

The Five Alive with Bishampton and Throckmorton Praying Together on a Sunday

28th February 2021

Lent Two

*You may like to light a candle as a visible sign of Jesus
being present with you.*

The Lord is with us.

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation,
to you be glory and praise for ever.

In the darkness of our sin you have shone in our hearts
to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God
in the face of Jesus Christ.

Open our eyes to acknowledge your presence,
that freed from the misery of sin and shame
we may grow into your likeness from glory to glory.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Blessed be God for ever.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Keep a moment of quiet

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise now and for ever.
Amen.

Canticle:

**Tell the good news of Jesus the Christ
to all who are searching for redemption.**

- 1 This is the message we have heard from Christ
and proclaim to you:
that God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all.
- 2 If we say that we have fellowship with God
while we walk in darkness,
we lie and do not do what is true.
- 3 But if we walk in the light as God is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another.
- 4 And the blood of Jesus, the Son of God,
cleanses us from all our sins.
- 5 If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- 6 If we confess our sins,
the One who is faithful and just will forgive us
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1: 5-9

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever.
Amen.**

**Tell the good news of Jesus the Christ
to all who are searching for redemption.**

Reading: Romans 4: 13 – end

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become ‘the father of many nations’, according to what was said, ‘So numerous shall your descendants be.’ ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith ‘was reckoned to him as righteousness.’ ²³Now the words, ‘it was reckoned to him’, were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Reading: Mark 8: 31-38

Jesus began to teach the disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes,

and be killed, and after three days rise again.³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Reflection

"If any want to become my followers, let then deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" Jesus said to the disciples, and the whole crowd.

This is the character and cost of discipleship.

We gain a better understanding of this teaching of Jesus, when it is put in the context of what has come before.

Mark starts his gospel with Jesus' Baptism. Jesus heard God affirm him, *"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased"*. The Spirit then sent Jesus out into the wilderness, where Satan tempted him. Jesus returned to begin his public ministry. He appointed twelve apostles to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message (3: 13-19). The twelve followed. They saw him calm the wind and the waves (4: 35-41). They watched him heal the man with an unclean spirit (5: 1-20). They heard him teach the crowds. (4: 1-9). They were asked to help him feed the crowd of 4000 (8: 1-10), YET they never could quite understand who

he was. What a relief one thinks – when one of the disciples, Peter, who had seen and heard, perceived and understood, declared who Jesus was, “You are the Messiah”.

Though Peter had understood who Jesus was, he did not understand, or rather, could not accept, that this meant, that Jesus had to suffer and die. Jesus response to Peter and the whole crowd along with the other disciples who were listening went further – not only he, but they too, if they were to follow. For Peter, the news had got worse – following Jesus would impact on his own life.

Paula Gooder says this about Jesus’ teaching to deny oneself and take up ones’ cross to follow him:

“Denying ourselves requires us to dissociate from our nature; a nature that places ourselves and our concerns at the centre of our world; a nature that avoids suffering and death at all costs. Following Jesus requires us to go against the grain of human nature and to put someone else (Jesus) at the centre of our world. It requires us to be prepared to follow him wherever he may go a dissociation from the “cult of me””.

Then comes the second half of Jesus teaching on discipleship. It comes almost like a riddle – to lose your life in order to save it.

The temptation is to “gain the whole world” – whatever that means to each person. Prestige, fame, power..... but it comes at the expense of their life. This is reminiscent of one of Satan’s tests on Jesus in the wilderness, where he is offered the glory of the whole world, in exchange for worship (Luke 4: 5-8). The Greek word used by Mark here for “life” can also be translated as “soul”. Jesus was offered the whole world in exchange for who he really was – God’s Son – bound with the Father – what would he have gained if he had lost that?

So, for others. If one strives only for that which satisfies one's innate human nature to want rights and privileges for oneself – to gain what looks attractive and prestigious, and one loses who one is, what is the point of that? If one gives oneself (one's soul) away, what has one left?

Rather what Jesus says is to put Christ at the centre of one's life, and one gains everything. It is when you follow Christ in his ways, even if that involves suffering and death, then, and only then can you fully discover who you truly are. It is by making that journey of leaving self behind, to follow Christ, at all costs, that you shall receive life.

At Baptism, we are marked on our foreheads with the sign of the cross, with these (or similar words):

Christ claims you for his own.

Receive the sign of his cross.

Do not be ashamed of Christ.

You are his for ever.

Stand bravely with him

against all the powers of evil,

and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.

May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness,

and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.

Amen.

(New texts from Common Worship for Baptism)

Reminiscent of God's affirmation of His Son, Jesus Christ. Being named and called as one with God "You are his for ever". Unlike Christ, we shall fail in our calling to stand bravely and fight the powers of evil, yet we are still "His for ever". This is the nature of God.

And with the calling, comes God's blessing. God's Holy Spirit to lead us in the light and obedience of Christ. We are asked to stand firm with Christ in his teaching and by the help of the Holy Spirit.

It is also significant that the oil used to sign the cross at Baptism, has been blessed by the Bishop - traditionally at the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday - a service attended by large numbers from across a diocese; a reminder that each individual baptism is also an act of the whole Church, and the call of the individual at Baptism, is one we also share with all other baptised members – the Church.

Denying one's own ambitions and self-drive, to do the will of Jesus Christ, the one we follow, is the call of every Christian, even when that involves hardship and suffering. Charles Wesley prayed for the Holy Spirit to work within us to complete the sacrificial nature of Christ's call "to follow him", in the words of the hymn:

O thou who camest from above,
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
with humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire
and still stir up thy gift in me.

Ready for all thy perfect will
my acts of faith and love repeat,

till death thine endless mercies seal
and make the sacrifice complete.

Keep a moment of quiet to reflect before praying

Prayers

Offered by Sarah

Our Lord showed us what it means to love sacrificially. We pray that people and nations shall comprehend the impact of their decisions and life-styles on others, and make those choices which always seek the common good even when that involves denying one's own privileges and comforts.

We pray for all who raise awareness of injustice and inequalities; for all who help societies to grow into communities which respect every person. As we hear Christ say to us "You are loved, you are precious" may we so hear Christ say to others, "You are loved, you are precious", and so love as Christ loves.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Our Lord suffered at the hands of others for speaking Truth, and for acting with messages of peace and mercy. We bring to Jesus all whose needs today can be forgotten and whose cries for help can go unheard – for all who cry for peace, equality, food, shelter, medicine, a place to call home.....

In Afghanistan, the Middle East, Myanmar, Tigray region of Ethiopia, Yemen, the Uighers;

We pray for all whose efforts bring relief and long-term answers for this and future generations in these places.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

Our Lord withdrew to places to be with his Father in prayer. We pray that the Church today may so help people be with God in prayer. When lives have been turned upside down, to find God constant in His love; when tired, to drink of God's life-giving spirit; when alone, to feel God close.

We pray for all who visit churches and churchyards to take a moment to be still with God; for all who are helped by online resources.

We pray for retreat houses and communities of prayer – Holland House and Mucknell Abbey.

For Christians in the work-place, and for chaplains.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Lord on the cross knew loneliness and pain. Christ understands fear. We bring to him in prayer, all who suffer from mental or physical illness, anxiety and loneliness. In this time of quiet we name those known to us who especially need our prayer.....

And those whose needs to God alone.....

May they know God's comfort and peace to heal, and his light to see through their fears and pain.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, we remember those who have died. For those we have loved and see no longer. We remember Richard Murray-Peters. As we give thanks for their lives, so we give thanks for your promise that we share with them your eternal life.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayers.

Lord, we pray with thankful hearts for your countless blessings. Thank you for family and friends; for the family of your Church; for science; for

all whose work provides our needs, for the seasons, for the gift of yourself in others.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Pause

Collect for Lent Two

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his Way
may we come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
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.

Hymn

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know,
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you, and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind,
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare,
will you let me answer prayer
in you, and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the pris'ners free,
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you, and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside,
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you, and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you,
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you, and you in me.

John L. Bell (b1949) and Graham Maule (b1958)

Let us pray

Jesus, lord of time,
hold us in your eternity.
Jesus, image of God,
travel with us the life of faith.
Jesus, friend of sinners,
heal the brokenness of our world.
Jesus, lord of tomorrow,
draw us into your future.
Amen.