

Worship for Fifth Sunday in Lent, *First Sunday of the Passion*
(complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome: to worship with the South Warwickshire Circuit. Thanks go this week to Rev David Greenwood who is our preacher, Nigel Saxton and Kat Pearson who give us the readings. I am Iain Ballard, and I will be leading you in worship.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hymn: StF 88 – Praise to the Lord the Almighty

- 1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!**
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, brothers and sisters, draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.
- 2. Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;**
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
who with his love doth befriend thee.
- 3. Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,**
fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,
then to thy need he like a mother doth speed,
spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

- 4. Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,**
who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,
sheddeh his light, chaseth the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.
- 5. Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!**
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the amen sound from this people again:
gladly for aye we adore him.

Joachim Neander (1650 – 1680)
translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827 – 1878)
and Rupert E Davies (1909 – 1994)

The Commandments of the Lord Jesus

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: 'The first commandment is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of confession

Let us pray
Lord, you are steadfast in your love and infinite in your mercy;

**you welcome sinners
and invite them to be your guests.
We confess our sins,
trusting in you to forgive us.**

Silence

We have yielded to temptation and sinned:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

We have turned from our neighbours in their
need:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

We have resisted your word in our hearts:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Declaration of forgiveness

May almighty God
have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and keep us in life eternal.
Amen.

Collect

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection
of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him
who suffered on the cross,
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Saviour of the World

Jesus, Saviour of the world,
come to us in your mercy:
we look to you to save and help us.

By your cross and your life laid down
you set your people free:
we look to you to save and help us.

When they were ready to perish
you saved your disciples:
we look to you to come to our help.

In the greatness of your mercy
loose us from our chains:
forgive the sins of all your people.

Make yourself known
as our saviour and mighty deliverer:
save and help us that we may praise you.

Come now and dwell with us, Lord Christ Jesus:
hear our prayer and be with us always.

And when you come in your glory:
**make us to be one with you
and to share the life of your kingdom.**

Hymn: StF 362 – Meekness and Majesty

- 1. Meekness and Majesty,
manhood and deity,
in perfect harmony –
the man who is God.
Lord of eternity,
dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility
and washes our feet.

*Oh, what a mystery –
meekness and majesty:
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God!***
- 2. Father's pure radiance,
perfect in innocence,
yet learns obedience
to death on a cross:
suffering to give us life,
conquering through sacrifice –**

and as they crucify,
prays 'Father forgive.'

*Oh, what a mystery –
meekness and majesty:
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God!*

3. **Wisdom unsearchable,
God the invisible,
love indestructible
in frailty appears:
Lord of infinity,
stooping so tenderly,
lifts our humanity
to the heights of his throne.**

*Oh, what a mystery –
meekness and majesty:
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God!*

Graham Kendrick (b 1950)
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THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NRSVA)

A New Covenant

³¹The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall

they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Psalm 51:1-12 (NRSVA)

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
⁵Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
⁶You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Gospel John 12:20-33 (NRSVA)
Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus
²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to

Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very 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. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

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. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' ³⁰Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Hymn: StF 277 – My song is love unknown

- 1. My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?**
- 2. He came from his blest throne,
salvation to bestow;**

**but they made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O my friend,
my Friend indeed,
who at my need
his life did spend!**

- 3. Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!'
is all their breath,
and for his death
they thirst and cry.**
- 4. Why, what has my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst him rise.**
- 5. They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he
to suffering goes,
that he his foes
from thence might free.**
- 6. In life no house, no home,
my Lord on earth might have;
in death, no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heaven was his home;
but mine the tomb
wherein he lay.**

**7. Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine:
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine!
This is my Friend,
in whose sweet raise
I all my days
could gladly spend.**

Samuel Crossman (c 1624 – 1683)

Sermon

'Now is the hour when we must say goodbye,
soon you'll be sailing far across the sea.'

About 40 years ago, I was dragged most unwillingly to a show at the London mime festival where 3 young men in full face masks, full head masks in fact – played the parts of two elderly men and a nurse who was caring for them in some establishment. The drama began and ended with that song being played as one of them opened a window and through the birdsong it came drifting through the trees. The first time it meant nothing, the second time one of the old men had died and the one left on their own, opened the window and heard 'Now is the hour when we must say goodbye.'

Up to this point in John's gospel, now has not been the hour. When Mary called on Jesus to perform the miracle at the wedding in Cana, he said, 'Woman, my time has not yet come.' And the time has not yet come until this reading; 'And now is the hour', he says. And then he goes on to explain what 'now is the hour' means for him. That it means death. That it means being lifted up and the evangelist writes that he means on a cross the way he is going to die. And he talks about the grain of wheat, - the seed that has to die in the earth before it can grow again, and all the full ear is produced and the fruit of the harvest. And so Jesus talks about his own

death and being lifted up. But of course we know that has another meaning. That it points also towards Easter when he will draw all people to himself and be lifted up in triumph in resurrection.

It's pretty much a year to the day since the first lockdown began and there has been much death. There has been much suffering, mental illness, loneliness, domestic abuse, loss of jobs and livelihoods, worries about the future, the struggles of home-schooling. There has been much in the way of death. And we in our churches have been planted in our individual soil, not able to meet, no coming together. The churches are closed now as they were then, opening only briefly in the middle and many were not able to attend.

But in this last year, new seeds have started to grow – just taking part in this on-line service is taking part in one of those. And we know that just this simple service recorded on Zoom and YouTube has been watched by people not just across the circuit, but across the country and even in places across the world.

And when we do go back, we won't be going back to how it was before – things will have changed. Things will have died, so that new things can grow and flourish. What are we going to put down? What are we going to allow to die? Our Sunday services won't look the same again - I can't imagine that you are keen to have somebody like me standing up and talking uninterrupted for 15 – 20 minutes; - want something shorter, something different; something where you can chat to your neighbours because that's what we've been missing. And something new will begin.

And in our own lives, what has had to die so that new things can begin? What have we put aside

because we haven't been able to do them? and do we want to pick them again or do we want to pick up something new and exciting – something that will allow us to show that love of God; to proclaim Jesus lifted up and glorified?

Now is the hour. As lockdown begins to ease, as the vaccinations begin to take effect, now is indeed the hour when we let things go to pick new things up, to begin afresh, to take what can survive from what we did before, not necessarily what was good before because what was good then, may not be what was good in the future. We need to find what will be good and flourish and grow and bear fruit in the future. What do we let go of? What do we pick up?

Now is the hour.

And to affirm that we are going to sing 415 from Singing the Faith. 'The Church of Christ in every age, beset by change, but Spirit-led, must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead.'

Hymn: StF 415 – The Church of Christ in every age

- 1. The Church of Christ, in every age
beset by change but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.**
- 2. Across the world, across the street,
the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat,
and never live until they die.**
- 3. Then let the servant Church arise,
a caring Church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,
and clothed in Christ's humanity.**
- 4. For he alone, whose blood was shed,
can cure the fever in our blood,**

**and teach us how to share our bread
and feed the starving multitude.**

- 5. We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord:
to care for all, without reserve,
and spread his liberating Word.**

Fred Pratt Green (1903 – 2000)

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THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for those who have power and influence and for all who govern the nations

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the powerless, for all victims of famine and war, and for all who strive for justice and peace

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray for the afflicted and sorrowful and for all who need our prayers

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us remember before God those who have passed from this life in faith and obedience

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Eternal God,

through the self-offering of your Son

you have filled our lives with your presence.

Help us in our sufferings and trials

and strengthen us in our weakness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Peace

In Christ, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through his blood which was shed on the cross.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 279 – O precious sight my Saviour stands

- 1. O precious sight, my Saviour stands,
dying for me with outstretched hands.
O precious sight; I love to gaze,
remembering salvation day,
remembering salvation day.**
- 2. Though my eyes linger on this scene,
may passing time and years not steal
the power with which it impacts me,
the freshness of its mystery,
the freshness of its mystery.**

*May I never lose the wonder,
the wonder of the cross.
May I see it like the first time,
standing as a sinner lost.
Undone by mercy and left speechless,
watching wide-eyed at the cost.
May I never lose the wonder,
the wonder of the cross.*
- 3. Behold, the God-Man crucified,
the perfect sinless sacrifice.
As blood ran down those nails and wood,
history was split in two,
history was split in two.**

- 4. Behold, the empty wooden tree,
his body done, alive and free.
We sing with everlasting joy
for sin and death have been destroyed,
sin and death have been destroyed.**

*May I never lose the wonder,
the wonder of the cross.
May I see it like the first time,
standing as a sinner lost.
Undone by mercy and left speechless,
watching wide-eyed at the cost.
May I never lose the wonder,
the wonder of the cross.*

Vicky Beeching

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Prayer & blessing

The God of all grace
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,
make us perfect,
confirming and strengthening us;
and to him be the power for ever and ever.
Amen.

The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
bless us and keep us,
now and always.
Amen.

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

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Bible Verses

NRSV & NRSVA

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