

Sunday 07 March 2021: Lent 3

Welcome to Praying Together but Separately

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

HYMN. I heard the voice of Jesus say *sung by St Martin's Voices*

- 1 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down
thy head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.
- 2 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.
- 3 I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'I am this dark world's Light;
look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found

in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

GATHERING BEFORE GOD

The Lord our redeemer be with you
and also with you.

OPENING PRAYER

God of our days and years,
we set this time apart for you.
Form us in the likeness of Christ
so that our lives may glorify you.
Amen.

THE BEATITUDES

Let us hear our Lord's blessing on those who follow him.

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Silence is kept.

PSALM 19

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

The heavens are telling the glory of God
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
One day pours out its song to another
and one night unfolds knowledge to another.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

They have neither speech nor language
and their voices are not heard,
Yet their sound has gone out into all lands
and their words to the ends of the world.
In them has he set a tabernacle for the sun,
that comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber
and rejoices as a champion to run his course.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

It goes forth from the end of the heavens
and runs to the very end again,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure
and gives wisdom to the simple.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean and endures forever;
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

More to be desired are they than gold,
more than much fine gold,

sweeter also than honey,
dripping from the honeycomb.
By them also is your servant taught
and in keeping them there is great reward.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

Who can tell how often they offend?
O cleanse me from my secret faults!
Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins
lest they get dominion over me;
so shall I be undefiled, and innocent of great offence.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

R The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.

Kyrie confession:

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness
And cleanse me from my sin:
Lord have mercy, **Lord have mercy.**

Make me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me:
Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Cast me not away from your presence
And take not your holy spirit from me:
Lord have mercy, **Lord have mercy.**

ABSOLUTION:

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

BIBLE READINGS:

FIRST READING: EXODUS 20:1-17

A reading from the book of Exodus.

Then God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work —you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

HYMN One more step along the road I go *played by Nicholas*

- 1 One more step along the world I go,
One more step along the world I go;
From the old things to the new,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.
- 2 Round the corners of the world I turn,
More and more about the world I learn;
All the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me.
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.
- 3 As I travel through the bad and good,
Keep me travelling the way I should.
Where I see no way to go,

You'll be telling me the way, I know.
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

4 Give me courage when the world is rough,
Keep me loving though the world is tough;
Leap and sing in all I do,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

5 You are older than the world can be,
You are younger than the life in me;
Ever old and ever new,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

Sidney Carter

Gospel: John 2:13-22

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Glory to you O Lord

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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

SERMON

SOME THOUGHTS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

It's hard to imagine isn't it? Reading John's Gospel for the first time – or maybe it isn't, maybe you are only just reading it now, for the first time? But, either way, the beginnings of John's book have slipped into common culture and understanding over the millennia – in the first two chapters we have golden, glistening moments of 'In the beginning was the Word', the 'darkness did not overcome it', we have John the Baptist proclaiming 'Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world', we have Jesus inviting the disciples on a journey of faith by saying 'come and see'. We then have the water turned into wine, and now in today's passage the overturning of tables in the temple. It's a packed two chapters that set out the whole of John's Gospel and invites the reader/hearer on a journey of realisation, shock, transformation, and new life. Whether these stories are new or familiar to you – they pack a punch and reading them afresh in one piece is the proverbial roller coaster ride – I commend it to you! And we must remember that the shock factor would have been more so for the first readers and hearers – the impact is lessened on us as the phrases and moments have passed into our everyday language. But, imagining this being heard or read for the first time would have astounded and transformed the hearer. Let us keep this thread of shock and wonder as we read on.

The Gospel has an opening unlike any other – it is poetry and story, metaphor and narrative, truth and challenge. It is an understatement to think it would have been shocking to the first readers – it would have

shaken the foundations and intrigued the reader to carry on. And it does that for me today and I hope for you too – maybe you could read the first two chapters to yourself today; sense the pace, the excitement, the questions it raises.

We have a picture of Jesus building in these chapters that sets out the cosmic significance of Jesus' life and light, and then the beginnings of what that might mean for me and you and all people in his Baptism. The call to repent and begin again, walking in the light of Jesus – we like the disciples are invited to come and see – see the Son of God, the Word of God and the Light of God. And then Jesus begins to further reveal his purpose and identity to them – he performs a sign of the life he is bringing. The water was turned into wine – beautiful, exquisite wine that didn't run out, and that showed this Jesus was and is the bringer of new life, abundance and generosity. The wine was also a sign of his blood – it is through his sacrifice of himself that we are invited to drink and be welcomed into eternal life.

So, we move from this picture of Jesus, as a guest at a wedding performing a great sign as to his true identity and purpose we see another side to him. In today's reading he is active, and dangerous, angry even; driven most definitely. He is on a mission – a whip of cords is made, and animals and money changers and coins and tables are driven out and upturned. It is a wild and chaotic scene – so unlike a wedding, where there is order and joy. Here, in the temple, in Jerusalem, where they are preparing for the Passover (the Jewish Festival where they celebrate God's liberation of them from slavery in Egypt) – the scene is quite different. Animals and noise, and shock and anger. The Temple was God's dwelling place – a place of sacrifice and prayer, the centre of the city and the Jewish world. Jesus' actions were shocking – truly, deep down shocking – this was God's dwelling place, the holy of holies and Jesus was turning it upside down and, proclaiming it was a marketplace and then claiming it could be rebuilt in 3 days. It's a lot to unpack...

Jesus was making a monumental statement – he had authority in the temple. He challenged the status quo and saying trade and money changers have no place in his Father's house. He may even have been saying that the animal sacrifices that were made in the temple would be no longer needed as his body would be the ultimate sacrifice to end all sacrifices – he had already been claimed as the Lamb of God. He was again showing who he was – the reconciler of heaven and earth; the blood of eternal life.

The term 3 days was mentioned again – in 3 days the temple will be raised (even though it had been under construction for 46 years). This echoes the Wedding at Cana which was held on the third day – when water was turned into wine. Both '3 days' are of course signposting the way to the final '3rd day' the day of resurrection. The temple, of the body of Jesus would be 'rebuilt' back to life on the 3rd day. The wine flowed on the 3rd day and life and abundance were symbolised in it.

Jesus's life in these two chapters of John is all about conversion and cleansing. The conversion of water into wine – the conversion of our stubborn hearts to love and faith; and then the second step after conversion, that of cleansing. The cleansing of Baptism which symbolically washes away our sin and darkness, to the new life of faith and then the cleansing of the temple from worldly things to Godly things. Every conversion leads to cleansing.

Christ's cleansing of the Temple is a prophetic action, telling the people of God, the Israelites, the message they should have paid attention to in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and the other prophets: the worship that God wants is simply for us to live as children of God and to seek justice, mercy and love for all.

But the cleansing of the Temple is also a Lenten reminder for us. The Temple was the house of God. Christ became Israel to save Israel. Christ

was the Temple, the dwelling of God on earth - torn down and three days later rebuilt. This made it possible for God to dwell in our hearts through the Spirit. We are now temples of the Holy Spirit - Christ has tabernacled among us.

So what is your Temple like?

Maybe we ask ourselves what corners of our lives still need converting into God's generous and life-giving ways? Where do we doubt? Where is there apathy? Where is there lethargy? And then what of our lives needs cleansing – what secrets and stains need handing to God, praying for the life-giving Spirit to wash it away and allow us a new start, a clean slate and a renewed sense of forgiveness and holiness. Maybe these are the hard questions of lent, so come Easter, on that glorious 3rd day, the new life will rise within us and make us whole and holy. Amen.

Kate Peacock

HYMN **Father hear the prayer we offer** *sung by St Martin's Voices*

- 1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.
- 2 Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.
- 3 Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

- 4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

OUR PRAYERS : INTERCESSIONS

LENTEN PRAYER: LORD OF LIGHT

You may like to light a candle for this prayer

Lord of light, come shine your truth upon my life in this season of Lent. Light into the dark corners of disillusionment, where I hide beneath the comforts of food and drink.

Light upon the fears and worries I seek to quell with control and routine. Light within the shadowed areas of hurt that cast shades of resentment and unforgiveness in me.

Light bright across my thoughts, seep into my heart and come awaken my hope.

May your eternal light reveal heavens beautiful promises and bring a peace that surpasses understanding. Amen.

Prayers from: https://www.living-prayers.com/events/lenten_prayers.html

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

**My Jesus, I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.**

**I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.**

**Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.**

**I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You**

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 those who 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**

THE PEACE

Since we are justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has given us access to his grace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

HYMN Will your anchor hold in the storms of life *played by Nicholas*

1 Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?
*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

2 Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
When the breakers road and the reef is near;
While the surges rage and the wild winds blow,
Shall the angry waves then your bark o'erflow.
Chorus

3 Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
When the waters cold chill our latest breath;
On the rising tide it can never fail,
While your anchor holds within the veil.
Chorus

4 Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore
when life's storms are past for evermore?
Chorus

Priscilla Jane Owens