

The Camel-Allen Churches

Worship at Home



Sunday 7th March 2021 – Lent 3

Opening prayer

In you, Lord God,
**the widowed find a carer,
the orphaned find a parent,
the fearful find a friend.**

In you,
**the wounded find a healer,
the penitent find a pardoner,
the burdened find a counsellor.**

In you,
**the miserly find a beggar,
the despondent find a laughter-maker
the legalists find a rule-breaker**

In you Jesus Christ,
**we meet our Maker
and our match.**

And if some need to say, 'Help me'
And if some need to say, 'Save me'
And if some need to say, 'Hold me'
And if some need to say, 'Forgive me'
then let these be said now, in confidence, by us

Hymn:

Be still for the presence of the Lord
The holy one is here
Come bow before him now
With reverence and fear
In him no sin is found
We stand on holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The holy one is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with holy fire
With splendour he is crowned
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant king of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister his grace
No work too hard for him
In faith receive from him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place

We make our confession and receive God's forgiveness...

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

**Father,
we have sinned against heaven and against you.
We are not worthy to be called your children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself
as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord. Amen**

I believe that God forgives and sets us free.

**We believe that God forgives and sets us free;
and at each day's beginning
we commit ourselves
to follow where Christ calls
and to love one another.**

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his service
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Collect for the third Sunday of Lent

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,

may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
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**

Bible Reading Psalm 19 - God's Glory in Creation and the Law

- ¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- ² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
- ³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
- ⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hidden from its heat.

- ⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple;
- ⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
- ⁹ the fear of the Lord is pure,



enduring for ever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true
and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.

¹³ Keep back your servant also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Song

Ascribe greatness to our God, the rock.
His work is perfect and all his ways are just.
Ascribe greatness to our God, the rock.
His work is perfect and all his ways are just.
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
good and upright is he.
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
good and upright is he.

Reading - 1 Cor 1.18-25 - Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

¹⁸ For 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. ¹⁹For it is written,

‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’

²⁰Where 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? ²¹For 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. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.



Gospel Reading - John 2.13-22

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making 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. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' ¹⁹Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After 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.



Reflection

We call this incident in our Gospel reading when Jesus turns over the tables of the money changers and merchants, the 'cleansing of the Temple'. Traditionally we have thought of it as a clearing out of the corruption of the market-place: the over-charging and shady dealing, the exploitation of the poor, none of which should have had any place in God's house of prayer.

But there is really much more going on here. It is not just these individual practices, but the whole system that has become corrupted and is far from what God intended it to be. The Temple was supposed to both symbolise God's dwelling with Israel for the sake of the world, and graciously provide a way to be forgiven and brought into relationship with him. Instead of this place of inclusion and welcome, it had become instead a place of exclusion - you were only really allowed to take part fully if you were Jewish, male and following the law according to the interpretation of the Priests and Levites - do it any other way and you were left outside.

This startling action of Jesus then, is an acted parable of God's judgement on the temple and what it has become. He is signalling that not just the tables of the moneychangers, but the whole system is about to be turned upside down and superseded by a new means of approaching God, and new means of sins being forgiven: the cross of Jesus.

We've often talked about Lent as being a time for a spiritual spring cleaning: a time to examine our personal lives as individuals and ask: Are we living according to God's design? Are we living by God's instructions or are there things which block God's purposes in our lives that he wants to clear out? There is little value in giving up chocolate or whatever, if we don't give time to this sort of examination and co-operate with the work of God's Spirit within us to cleanse, restore and heal.

But this Gospel story reminds us that our faith is not just individual; there is a communal aspect too. So what might Jesus want to clean out of our church-life this Lent? Are there ways that we have strayed away from the purposes of God for us and got distracted from what he created us to be? Are there things in our churches that get in the way of what God wants to do and what he wants us to do?

Like God's plan for the Temple, the church is meant to be a community where all people can experience and come near to the loving God but sometimes we have created barriers that instead keep people out. What are they and how can we break them down? Sometimes it's the way we do things - and sometimes it's our attitudes to others who maybe don't do things the same way as us that shuts people out.

Lent, and this Lent in particular as we consider re-opening our services soon, is a great opportunity to take some time to prayerfully consider how Jesus might see what we are doing as a church, and the way that we are doing it. To measure ourselves against his standards and purposes and to change what is necessary - with God's help. As you pray and reflect on these questions, I'd love to know what you think - let's start a discussion and work together to make our churches more welcoming, more open to others, more focussed on sharing the love of God in word and deed and let's clear out anything that get in the way of that.

Let's take the opportunity to allow Christ Jesus, the power of God and the wisdom of God, to work in us through his Holy Spirit and enable us to flourish, to develop according to his plans: for his Kingdom to grow in us and through us, and in our life together as a church family this Lent and always.



Hymn - Affirmation of faith

Can be sung to tune Hyfrydol (eg Alleluia sing to Jesus, or I will tell the wondrous story)

We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.

We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.

Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.

We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.

We believe in God the Spirit;
in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.
So by faith our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the live that knows no end.

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray for those who may be born today
and bless them in Jesus' name:

**The joy of God shine from your face
and joy to all who see you;
the shield of God surround your head
and angels ever guard you.**

May every season be good for you
and the Prince of Peace give peace to you

Let us pray for those who must work today
and bless them in Jesus' name:

**God bless you today,
the earth beneath your feet,
the path on which you tread,
the work of hand and mind,
the things which you desire.**

And when the day is over,
God bless you to your rest.

Let us pray for those who are sick in body mind or spirit today
and bless them in Jesus' name, especially...

**May the keeping of Christ be round you,
may the guarding of God be with you,
to possess you, to protect you
from danger and from loss.**

May the gospel of the God of grace
bless you from head to sole.

Let us pray for those who may face death today
and bless them in Jesus' name:

**May God provide for you
all that is needed
for body, mind and soul
as you face the final journey**

May Christ take your soul in his arms

and bring you through the balancing time
to the dwelling place of peace
and make it your home forever.

And let us pray for ourselves and one another:
**In the isolation or the busyness of this day
grant me a stillness of seeing, O God.**

**In the conflicting voices of my heart
grant me a calmness of hearing.**

**Let our seeing and hearing
our words and our actions
be rooted in a silent certainty of your presence.**

**Let our passions for life
and the longings for justice that stir within us
be grounded in the experience of your stillness.
Let my life be rooted in the ground of your peace, O God,
let me be rooted in the depths of your peace. Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven...



Hymn

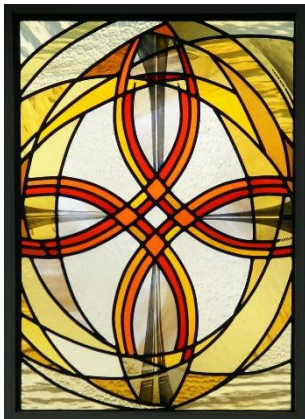
Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, be Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father and I thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breastplate my sword for the fight,
Be Thou my armour and be thou my might.
Thou my soul's shelter and Thou my high tower.
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I need not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, all of my days:
Thou and Thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, when battle is done,
Grant heaven's joy to me, bright heaven's Son!
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, Thou Ruler of all.



Thanksgiving

For all that God can do within us,
for all that God can do without us,
Thanks be to God.

For all in whom Christ lived before us,
for all in whom Christ lives beside us,
Thanks be to God.

For all the Spirit wants to bring us,
for where the Spirit wants to send us,
Thanks be to God. Amen

Benediction

**The peace of the running wave to you;
the peace of the flowing air to you;
the peace of the quiet earth to you;
the peace of the shining stars to you
and the peace of the Son of Peace to you.**

**May the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Be among us and remain with us always. Amen**

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