

THE BEGINNING OF PASSIONTIDE

21ST MARCH 2021: THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



WE PREPARE TO MEET WITH GOD

We come from scattered lives and locations to meet with God.
Let us recognize his presence with us.

Silence is kept.

As God's people we have gathered:
Let us worship him together.

Lord speak to us
that we may hear your word.
Move among us
that we may behold your glory.
Receive our prayers
that we may learn to trust you. Amen.

HYMN

*Alleluia! sing to Jesus! His the sceptre, His the throne.
Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood.
Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by His blood.*

*Alleluia! not as orphans are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us, faith believes, nor questions how;
Though the cloud from sight received Him when the forty days
were o'er
Shall our hearts forget His promise, "I am with you evermore"?*

*Alleluia! bread of angels, Thou on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia! here the sinful flee to Thee from day to day:
Intercessor, Friend of sinners, Earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal
sea.*

*Alleluia! King eternal, Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia! born of Mary, Earth Thy footstool, Heav'n Thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered, robed in flesh our great High
Priest;
Thou on earth both priest and victim in the Eucharistic feast.*

WE MAKE OUR CONFESSIONS TO GOD AND SEEK HIS
FORGIVENESS

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness;
by his wounds we have been healed.
Let us confess our sins.

Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess we have failed you as did your first disciples.
We ask for your mercy and your help.

When we take our ease
rather than watch with you;
Lord forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

When we bestow a kiss of peace
yet nurse enmity in our hearts;
Lord forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

When we strike at those who hurt us
rather than stretch out our hands to bless:
Lord forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

When we deny that we know you
for fear of the world and its scorn
Lord forgive us.
Christ have mercy.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
Draw us to himself
And cleanse us from all our sins,
That we may behold the glory of his Son,
The Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Jeremiah 31: 31 - 34

A New Covenant

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **32** It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. **33** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **34** No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

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

Hebrews 5: 5 - 10

5 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”; **6** as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” **7** 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. **8** Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; **9** and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, **10** having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.



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

HYMN

*Dear Christ, uplifted from the earth,
your arms stretched out above
through ev'ry culture, ev'ry birth,
to draw an answ'ring love.*

*Still east and west your love extends
and always, near and far,
you call and claim us as your friends
and love us as we are.*

Where age and gender, class and race,

*divide us to our shame,
you see a person and a face,
a neighbour with a name.*

*May we, accepted as we are,
yet called in grace to grow,
reach out to others, near and far,
your healing love to show.*

THE GOSPEL READING AND REFLECTION

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
Christ humbled himself and became obedient to death,
even death on a cross.
Therefore God has highly exalted him
and given him the name that is above every name.
Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

JOHN 12: 20 - 33

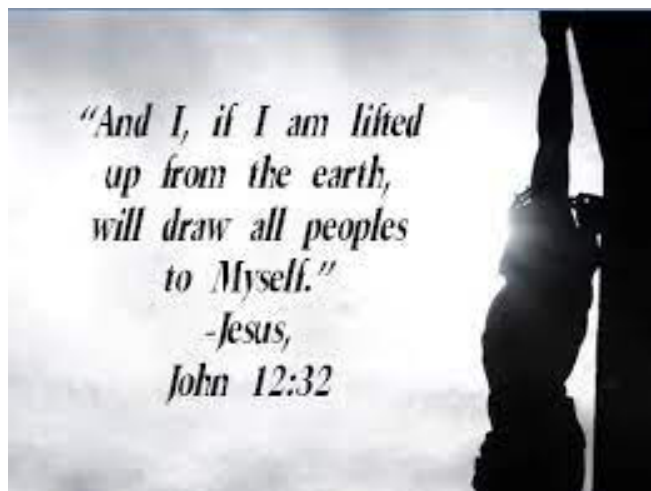
Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. **21** They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." **22** Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **23** Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** 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. **25** Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

Jesus Speaks about His Death

27 “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. **28** Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **30** Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. **31** Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” **33** 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.



REFLECTION

Our Gospel reading for today appears to be a curious one in some respects: only John recalls the apparently trivial incident when some Greeks asked if they could see Jesus; and even John does not finish the story, because he leaves us guessing whether the Greeks ever did get to see him. Just after our passage, John says Jesus went away and hid himself: so the Greeks probably never did get to see him: but whether they did or not, is not the point of the story.

So, what is the point of this story? In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ mother urges him to do something when the wine runs out at the wedding feast at Cana, but Jesus’ first reaction is to say, “*My hour has not yet come*”. When his teachings astonish Jerusalem, the leaders attempt to arrest him but they fail because “*his hour has not yet come*”. Again, when teaching in the Temple and claiming to have been sent by the Father, no one arrested him because “*his hour had not yet come*”. Yet, when Philip and Andrew tell him that the Greeks would like to see him, Jesus declares “*The hour has come*”. So what prompts this realisation?

In the story just preceding our reading, Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. This caused many to believe in Jesus: but it also roused the opposition of the Jewish leaders who, from that time on, John says, planned to kill him. John then tells of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with the crowds welcoming him exuberantly. And, in the verse immediately preceding our

reading, the Pharisees say to one another, 'See, *you can do nothing. Look, the world goes after him*'.

These Greeks are in Jerusalem for the Passover festival: they want to speak with Jesus, and approach Philip who then conveys the message first to Andrew. Philip and Andrew are the only two of the disciples with Greek, rather than Hebrew, names and it is they who approach Jesus on behalf of the Greeks, effectively acting as representatives of the world beyond Israel.

This request by non Jews operates as some sort of sign or trigger for Jesus to understand that the hour for him to die has arrived. It is as if he needed to know that word about him had spread beyond the Jewish world before the final scene in the great cosmic drama could begin. No doubt, he was already aware that the Pharisees and Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him and knew that the fact that he was now drawing converts from even outside Israel would be the last straw for them.

Jesus knows that he must die and understands that he must not ask the Father to save him because "*it is for this reason that I have come to this hour*". He explains that, just as the seed must fall to the ground and die before it can give rise to a new plant bearing much fruit, his own death is necessary for the Gospel to be spread and for others to be able to follow his path to eternal life. He is to be the seed which has to die for much fruit to be borne.

Then comes the voice from heaven, heard before at Jesus's baptism and at his transfiguration on the mountain. Now it is heard again at this final turning point towards the cross. And Jesus proclaims that, when he is lifted up above the earth onto the cross, he will, by this act, draw all people to himself: not just the lost sheep of Israel, whom he had previously declared he had come to save, but the Gentiles too, first represented by those Greeks humbly and politely asking to see him.

We don't know if they ever got to see him: but *we* will.

HYMN

*Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch Him,
And say that we love Him.
Open our ears, Lord
And help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus.*



WE AFFIRM OUR FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST

**Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the scriptures;
he was buried;
he was raised to life on the third day**

**in accordance with the scriptures;
afterwards he appeared to his followers,
and to all the apostles;
this we have received,
and this we believe.
Amen.**

OUR PRAYERS



Let us pray to the Father through the Son
who suffered on the cross for the world's redemption.

Lord, fill with your Spirit Christ's broken body, the Church.
Give to Christian people everywhere a deep longing
to take up the cross and to understand its mysterious glory.
Help us to understand that more unites us than divides us
and grant us tolerance and understanding of all
who seek to worship you in whatever way
seems most fitting to them.
By the Saviour's cross and passion,
Lord, save us and help us.

Bless those who lead the Church's worship at this solemn time,
especially as the lockdowns continue to limit the ways in which
we can worship you.

We pray for our bishops, Philip and Hugh, and for all who
minister in this Diocese, ordained and lay.

In the preaching of the word and the celebration of the
sacraments

draw your people close to you.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

Lord, save us and help us.

Look in your mercy upon the world you loved so much
that you sent your Son to suffer and die.

Bless those who work for peace
in a world torn by violence.

Strengthen them as they work to share
the reconciliation won at such a cost upon the cross.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

Lord, save us and help us.

Bring healing by the wounds of Christ
to all who are weighed down by pain, injustice or oppression.
Help the lonely and the betrayed, the suffering and the dying,
to find strength in the companionship of Jesus,
and in his passion to know their salvation.

By the Saviour's cross and passion,

Lord, save us and help us.

Welcome into paradise all who have left this world in your
friendship.

According to your promises,
bring them with all your saints
to share in all the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.
By the Saviour's cross and passion,
Lord, save us and help us.

**Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy on us.
Amen.**



The Collect for today:

Gracious Father,
you gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom,
as we pray in the words you gave us:

Our Father...

HYMN

*My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake
My Lord should take, frail flesh and die?*

*He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed for Christ would know:
But O! my Friend, my Friend indeed,
Who at my need His life did spend.*

*Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,
And for His death they thirst and cry.*

*Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
He gave the blind their sight,
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these*

Themselves displease, and 'gainst Him rise.

*They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they saved,
The Prince of life they slay,
Yet cheerful He to suffering goes,
That He His foes from thence might free.*

*In life, no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heav'n was His home;
But mine the tomb wherein He lay.*

*Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend, in Whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.*

CONCLUSION

Lord God,
you hold both heaven and earth in a single peace.
Let the design of your great love

shine on the waste of our anger and sorrow,
and give peace to your Church,
peace among nations,
peace in our homes,
and peace in our hearts,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

You believe that by his dying
Christ destroyed death forever.

Amen.

You have been crucified with Christ
and live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved you and gave himself for you.

Amen.

May he send you out to glory in his cross,
and live no longer for yourselves but for him,
who died and was raised to life for us.

Amen.

The almighty and merciful Lord,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Bless us and keep us,
This day and ever more.

Amen.

