYMN**

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,  
 Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
 Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
 Call for songs of loudest praise.  
 Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
 Sung by flaming tongues above;  
 O the vast, the boundless treasure  
 Of my Lord's unchanging love.

Here I find my greatest treasure:  
 Here by Thy great help I've come;  
 And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,  
 Safely to arrive at home.  
 Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
 Wandering from the fold of God;  
 He, to rescue me from danger,  
 Interposed His precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
 Daily I'm constrained to be!  
 Let that grace now, like a fetter,  
 Bind my wandering heart to Thee  
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it  
 Prone to leave the God I love;  
 Take my heart, O take and seal it,  
 Seal it to thy courts above.

Alleluia alleluia  
My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord  
I know them, and they follow me.  
Alleluia

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke  
Glory to you O Lord

<sup>17</sup> He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup> who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, <sup>19</sup> and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. <sup>20</sup> Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup> Blessed are you when people hate you,  
when they exclude you and insult you  
and reject your name as evil,  
because of the Son of Man.

<sup>23</sup> “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,  
because great is your reward in heaven.  
For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have already received your comfort.

<sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are well fed now,  
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,  
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

This is the gospel of the Lord  
Praise to you O Christ

### Reflection

Some poor soul in Columbia University, whom I suggest needs to get out more and ‘get a life’, did a study and found that the average person makes about 70 decisions every day. That’s 25,500 decisions a year. In a 70-year lifespan, it is 1 million,788 thousand, 500 choices.

All four readings today are about choices. For Jeremiah it to make a choice between ‘those who trust in mere mortals’ and ‘those who trust in the Lord’ The psalm warns us not to ‘follow the path of the wicked, not to mix with ‘sinners and scoffers’. Those who trust in ‘mere mortals’ and who don’t choose the best company, are likened to dry shrubs and chaff in desert wilderness dry and blown about rootless and without sustenance.

In contrast those who turn in trust to God and take care how they live are like trees, deep rooted planted by water green and fruitful. Unaffected by drought or heat. Illustrations far more vivid to people living in that country compared to ours.

St Paul draws alternatives between a resurrection faith, and a life which is without hope if Christ is not raised to life again. Make up your minds, reason it out he says, if Christ is not raised then neither is anyone else and we are as lost as ever. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we are a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to follow.

The portion from the gospel you will recognise as what is commonly called the beatitudes; blessed are the poor, the hungry and so on, they are but a part of Jesus' teaching. In Matthew's gospel he brings all the teaching together in three chapters, Luke spreads it throughout his gospel. But if we take an overview, in all the teaching illustrations Jesus gives, we cannot miss the point; Jesus is setting before us choices, and he calls us to choose.

There really are only two options. Jesus sets it out in parables to the crowds. He speaks in parables, stories with pictures, the sower, the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, weeds and wheat growing together, mustard seeds and yeast.

Jesus will talk about two gates, the narrow and the wide, two trees, two fruits good and bad, two masters, God or wealth, two foundations, rock or sand.

To follow Jesus is to make a choice; to choose to follow Him, to live under Him in His kingdom, love Him, and serve Him.

There is the key point here that we must not miss. Read the text carefully and you will see that both Luke and Matthew tell us that this teaching was given to his disciples, not the crowds. His teaching was for those who were his closest followers and carefully preserved by the early church and now for us.

It is a Christian counterculture; a value system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude to money, ambition, lifestyle and relationships, all of which are the total opposite of the non-Christian world. We are to choose to love our enemies, to bless and forgive, to be salt and light in all areas of our life. This is life in the kingdom of God, a fully human life lived out under divine rule.

In both accounts of this teaching there is one final illustration although not in the text this week. Listen to these words bearing in mind this teaching is to believers:

“Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not [practice] what I tell you? For everyone who comes to Me and listens to My words in order to heed their teaching and does them, I will show you what he is like:

He is like a man building a house, who dug and went down deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood arose, the torrent broke against that house and could not shake or move it, because it had been securely built or founded on a rock.

But he who merely hears and does not practice doing My words is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation, against which the torrent burst, and immediately it collapsed and fell, and the breaking and ruin of that house was great.”

It is possible for us to sit under the teachings of Jesus and to do no more, just believe that they are wise and good but do nothing. To call Jesus Lord, but not to do what he calls us to do. You see, it is again a choice.

What we believe has to be worked out by faith, faith is action. When we begin to put belief into faith – we make decisions which are life giving. We are able to endure what life throws at us. We are like the trees by the running streams, enduring drought and heat, our lives stand secure upon the rock which is Christ.

This is how some of our daily 70 choices can become the blessedness of which Jesus speaks. Choices – no one can make them for us, but we have no choice but to choose.

Lord Jesus, help us not to be just hearers but doers. By your grace increase within us an awareness of the promptings of your Spirit. Draw us as a church and as individuals into a closer and joyous relationship with you as we yield to you every area of our lives so that we may be a blessing to our church, our families and those we meet. We ask this to the glory of your name.  
Amen

### **The Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Ghost,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **Intercessions**

Let us pray to God the Father,  
who has reconciled all things to himself in Christ:

For Christian people everywhere,  
that we may joyfully proclaim and live our faith in Jesus Christ

For those who serve in public office,  
that they realise their responsibility and work for the common good

For peace among the nations,  
the cessation of violence and destruction  
For those who suffer so terribly this day  
that peace will come, and people can grow in justice and harmony

For those who suffer from hunger, sickness, or loneliness,  
that they may know your love for them in pity, healing and mercy  
health and wholeness.

For the homeless, those imprisoned in slavery  
the refugee, those who have nowhere to call home.  
God in mercy, strengthen and prosper all who work  
to bring comfort, aid and relief and rescue.

For those whom we love but see no longer.  
those who will die this day, and all who mourn.  
For the families of those who die in unexpected and tragic circumstances  
for those affected by the suicide of those they loved.

Hear us God of mercy as we hold before you people and situations  
which overwhelm us with their pain.  
Situations beyond imagining but not beyond you.  
Keep us from praying empty words for the troubles  
of the world seem too big for our little prayers.  
May we dare to pray that you will make us alert to needs around us  
and then willing to do something to help as we are able  
– for we are often the answer to our own prayers.  
Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone,  
and especially to the family of faith.

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Eternal God,  
whose Son went among the crowds  
and brought healing with his touch:  
help us to show his love,  
in your Church,  
and by our lives as they are transformed  
into the image of Christ our Lord.  
And the blessing of God almighty, +  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

**Amen**

**HYMN**

Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go,  
my daily labour to pursue;  
thee, only thee, resolved to know  
in all I think or speak or do.

Thee may I set at my right hand,  
whose eyes mine inmost substance see,  
and labour on at thy command,  
and offer all my works to thee.

The task thy wisdom hath assigned,  
O let me cheerfully fulfil;  
in all my works thy presence find,  
and prove thy good and perfect will.

Give me to bear thy easy yoke,  
and every moment watch and pray,  
and still to things eternal look,  
and hasten to thy glorious day.

For thee delightfully employ  
whate'er thy bounteous grace hath given;  
and run my course with even joy,  
and closely walk with thee to heaven.

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