

Morning Prayer 14th March 2021

The Fourth Sunday of Lent Mothering Sunday

Morning Worship with William Teale



Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

Prelude

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with us.
This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Let us pray with words from Psalm 107

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious, ♦
for his steadfast love endures for ever.
Let the redeemed of the Lord say this, ♦
those he redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
And gathered out of the lands
from the east and from the west, ♦
from the north and from the south. ...

Some were foolish and took a rebellious way, ♦
and were plagued because of their wrongdoing.
Their soul abhorred all manner of food ♦
and drew near to the gates of death.
Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, ♦
and he delivered them from their distress.

He sent forth his word and healed them, ♦
and saved them from destruction.
Let them give thanks to the Lord for his goodness ♦
and the wonders he does for his children.
Let them offer him sacrifices of thanksgiving ♦
and tell of his acts with shouts of joy.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
**As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever.**

Song: Amazing grace (SOF 19)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers toils
And snares I have already come
Grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun

The Collect for today, the Fourth Sunday of Lent

Merciful Lord,
you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives
and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid
and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The reading is taken from Ephesians 2.1-10

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

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

The reading is taken from John 3.14-21

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Glory to you, O Lord

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

“What should I do now?” Is a question that I remember asking my mother a lot when I was a child. I seemed to live sometimes in a sort of listless boredom in which I was looking for something to do and waiting for something to happen at the same time. A lockdown feeling that simultaneously had a sort of hopeful promise that something might happen and a hopeless fear that it would not. “Go out and play” met with “what should I play?” “Draw a picture” met with “what should I draw?”

“Tidy your room” was the only thing which seemed to reinvigorate my search for something else to do.

Maybe this is a state of mind which is slowly returning to some of us as work and home life merge together, meeting friends is severely restricted and cinemas, cafes, bars and shops are all closed.

So how should we fill our time? Some would argue that we shouldn't. Kierkegaard, for example thought that our impulse to escape the present by keeping ourselves busy is our greatest source of unhappiness (and he didn't even have Snapchat). The “what should I do now?” State of mind can be precarious these days - it is ever easier to fill our time than ever - hang on, I've just got a message - but waiting and not knowing what you are waiting for can be important for us. A time when we can look inwards and find out who we really are. This is playfully expressed by Samuel Beckett in Endgame when one character asks “Do you believe in the life to come?” His companion sighs and then replies “Mine was always that”.

However, this balance is very fine. A constant feeling that life is only being lived elsewhere by other people can easily tip into being very much a negative emotion. In this context there is a word for it - acedia - a sort of bored listlessness which is quite near to sadness. In medieval times it was considered to be a sin close to sloth. A state in which, far from knowing who we really are, we can also not really know ourselves. A state where we say “OK why not” to harmful thoughts suggestions we would dismiss and refuse at other times when we are feeling more upbeat.

Today's bible passage starts off by talking about our sins and trespasses, and it's this particular feeling of acedia that I have been thinking about this week. While trespass (paraptoma) might mean a slip or a fall, the word used for sin (hamartia) may be more appropriate when thinking about acedia. Hamartia is a shooting word which means to miss. That is how Paul sees sin here; not as committing armed robbery or grievous bodily harm, but more as missing life's target.

Coming up short, not quite making it, failing. This sort of sin is built into us - a not being perfect. Not having the motivation to talk to our children as we should when we see stress and argument on the horizon, not asking how someone close's day was to avoid a long conversation, not saying thank you for things that have been done for us. The list goes on. And on. And on. So what happens when the answer to "what should I do know" is "let God in"? What happens when our still lockdown thoughts have Him somewhere at their centre. What happens when we ask Him to be with us and live in us? I think that this gives us a very special sort of courage - the courage to be our true selves. As E. E. Cummings said, "It takes courage to grow up and be who you really are". I don't think we can do that without Jesus' redeeming power. So don't be scared of being bored. Don't fill your lives for the sake of their being full. Ask God to share your quiet moments and listen. It is my prayer and my belief that that will make you the person you have the potential to be.

Song: The Lord's my shepherd (ACF 114)

The Lord's my Shepherd I'll not want
He makes me lie in pastures green
He leads me by the still still waters
His goodness restores my soul

And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone
For Your endless mercy follows me
Your goodness will lead me home

He guides my ways in righteousness
And He anoints my head with oil
And my cup it overflows with joy
I feast on His pure delights

And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone

For Your endless mercy follows me
Your goodness will lead me home

And though I walk the darkest path
I will not fear the evil one
For You are with me
And Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know

And I will trust in You alone
And I will trust in You alone
For Your endless mercy follows me
Your goodness will lead me home

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Intercessions (by Tini)

When I say God of grace, please respond with hear our prayer

Missing the mark, making mistakes, sin... These are hard words. How often have we missed the mark this week, this morning, even during this service? These sins linger in our hearts and minds. We can get caught up in self-talk in how bad we are and/or even perhaps start comparing ourselves with others, trying to make ourselves feel better by thinking, "Well, my sins aren't as bad as that person." In this downward spiral we lose sight of the fact that you have forgiven us. Thank you for your grace—your love given freely without strings attached. Help us to turn our eyes to you and to accept this grace. Let us know take a moment of silence to let go of the sin that we are holding onto.

God of grace,
Hear our prayer

Lord there are so many people who are hurt by others sins, their coming up short. We bring you all those people who are victims of violence—whether it is in

their own homes or in a war-torn country. May your grace and protection cover them so that they are safe and can experience your peace physically, mentally, and emotionally.

God of grace,
Hear our prayer

I pray for our church community. Thank you for the many ways that I and we have seen “good works” done to and for each other. I thank you for the way that your love and grace is passed on from one to another. Please bind us together despite restrictions and the current circumstances. Open our eyes to those in need and show us how we can extend grace and forgiveness to one another.

God of grace,
Hear our prayer

Lord you promise that we will see your incomparable riches and kindness in Christ Jesus and yet we are bombarded in our daily lives by deficiencies. People are struggling in so many ways—financially, emotionally, spiritually and physically. In John you promised a similar thing, “to give us life in abundance.” What does that look like, especially in a global pandemic? I pray that you would give all these people—the business owners and workers who are scrambling to find enough money for daily expenses, all those who are fighting depression, loneliness, or anxiety, those doubting their faith, and those who are physically ill—a glimpse of this life in abundance. May you meet them where they are! Let’s take a minute to bring specific people before the Lord in prayer—either aloud or silently.

God of grace,
Hear our prayer

We continue to pray for our pastor and his family. Please prepare the way for him to come to us in Freiburg. May he and his family experience your grace and your leading as they take steps toward a new

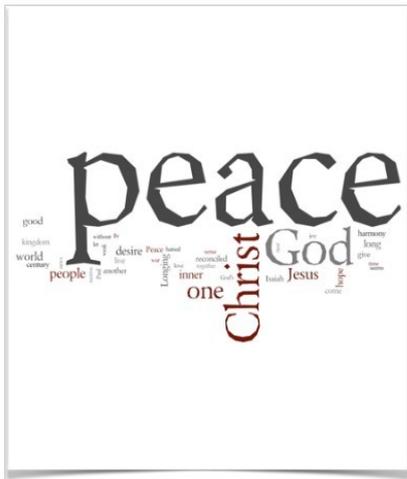
phase of life and ministry. We pray for his current parish that you would prepare them for the news of his leaving. Give us wisdom in how we can extend your grace and love to them both now and in the coming weeks.

God of grace,
Hear our prayer

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

In the language of our hearts, let us pray as our Saviour taught us



A sign of peace

God is love
And those who live in love live in God
And God lives in them.
We meet in the name of Christ and share his peace.

Song: Above all powers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgarvpSvKpA>

Verse 1

Above all powers above all kings
Above all nature and all created things
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man
You were here before the world began

Verse 2

Above all kingdoms above all thrones
Above all wonders the world has ever known
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth
There's no way to measure
What You're worth

Chorus

Crucified laid behind the stone

You lived to die rejected and alone
Like a rose trampled on the ground
You took the fall and thought of me
Above all

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The Blessing

The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace;
and the blessing
of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always.

Amen.

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude