

Third Sunday in Lent 20 March 2022

Welcome

Call to Worship - Praise the Lord!

With all my heart I will thank the Lord in the assembly of His people.

How wonderful are the things the Lord does!.....

All He does is full of honour and majesty;

His righteousness is eternal. - Psalm 111 v 1 - 3

Hymn 512 To God be the glory, great things He has done!

To God be the glory great things He has done

So loved He the world that He gave us His Son

Who yielded His life an atonement for sin

And opened the life gate that all may go in

Praise the Lord praise the Lord

Let the earth hear His voice

Praise the Lord praise the Lord let the people rejoice

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son

And give Him the glory great things He hath done

O perfect redemption the purchase of blood

To ev'ry believer the promise of God

The vilest offender who truly believes

That moment from Jesus a pardon receives

Praise the Lord praise the Lord . . .

Great things He hath taught us great things He hath done

And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son

But purer and higher and greater will be

Our wonder our transport when Jesus we see

Praise the Lord praise the Lord . . .

Prayer and Lord's Prayer (*First Form*)

Lord, we praise You, we lift Your Name on high.
You are our gracious King, full of majesty and honour.
You are faithful and just,
And You rule with compassion.

We can depend on all Your commands.
You take care of each one of us and watch out for us.
You meet all our needs and we are eternally grateful to You.
May Your Name Lord be glorified in all the Earth.

This morning, as we worship, may our praises bring You glory
May we enjoy singing our hymns of praise to You
And rejoicing in all that You have done for Your people.

Forgive us Lord, for the times when we have forgotten about You.
For we know that You never forget about us.
Forgive us Father for the hurtful things we have said to others.
For the ungracious thoughts which we have harboured in our minds.
And for the ways in which we have failed to help others.

Create in each one of us Lord,
a deep desire to be helpful to those near and far.
To see them as Jesus sees us
To love them as He loves us
To encourage them as Your Spirit encourages us
To put ourselves in their shoes,
And to do for them what we would want them to do for us.

Lord, receive now our gifts,
which we present to You with our thanks.

And hear us Lord as we pray as Jesus teaches us:

(Lord's Prayer - First Form)

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.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Bible Reading - Luke 4 v 1 - 13 (GNB) The Temptation of Jesus (*Gordon Junor- Ashkirk*)

⁴ Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the desert, ² where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over.

³ The Devil said to him, “If you are God's Son, order this stone to turn into bread.”

⁴ But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Human beings cannot live on bread alone.’”

⁵ Then the Devil took him up and showed him in a second all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ “I will give you all this power and all this wealth,” the Devil told him. “It has all been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose. ⁷ All this will be yours, then, if you worship me.”

⁸ Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!’”

⁹ Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, “If you are God's Son, throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For the scripture says, ‘God will order his angels to take good care of you.’ ¹¹ It also says, ‘They will hold you up with their hands so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.’”

¹² But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

¹³ When the Devil finished tempting Jesus in every way, he left him for a while

Hymn 374 From Heaven You came (The Servant King)

From Heaven you came helpless babe
Entered our world Your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give your life that we might live

*This is our God the servant king
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the servant King*

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
Yet not my will but yours he said
This is our God...

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered
This is our God

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving
This is our God...

Prayer - (Chris Carroll - E & Y)

Prayers for Ourselves and Others

Lord! It just doesn't make sense! I mean all this stuff which is happening all round us. It seems peaceful enough inside this church building - but I can't be sure. Out there though! You should see all the things which are on the news and hear all the things people are talking about. It's frightening! Is there anything good out there?

Yes there is Lord. We know that You are out there - and in here. And yes Lord, it does all make sense because You have explained it. Even though it is not the way You had intended and even though we might not fully comprehend it, or like it. We are so thankful for Your scriptures Lord. They inform and orientate us in the way we relate to You.

For ourselves Lord, we pray that You might help us in our ability to understand and strengthen our relationship with You. Help us to overcome the obstacles which try to prevent this from happening.....

Lord, hear our prayer

Father God, there are so many people out there who know nothing about You. Some do not want to know. Some have turned away from You. Indeed the whole world seems to be turning away from You.

For a moment, if there is someone we know whom we would dearly love to turn to God or turn back to their Christian faith, let us silently bring them to mind before our Lord.....

Lord, hear our prayer

Almighty God, we pray for those who govern us both locally and nationally here in Scotland and in the rest of the British Isles, that they would govern in a godly way and we may live in peace. For them we ask wisdom in dealing with the results of conflict in other nations.....

Lord, hear our prayer

We pray, Lord, for the leaders and governments of other nations - both the rich and powerful nations and those which are poor. You are a God of righteousness and justice and know what is in the heart of every person. You are the One who is able to restrain evil.....

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers

It is through the death, resurrection and glorification of Your dear Son, Jesus that we come to You today and through the coming week.

Amen

Hymn 567 Focus my eyes on You, O Lord

Focus my eyes on you, O Lord

Focus my eyes on you

To worship in spirit and in truth

Focus my eyes on you

Turn round my life to you, O Lord

Turn round my life to you

To know from this time you've made me new

Turn round my life to you

Fill up my heart with praise, O Lord

Fill up my heart with praise

To speak of your love in every place

Fill up my heart with praise

Bible Teaching - Peter, James and John in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus

We all need friends in our lives!

Good friends, loyal friends, friends who will stick by us and help us when we are feeling down or under pressure. Friends who will support us, encourage us and pick us up.

Jesus had many friends, Mary, Martha & Lazarus, Simon the leper, Mary Magdalene, the 12 disciples and others.

But as we look at the Gospels, we see that it was 3 of the disciples in particular whom Jesus took with Him on certain occasions, just to be there with Him.

These three were Peter, James & John. It was Peter, James and John whom He took with Him when He raised Jairus's daughter from the dead and also when He went to pray on the mountain and was transfigured before them.

Let's look together this morning at another occasion when Jesus took His three friends with Him:

READ OUT: MATTHEW 26 verses 36 - 46 (Good News Bible)

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Grief and anguish came over him, ³⁸ and he said to them, "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹ He went a little farther on, threw himself face downward on the ground, and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me! Yet not what I want, but what you want."

⁴⁰ Then he returned to the three disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, "How is it that you three were not able to keep watch with me for even one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² Once more Jesus went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cup of suffering cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done.” ⁴³ He returned once more and found the disciples asleep; they could not keep their eyes open.

⁴⁴ Again Jesus left them, went away, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look! The hour has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up, let us go. Look, here is the man who is betraying me!”

The Garden of Gethsemane, where some of you may have been, is truly amazing.

I have been there on two occasions and you can really sense the great history and significance of this very special place.

The name Gethsemane means ‘The Garden of the Oil-Press’ & is made up of some very ancient, twisted and gnarled olive trees.

It lies at the foot of the Mount of Olives, separated from the the city walls of Jerusalem by the Kidron valley.

It was a favourite place for Jesus and His disciples to go for peace and quiet, away from the hustle & bustle of the city.

And so, after they had celebrated what became known as the Last Supper together, Jesus and eleven of His disciples (Judas Iscariot had gone off to betray Him) went there together.

Jesus leaves the rest of His disciples in one part of the garden and takes Peter, James & John to another part, so that He could pray.

And Jesus confesses to His good friends: ‘The sorrow in My heart is so great that it almost crushes me, stay here and keep watch with Me.’

And Jesus then goes a little further on, throws Himself to the ground and prays: ‘My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from Me!

Yet not what I want, but what You want.’

But when, an hour later, He walks back the short distance to where He had left His three friends, what does He find? He finds them fast asleep!

And so He gives Peter a little shake and says: 'How is it that you three were not able to keep with with me for even one hour? Keep watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

Then Jesus leaves them and once again goes to pray to His Father. And once again: 'My Father, if this cup of suffering cannot be taken away unless I drink it, Your will be done.'

And then He returns to where He had left them and guess what? They are fast asleep again, they could not keep their eyes open!

And so Jesus again leaves the and prays for the third time, echoing His earlier prayers. He returns and yet again finds them asleep!

'Are you still sleeping and resting? Look the hour has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinful men. Get up, let us go.'

And seeing Judas Iscariot and an armed crowd approach, says: 'Look! here is the man who is betraying Me!'

When Jesus needed His three right hand men the most, they were not there for Him! Well, they were there , but they were fast asleep!

They had proved to be useless as guards or lookouts.

They had let Jesus down and they knew it!

Jesus was facing His toughest time so far, only surpassed by the Crucifixion itself. He was in deep anguish and distress.

Luke tells us He sweated great drops of blood, a condition known as hematidrosis, which causes the sweat glands to rupture and exude blood, and which only occurs in times of extreme physical or emotional stress.

At this point in His life Jesus was beginning to become aware of the tremendous burden He was to carry for us all - the sins of all mankind and the terrible consequence of our sins which would mean His own death.

Here in these lonely prayers, we see the humanity of Jesus, we see His fear and His great anguish, but also His unflinching commitment, love and obedience.

Remember what He had said to Peter, James and John when He first left them? He tells them that His heart is at breaking point with sorrow and pleads with them to stay awake with Him and keep Him company.

Bishop Ryle writes: 'In this most critical hour in His earthly life, the Son of Man needed, as every human being needs, the companionship and sympathy of others, be it only a few, for no life that is truly human can be completely independent,'

Put simply, Jesus wanted His best friends to be with Him at this crucial time in His life!

And you and I need that too! No man or woman is an island, we need each other.

Just think for a moment. How much better is it for you and me if we have someone we love with us when we face a difficult time in our lives?

If, for example, we have to see a Consultant for a medical diagnosis. If we have an important doctor's appointment. If we have to undertake an unfamiliar journey. If we have to make an important decision about our job or our family.

Jesus needed Peter. Peter, who only an hour or so before, had promised that he would *never* leave Him, even though everyone else did! Peter, who would never deny his Master, even if he was threatened with death!

Jesus needed James and John. James and John, 'The Sons of Thunder,' who just a few weeks before had promised Jesus that *they* could drink His cup of suffering!

Jesus had explained to them how He was feeling. He had asked them to stay and keep watch, to keep vigil.

Now in their heart of hearts, that's exactly what these three disciples intended to do, but they didn't! They fell asleep!

‘The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak’ Jesus told them that night in the garden.

I love the way The Message translation puts it: ‘Stay alert; be in prayer so you don’t wander into temptation without even knowing you’re in danger.’

There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there’s another part that’s as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire!’

That’s exactly what Peter, James and John were like!

And, at times, if we’re honest, that’s what you and me are like, as His disciples today!

We *want* to do as Jesus asks us, but often, when it comes down to it, the pressures and concerns of this world just get too much for us and we don’t do it!

What are we to do about this?

How can we sort this out? Do we simply say: ‘Well, we’re only human, we’re weak, we’re bound to fail, it’s inevitable!’

Look at Jesus’ three right hand men, *they* failed, so what hope is there for us?’

Or, do we realise that, yes there are times when we *will* fail to do as Jesus asks us, *but* we must do all that we can to carry out His requests, His instructions, His commands!

Now Peter, James and John *eventually* came to realise this and they became great ambassadors for Christ, to the point of giving their own lives for Him (Peter and James being executed for their faith and John faithfully serving Him in exile well into his old age).

But *how* can *we* learn to carry out His instructions?

How can *we* do what Jesus tells us?

How can we: ‘watch and pray so that we do not fall into temptation?’

How can *we* stand up against the pressures of life that are all around us and beset us each day?

As Christians we have three distinct enemies in our lives.

These are: THE WORLD, THE FLESH and THE DEVIL

How can we fight against these three formidable enemies?

1st of all: THE WORLD

Not the Earth as such, but the *philosophies* of the world, the world's *system*, the way the world *is*, the way *society* is.

The world says that you and I can do more or less whatever we want. That you and I have the *power* to do anything we like.

All we have to do is to *recognise* this and exercise that power and live out our dreams!

So what's wrong with that you might say. I'll tell you what's wrong with that - it's all about *ourselves* - there's no mention of others and more importantly, there's no mention of *God!*

It's all about *our* needs and what *we* want and it's neither right nor healthy!

We *need* other people in our lives and we certainly need God!

Paul in Romans 12 v 2 reminds us that: We trust GOD to meet OUR needs as we serve OTHERS!

The JB Phillips translation warns us : 'Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould - but let GOD *remould* your minds from within!'

As Christians, we must not allow those around us to control our thinking - instead we must be influenced by GOD'S SPIRIT who lives in us!

The Lord our God will help us in this, we must look to *Him*, focus our attention on *Him*, think about *Him*, all that He is and all that He has done for us.

'Focus my eyes on You, O Lord, focus my eyes on You.'

'Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face

And the things of Earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.'

Our faith in God and in what He has done for us through His Son, will help us to stand up against the world and all that it can throw at us!

Jesus said: 'In this world you will have trouble, but take heart - I have overcome the world!
And with His help and in His strength, so can you and I!

So that's THE WORLD. Our second enemy as Christians is: THE FLESH

Now that sounds quite old-fashioned doesn't it?

Perhaps it's better to call it THE SELF. Human Nature. Thinking about ourselves.

Once again the Apostle Paul warns us against this in Romans 8 verses 7 and 8:

'Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God!

And so we become more and more wrapped up in ourselves & less and less concerned about the
One who made us.

We start to ignore who God is and what He is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored!

As Christians, we believe that God has given us His Holy Spirit to live in us, to lead and guide us
through life.

Before we became Christians we were led and guided by ourselves, by the self.

And now, within each one of us, we face an inner conflict. The self says one thing to us, the Spirit
says another!

As Christians we hear both inner voices, but it is the Spirit whom we are to obey!

Paul writes in Galatians 5: 'Let the Spirit direct your lives and you will not satisfy the desires of the
human nature.'

The Spirit has given us life and we must allow Him to control our lives.

That's THE FLESH, THE SELF. And finally, as Christians our third enemy is: THE DEVIL

Even Jesus was tempted by the Devil when He was in the desert. Three times the Devil tempted
Him & three times Jesus resisted his temptations and the Devil left Him.

As Christians, the Devil is our arch-enemy. He confronts each one of us.

And on our own, we are powerless to stand against him. We need help.

Ephesians 6 speaks about 'the shield of faith, with which we can put out the flaming arrows of the evil one.'

We need faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who stood up to the Devil in the desert and who has defeated him.

Jesus delivered a death blow to the Devil on the cross and He sealed the Devil's fate when He rose from the dead!

The war has been won, but there are still some battles for us to fight.

Because the Devil will not let things go and wants to do his utmost to prevent us from growing in our faith and becoming more like Jesus - he hates that!

We need 'the shield of faith' to stand up against his attacks.

His temptations are often in the form of self-doubt, as when he tempted Jesus:

'If You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.

If You are God's Son, throw yourself down from here and You will come to no harm.'

So the Devil may say to us, something like this: 'Why are you praying? God hasn't answered your prayer, has He? No-one is listening to you, so why don't you just give up?

Or he says: 'You're a useless Christian, you've let God down, you'll never be any good, pack it in and enjoy life.'

He sows seeds of doubt and self-doubt in our minds, that's the way he attacks.

And we need to respond to these attacks, by FAITH, faith that God CAN be trusted - always!

That God does know what He's doing. And that He ALWAYS has our best interests at heart.

Faith that God loves each single one of us, very, very much. Faith that He will look after us and meet all our needs. Faith in His Son Jesus, who loves us so much that He gave His life for us!

That's how we stand up against the attacks of the Devil, by reminding ourselves of just how loving and caring. How generous and patient. How merciful and just. How faithful and forgiving our God really is!

Jesus didn't condemn His three sleepy disciples. He challenged them to be alert to temptation and He UNDERSTOOD them.

Because although He was the Son of God, He was also the Son of Man.

He was fully God and He was fully man!

He knew what it was like.

That's why He said to them as they wiped the sleep out of their eyes:

'Keep watch & pray that you do not enter into temptation, for the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.'

So when, we feel that we have let God down, don't listen to the Devil's accusations. Listen to Jesus, to His gentle rebuke and His gracious encouragement.

Listen and put into practice what He says to us here. He knows what He is talking about, for He has won the great victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil.

He knows what it's like for you and me to struggle and fight against these things:

'He knows my frailty,
Shared my humanity,
Tempted in every way,
Yet without sin

He walked where I walk,
He stood where I stand,
He felt what I feel,
He understands....He understands!'

Hymn 644 O Jesus, I have promised (Thornbury)

O Jesus I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Be now and always near me,
My Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle
If you are by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If you will be my Guide.

O let me feel you near me:
The world is ever near:
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw still nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear you speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self will;
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten or control;
O speak and make me listen,
True Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus you have promised,
To all who follow you,
That where you are in glory
Your servant shall be too;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Now give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend.

John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)

Benediction - 'And now may
the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, now and forevermore.'

(3 fold Amen)