



St. Mary's Church SAWSTON

Worship at Home – 2nd Sunday of Lent – 28th February

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 467: New ev'ry morning

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

Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 17: 1 – 7, 15 – 16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

New Testament 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. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For 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, as 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. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations', according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' He 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. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him', were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us

who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Hymn 332: I, the Lord of sea and sky

Gospel Reading: Mark 8: 31 - end

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

Glory to you, O Lord

Then he began to teach them 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. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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.'

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. 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. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Revd Petra Shakeshaft

A little while ago, I had a conversation with an elderly gentleman, a retired professor, who struggled, two or three words at a time, laboriously, to tell me about something he had witnessed a few days earlier. There had been a man in the bed opposite him who had wanted to die. He was estranged from his family and kept crying out for someone to put an end to him. He felt his life was worthless, pointless. He had no hope. Someone had come to see him, he wasn't sure who, and had spent some time talking with him. Following the conversation he agreed to take a call from one of his children. It was a conversation leading to the phone call that restored his sense of purpose and hope. He had something to live for. He was no longer calling out to die.

As he was telling me this story, the gentleman was very distressed, weeping.

It's touched something very deep in you, hasn't it? I said.

Yes, he replied, *It's so important for people to know their life has value.*

If I were ever able to preach a sermon, he said, I would tell this story to give people hope.

I promised that one day, I would tell the story for him.

Hoping against hope.

I think we've all done some hoping over the last year.

Hoping we don't get Covid ...

Hoping our family or friends don't get Covid ...

Hoping we will survive Covid/lockdown/home-schooling/isolation ...

Hoping schools will go back ...

Hoping it will soon be our turn for the vaccine ...

Hope seems to imply that there is some uncertainty and it's true, the last year has been so full of uncertainty and maybe that's what we find so hard to live with; not knowing – that, and not being in control of anything.

But I think the hoping against hope of which Paul speaks, in regard to Abraham, is something different altogether.

In another translation, it says,

Faced with a hopeless situation, with hope nonetheless, Abraham believes he will be the father of many nations because he had been told.

Abraham had faith in what he had been told; that this unbelievable blessing was, at last, to be his.

He did not weaken in faith ... but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That's Abraham ...

and then we have Peter.

When Jesus spells out the rejection and the suffering he must undergo, Peter has a wobble and takes him aside to rebuke him.

And yet, in the verse immediately prior to this passage Peter has declared Jesus the Messiah.

Who do you say that I am? Jesus had asked him.

Jesus' identity as the Messiah is the whole point of the Gospel.

It's what it's all about.

One moment Peter seems to get it, and in the next

he demonstrates how completely he has misunderstood what kind of Messiah Jesus is. His faith wavers.

Get behind me Satan, says Jesus.

Perhaps he too is hoping against hope that he will be spared the suffering; spared the cross, and yet, he knows that without it he cannot fulfil his purpose; his calling.

How tempting it must have been for him at so many points in his journey, to walk away; to refrain from challenging the powers that be.

Your mind is on earthly things and not divine things.

And maybe that's why Paul speaks of hope in the context of faith.

Maybe you can't unravel real hope from faith.

it is very easy to have faith and hope pinned on earthly things; things that we can see and touch and control and measure.

And when it comes to suffering we can see why that might be.
Who can endure suffering or watch another's suffering?
Haven't we all heard someone say,
Well, if there is a God, why does he let this happen to me or to X, Y, Z?
We've probably said or thought it ourselves.
And Peter must have thought that surely, if Jesus is the Messiah,
why would God let that happen to him?

Faith doesn't exempt us from suffering.
Faith does not give us a charmed life.
Jesus calls us to put our faith not in earthly things,
not in those things that look and feel and sound certain,
but, in reality are here today and gone tomorrow,
but to put our faith in the infinite, eternal hope of the life that faith in God offers.

Those words of rebuke to Peter were, of course, heard as if from the other side of the cross.
Peter had no idea about Easter Day; had no experience of resurrection,
nor of what it would come to mean to him,
how it would steer his life; the strength, the faith and hope he would discover in himself
through the pain and despair of the Cross.
We, on the other hand, are this side of the Cross
and know its promise of new life, yet, still we find ourselves doubting,
fixed, like Peter on earthly things, not divine things.
We are, like Peter, only human.

The elderly gentleman wanted me to pray with him.
He had witnessed and experienced what hope against hope can do; the healing it can give,
the sense of strength and purpose it can bring to a life, even in the midst of great suffering;
even in the face of death..

Abraham saw his life ending with no child to hand down his property to;
no one to care for Sarah and he in their old age,
no one to make them the parents they longed to be
and take away the shame of childlessness.
Yet God fulfilled his promise to Abraham, to make him the father of the nations
whose offspring would number more than the grains of sand
and out of this issue would come the Messiah, God's own anointed – the hope for all nations.

And Peter would be there to see that hope played out on Easter Sunday morning;
that rejection, suffering and death transformed into eternal life.

The challenge to us, is to take up *our* cross and follow Christ;
that is to accept the load life calls *us* to bear for ourselves and on behalf of others,
which may come with pain and suffering,
but through His Cross, we *can* hope against hope, that we *will* be transformed,
that there will be new life, and new hope.

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

God Almighty, this morning we remember that you have promised to be our God from generation to generation and onward to those as yet unborn. By grace your power over sin and death has been demonstrated to us, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and so we give you thanks and we come before you now with reverence and awe.

We pray for the church across the world. Thank you for calling us to be the light of the world. May we hold out the invitation of the gospel with confidence, so that many may 'come and see' and respond to your everlasting love. We ask that those who are following your Son in difficult situations, may know joy and hope through your presence with them day by day; especially we ask you to protect and give wisdom to any who are at risk of persecution for their faith.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you because Lord, you desire justice and mercy, and so we pray for the world. We remember before you our changing climate, and think of the injustice of some living comfortably at the expense of others who are struggling to live. Teach us Lord, we pray; increase our understanding of the responsibility you have given us; expand our understanding of neighbour; help us to live lightly; help us not to hold tightly on to what we see as ours.

Thank you for those who govern this country. Raise up among the nations many good leaders who will make wise decisions and develop good policies for the future of the earth, we pray. May your will be done and your glory be seen.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for our own community. Thank you for leading us, so that we are part of this place, in these days. Please touch with your healing presence, homes where there are

troubles or sadness this morning, perhaps concerning children, elderly relatives, or altered plans for the future. Please show us your power within our community.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

To you, O Lord, be praise and glory, for the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over death; in him we are more than conquerors, for he has called us into eternal life. Lord, make us worthy of our calling, so that, having in mind your concerns and not merely our own, we may serve you in love and peace. Amen.

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

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 457: My God how wonderful you are

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 54: At the name of Jesus

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)