



~AT HOME WORSHIP~



Third Sunday in Lent

20th March 2022

Theme: One more year

Preparation

Come, you who are weary with waiting.
Come, you who are hungry for change and fulfilment.
Come, you who are lost and seeking direction.
Come, to the one who will refresh, revive and redeem you.

A gathering prayer

Loving Lord, together we wait on you: **embrace us.**
Lifegiving Lord, we hunger for you: **change us.**
Lord of the Way, we often feel lost: **direct us.**
Lord of our time, forgive our misuse: **redeem us.**
Amen.

These prayers gathers us together, whether we are together in person, online or sitting on our own and reading the pages. We are still gathered because God calls us to him. Repeat the words and recognise the weariness, the hunger, feelings of loss either in your own life or in lives that you know. Our world is not at peace and this is a time of worry. Let us come into God's presence by knowing and following his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, we will be refreshed, revived and redeemed. We can, in peace, support others.

Hymn/Song – Through all the changing scenes of life

<https://youtu.be/yBkorDtz1nU>

Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ.

Oh, magnify the Lord with me;
With me exalt his name;
When in distress to him I called,
He to my rescue came.

The hosts of God encamp around
The dwellings of the just;
Deliv'rance he affords to all
Who on his succor trust.

Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you his service your delight,
He'll make your wants his care.

Nahum Tate & Nicholas Brady (1696)

A prayer of adoration

**God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
you nurture and nourish the soil of our lives,
you watch over us patiently and expectantly,
you fill us with the nutrients we need in order to grow,
and you rejoice when we too,
nurture, protect and watch over others – in your name. Amen.**

Prayer for the Day

Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,
to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection we are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Saying Sorry

Lord God,
forgive us when we are slow to change, but quick to judge;
when we take more from life than we give back;
when we give up on others too soon and offer support too late;
when we deny others the opportunity to grow, and uproot their dreams.
Forgive us and grant us your patience, perseverance and vision,
and inspire us to care for all you have made.
We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Loving God, in whom all things are possible,
for give us time enough to change and grow:
we thank you with all our heart.
For giving us the desire to change and grow:
we thank you with all our mind.
For giving us the opportunity to change and grow:
we thank you with all our soul.
And for forgiving us when we rush, judge
and deny others those same opportunities:
we thank you with all our strength.
Amen.

BIBLE READING



Luke 13:1-9

13 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **2** Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? **3** I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. **4** Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? **5** I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. **7** So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'"

8 "Sir," the man replied, "leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. **9** If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down."

REFLECTION TIME



Thought for the Day taken from the Roots publication

Children may choose to use the Activity Sheet

Those who know television series *Dad's Army* will no doubt recall the undertaker Private Frazer's catchphrase: 'We're all doomed!' It is what he said whenever any disaster threatened the platoon. It seemed to chime in so well with his character – and occupation. Well, there were people like that in Jesus' day, who were inclined to see God's judgement at work whenever tragedy struck, especially when it struck other people. What is worse was the unspoken notion that because it had *not* happened to them, they must be special people (better, not as sinful, and so on). But Jesus responded to this by saying that bad things can happen unexpectedly to anyone. So, rather than point the finger at the victims, everyone needs to change their ways while there is still time to do so. He reinforces this, or perhaps helps people to remember it, with a story about a barren fig tree. The owner wants to cut it down, seeing it as a waste of space. But the gardener pleads for more time, for a second chance.

Of course, the parable is about us not horticulture, but figs are grown for fruit rather than leaves. And God is looking for fruitful lives from us today, just as then. So, the story contains both a challenge and a chance.

You know what happens when a sports team is not performing very well: a new manager or coach is appointed. Would you expect the team to start winning immediately, and demand if they didn't that the new person is replaced? Would you not give the new person some time to make the necessary changes and opportunities to improve? On the other hand, you probably won't wait indefinitely. You would expect to see some results and might even set a 'cut-off' date. So, what about us and God?

The Bible could be described as a book of second chances, especially for God's chosen people. Peter is given several second chances. So is Paul – or rather, Saul, as he was at the time. These are two very obvious New Testament examples, but there are plenty more.

There are similar stories outside the Bible too. John Newton – the one who wrote 'Amazing grace' - captained slave ships as a young man and invested money in this horrific and evil trade. When his ship was caught in a violent storm, fearing for his life, he turned to God. That was the moment God gave him a second chance, although it took time for him to see that slavery was incompatible with his faith. But then he joined Wilberforce in his campaign against slavery, preached against the slave trade, and lived to see it abolished – and of course wrote the song we know so well. He truly was a wretch but God changed him.

If God allows time for change, so must we both as individuals and as a community. Faith is not like instant coffee. It is more like a plant that needs to be nurtured, trained and given space to grow. There may – there will – be disappointments, but there will be glorious surprises as well.



Family Song - Be bold, be strong

<https://youtu.be/v8O98virIpU>

Reflection Song before Prayers – Refiner’s Fire (Purify my heart)

<https://youtu.be/Uxviwvjyglw>

Purify my heart,
let me as gold
and precious silver.
Purify my heart,
let me be as gold,
pure gold.

Refiner’s fire,
my heart’s one desire,
is to be holy,
set apart for you, Lord.
I choose to be holy,
set apart for you my master,
ready to do your will.

Brian Doerkson

Time for Prayer

God of Grace,
we pray for those who live in areas of conflict and violence
where bullets and bombs bring destruction and devastation
- may your love be known.

May your presence bring hope.

We pray for those who suffer the pain of famine and drought
and the after-effects of natural disaster
- may your love be known.

May your presence bring hope.

We pray for those who suffer the pain of illness and disease,
their own or that of a loved one
- may your love be known.

May your presence bring hope.

We pray for those who suffer the grief and torment of bereavement
- may your love be known.

May your presence bring hope.

God of love, we humbly offer to you all the suffering of our world,
and we pray that you will bring healing and peace;
for the sake of your dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Lord’s Prayer

**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.**

Hymn/Song – I am a new creation

https://youtu.be/Teva2_x2aXo

I am a new creation,
No more in condemnation,
Here in the grace of God I stand.
My heart is overflowing,
My love just keeps on growing,
Here in the grace of God I stand.

And I will praise you, Lord,
Yes, I will praise you, Lord,
And I will sing of all that you have done.

A joy that knows no limit,
A lightness in my spirit
Here in the grace of God I stand.

Dave Bilbrough (1983)

Closing Prayer

**Lord God, you look for growth and fruit;
help us this week to grow closer to you,
and to be patient when we have to wait –
as you are patient with us.
Amen.**

Dismissal

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore.
Amen.

God bless you now and always



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