

Ash Wednesday

17 February 2021



OPENING HYMN:

How deep the Father's love for us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ5kqQ359E4>

HOW DEEP THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR US

how vast beyond all measure,
that he should give his only Son
to make a wretch his treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss;
the Father turns his face away,
as wounds which mar the chosen One
bring many souls to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,
my sin upon his shoulders;
ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held him there,
until it was accomplished;
his dying breath has brought me life –
I know that 'it is finished.'

I will not boast in anything,
no gifts, no power, no wisdom;
but I will boast in Jesus Christ,
his death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from his reward?
I cannot give an answer;
but this I know with all my heart,
his wounds have paid my ransom.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection. It became the custom of the Church to prepare for this by a season of prayer and fasting.

At first this season of Lent was observed by those who were preparing for baptism at Easter and by those who were to be restored to the Church's fellowship from which they had been separated through sin. In course of time the Church came to recognise that, by a careful keeping of these days, all Christians might take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so grow in faith and in devotion to our Lord.

This year, because of Coronavirus restrictions, we are unable to observe the traditional imposition of ashes. Nevertheless, I invite you in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

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

Let us pray for the grace to keep Lent faithfully.

(Silence is kept)

Holy God,
our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Psalm 50:1-6, 23

A psalm of Asaph

- ¹ The Mighty One, God, the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.
- ² From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.
- ³ Our God comes
and will not be silent;
a fire devours before him,
and around him a tempest rages.
- ⁴ He summons the heavens above,
and the earth, that he may judge his people:
- ⁵ 'Gather to me this consecrated people,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.'
- ⁶ And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,
for he is a God of justice.
- ²³ those who sacrifice thank-offerings honour me,
and to the blameless I will show my salvation.'

Isaiah 58:1-12

True fasting

- 58** 'Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
- ² For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.
- ³ "Why have we fasted," they say, "and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?" 'Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.

⁴ Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

⁵ Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

⁶ 'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I. 'If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

¹¹ The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

¹² Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN: ***Forty days and forty nights***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9N29ZnwU4LM>

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

thou wast fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
tempted, and yet undefiled.

Sunbeams scorching all the day,
chilly dewdrops nightly shed,
prowling beasts about thy way,
stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.

And if Satan vexing sore,
flesh or spirit should assail,
Thou, his vanquisher before,
grant we may not faint nor fail.

So shall we have peace divine;
holier gladness ours shall be;
round us too shall angels shine,
such as ministered to thee.

Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
ever constant by thy side,
that with thee we may appear
at the eternal Eastertide.

George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870) and Francis Pott (1832-1909), Chet Valley Song

GOSPEL READING:

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Giving to the needy

6 `Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² `So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

⁵ `And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Fasting

¹⁶ `When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in heaven

¹⁹ `Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON: The God who sees our secrets.

The Liturgy of Penitence

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

God the Father, **have mercy on us.**

God the Son, **have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit, **have mercy on us.**

Trinity of love, **have mercy on us.**

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

Lord, have mercy.

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you, Lord,
all our past unfaithfulness:
the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,
Lord, have mercy.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of others,

Lord, have mercy.

Our anger at our own frustration,
and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,
Lord, have mercy.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts,
and our dishonesty in daily life and work,
Lord, have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship,
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,
Lord, have mercy.

Accept our repentance, Lord ...

for the wrongs we have done,
for our blindness to human need and suffering,
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
Accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgments,
for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbours,
and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from
us,
Accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation,
and our lack of concern for those who come after us,
Accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;
Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
That we may show your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Silence

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen**

Prayers of Intercession

We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things and to give ourselves to him this Lent.

Give your Church the courage to give up her preoccupation with herself and to give more time to your mission in the world. May the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus bring forgiveness to your people and help us to face the cost of proclaiming salvation.

Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give your world the courage to give up war, bitterness and hatred, and to seek peace.

May the shoulders of the risen Jesus, once scourged by soldiers, bear the burden of political and military conflict in our world.

Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy in our families, neighbourhoods and communities.

May the presence of the risen Jesus, his body once broken and now made whole, bring peace and direction as we live with one another.

Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up our selfishness as we live for others, and to give time, care and comfort to the sick.

May the wounded hands of Jesus bring his healing touch, and the light of his presence fill their rooms.

Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up our fear of death and to rejoice with those who have died in faith.

May the feet of the risen Lord Jesus, once nailed to the cross, walk alongside the dying and bereaved in their agony, and walk with us and all your Church through death to the gate of glory.

Lord, meet us in the silence,
**give us strength and hear our prayer,
here and in eternity.
Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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.**

The priest greets the people in peace

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,
and also with you.

Prayer of God's Blessing

Now may Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen

CLOSING HYMN: ***I will offer up my life***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tYEo0DXcIE>

I WILL OFFER UP MY LIFE in spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love, as my worship to you
In surrender I must give my every part
Lord, receive this sacrifice of a broken heart.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a Friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung;
As the praise of Your name for the things You have done?
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.*

You deserve my every breath, for You've paid the great cost,
Giving up your life to death, even death on the cross
You took all my shame away, there defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven and have beckoned me in.

Matt Redman, Chet Valley Song

Go in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

