



## **St. Mary's Church** SAWSTON

### Worship at Home – Fifth Sunday of Lent – 21<sup>st</sup> March

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

**Amen**

#### Hymn 497: O happy band of pilgrims

#### Welcome

The Lord be with you,  
**and also with you**

#### Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.  
Amen**

#### Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen**

Lord have mercy

**Lord have mercy**

Christ have mercy

## **Christ have mercy**

Lord have mercy

## **Lord have mercy**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **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 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**

## **New Testament Reading: Hebrews 5: 5 - 10**

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'; as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek.'

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

## **Hymn 738: When I survey**

## **Gospel Reading: John 12: 20 - 33**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

## **Glory to you, O Lord**

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

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

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ**

## Sermon: Revd John Pinder

I am not sure how Jesus would have coped with 'selfies'. It's probably just as well they didn't exist then, otherwise Jesus might have been just another celebrity on Facebook. I am sure that the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus wanted far more than to have a selfie of them with him. And certainly for the gospel writer, 'seeing' is a word of deep significance. It's Philip who at the last supper says to Jesus, 'show us the Father and we will be satisfied' and we know how Jesus replied. After the resurrection we hear how Thomas 'saw and believed.' We have the expression 'seeing is believing' but certainly in John's gospel there's a bit more to it than that. John gives us a very attractive portrait of Philip. After Andrew brings him to meet Jesus he goes off to find Nathaniel – he has the enthusiasm to face those who hesitate to come forward. Philip is not afraid to challenge Jesus – so at the feeding of the 5000 – 'how are we to buy enough bread for all this lot?' In this morning's gospel, non Jewish visitors to Jerusalem are reluctant to approach Jesus directly, so they first seek out Philip (whose name of course is Greek) John is implying that Philip is an accessible figure, easily approachable.

So the main theme for this morning is about approaching God – and that takes us to the Epistle to the Hebrews. I think most of us would admit Hebrews is not the easiest book in the NT, chiefly because it's so steeped in Old Testament culture, centering around Old Testament ideas of sacrifice. Most of us would have a natural revulsion if we found ourselves in the Jerusalem Temple in the time of Jesus. It would seem more like an abattoir than a place of worship. But I think engaging with Hebrews is worth the struggle. The main question it puts is 'how do we approach God?' and the answer is - 'by looking to Jesus who gives us a direct pathway into the nature and being of God'. Hebrews describes Jesus as 'the great high priest' – this idea is unique in the New Testament.

In particular, the epistle is saying four things.

1. The sacrifice of Jesus is unique. The animals in Jewish temple worship had to be unblemished. The Jewish high priests would enter the holy of holies year after year on the day of atonement to seek God's forgiveness for the sins of the people, but they themselves were sinful.. Jesus was both priest and victim, and being sinless, was able to make the perfect sacrifice through his death on the cross and thus reconcile humanity with God.
2. Although Jesus is within the Jewish tradition, he is making a complete break with the past. He is not from the line of Aaron (which always supplied the high priests), but he is 'after the order of Melchizedek,' who predates the Aaronic line. So the sacrifice he makes on the cross is of a new order and the covenant made between God and his people is a new covenant or new testament.
3. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant, but in making the covenant on our behalf, he is giving us direct access to God himself. So in Ch.10 of Hebrews it says, 'Therefore my friends, since **we** have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus...let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.'
4. As we are reminded in today's reading, there is a cost. As I have said, Jesus is both priest and victim. He was not some remote figure, but very human. So 'in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears.' Asking God to spare him. Did Jesus go willingly to his sacrificial death? That's a good question. In the gospel we hear, 'Now my soul is troubled and what shall I say – 'Father save me from this hour?' But then Jesus continues 'No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.' Jesus was fully aware of his destiny, but that

awareness made it even harder. Was Jesus comforted by knowing the outcome, the final victory? I am not sure. All we do know is that for Jesus, the desolation on the cross was real and complete. The sacrifice of the cross remains in many ways, a mystery and we can never fully understand it. We can only approach it in awe and wonder. When **we** seek to approach Jesus in the next two weeks, we will have to make that journey to the foot of the cross, if we want to begin to understand the relationship between the love of God and the sacrifice of Jesus. Amen

## Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## Prayers

### The Peace

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## Hymn 483: O for a closer walk

### Lord's Prayer

**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.**

### **Remembering the Lord's Supper**

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

### **Hymn 379: Lead us heavenly Father**

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact  
Revd Petra Shakeshaft (07847 307416)  
or Sally Bard (01223 501165)