TMC. Feb 28. Lent 2

Opening Prayer

Come let us openly join together to revere the Lord, to praise and worship him. Let our hearts rejoice with everlasting joy.

AMEN

StF 317

1 At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,

every tongue confess him king of glory now;

this the Father's pleasure, that we call him Lord,

who from the beginning was the mighty word.

2 At his voice creation sprang at once to sight,

all the angel faces, all the hosts of light;

thrones and dominations, stars upon their way,

all the heavenly orders, in their great array.

3 Humbled for a season, to receive a name

from the lips of sinners unto whom he came;

faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,

brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

4 Bore it up triumphant with its human light,

through all ranks of creatures to the central height;

to the eternal Godhead, to the Father's throne,

filled it with the glory of his triumph won.

5 Name him, Christians, name him, with love strong as death,

but with awe and wonder, and with bated breath;

he is God the saviour, he is Christ the Lord,

ever to be worshipped, trusted and adored.

6 In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue

all that is not holy, all that is not true;

crown him as your captain in temptation's hour,

let his will enfold you in its light and power.

7 With his Father's glory Jesus comes again,

angel hosts attend him and announce his reign;

for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,

and our hearts confess him king of glory now.

Psalm 22:23-31

You who fear the Lord, praise him!

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

For he has not despised or scorned

the suffering of the afflicted one;

he has not hidden his face from him

but has listened to his cry for help.

From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;

before those who fear you[a] I will fulfill my vows.

The poor will eat and be satisfied;

those who seek the Lord will praise him—

may your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth

will remember and turn to the Lord,

and all the families of the nations

will bow down before him,

for dominion belongs to the Lord

and he rules over the nations.

All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;

all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—

those who cannot keep themselves alive.

Posterity will serve him;

future generations will be told about the Lord.

They will proclaim his righteousness,

declaring to a people yet unborn:

He has done it!

Prayers & Lords Prayer

Prayer of Adoration

All-powerful God of past, present and future, keeper of promises:

How we love you.

Son of man, the way the truth and the life, loving despite rejection:

How we love you.

Holy Spirit, living power within,

helping, guiding, testing transforming:

How we love you.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

your unique relationship - open to us:

How we love you

AMEN

Confession

Words of greeting on the lips; words of love on the lips - the example you gave us.

Forgive us when we fail to act as you do.

Words of retaliation, insincerity and malice on our lips;

Forgive us when we act towards others in this way, Lord.

Overwhelmed by complex relationships and rocky paths:

Forgive us for not setting our minds on you and your ways.

Fear of rejection and wary of being our true selves:

Forgive us and help us to give of ourselves as you give.

Forgive us, Lord, for our failure to trust you;

for not allowing you to be in the driving seat.

O Lord of covenant relationship, lead us and help us to live in your way.

In your name we pray.

Assurance of forgiveness.

Jesus was handed over to be crucified because of our sin. He died and rose again to make us right with God. Through him we are forgiven. Let us follow the Lord our God, giving our lives as he gave his for us.

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](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiousios) bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

Romans 4:13-25

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Mark 8:31-38

Jesus Predicts His Death

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Intercessions

We pray for those who are ashamed of themselves and what they have done.

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We pray for those who are depressed and despairing

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We pray for those who are filled with regret

Lord in your mercy- hear our prayer

We pray for those who are trying to come to terms with a serious illness

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We pray for those whose joy and Hope are being crushed by the cruelty and aggression of others

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We pray for those who know they have fallen short of living the kind of lives that bring glory to God and joy and fulfilment to themselves

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We pray for those who once walked with Christ but have drifted away

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We pray for ourselves and for all that is troubling our hearts and our minds.

Lord in your mercy - hear our prayer

We bring all these prayers in the name of Jesus

AMEN

StF 362

Meekness and majesty,

Manhood and Deity,

In perfect harmony,

The Man who is God.

Lord of eternity

Dwells in humanity,

Kneels in humility

And washes our feet.

O what a mystery,  
Meekness and majesty.  
Bow down and worship  
For this is your God,  
This is your God.

Father's pure radiance,

Perfect in innocence,

Yet learns obedience

To death on a cross.

Suffering to give us life,

Conquering through sacrifice,

And as they crucify

Prays: 'Father forgive.'

Wisdom unsearchable,

God the invisible,

Love indestructible

In frailty appears.

Lord of infinity,

Stooping so tenderly,

Lifts our humanity

To the heights of His throne.

Prayer before Sermon

Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove

With all your quickening powers

Kindle a flame of sacred love

In these cold hearts of ours. AMEN

Sometimes when we look at the lectionary readings for the day we find it difficult to realise the links that there are between them. And this is certainly true today. There are four readings; the first, which we didn’t use, was about the origin of circumcision. The second, the psalm we used a few moments ago. The third was the story of Abraham and Sarai’s conceiving a child even though they were very old, and the fourth Jesus predicting his own death. What a mixture!

Now it seems to me that the only way to make sense of this is realise that they are but parts of a story that begins with Abraham, or actually even before, and then carries on to Jesus and then carries on and on. We can read the acts of the Apostles and the many stories of what God continues to do but then it still goes on and on. And to that end we ourselves are but part of the ongoing story. It will never end because God will never come to an end.

If we are to study the whole era that these passages represent we need some background. So let’s begin with Abraham. And the first thing we need to note is something that many would not be comfortable with. Namely that Abram, as he was originally named, started life as a pagan. Someone who believed in gods. Indeed there is a legend that his father, Terah, was a seller of religious idols in Ur, of the Chaldees. If you wanted a god for your home this was where you went to buy it.

So something happened to Abram which caused him to move away from a religion of gods to a search for the one true God, the one whom we later came to know as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps, for example, he began to question how objects he or his father had made could themselves be powerful - who had made them. I remember my RE teacher, who was a local preacher, held a question and answer session in the sixth form. The inevitable question came up - who made God? His answer was easy yet complex. God! However far you want to go back it is always God who is there. Our task is simply to search and to find him.

So Abram found God and put his trust in a Power that was greater than anything man could produce for himself. But remember that was not the end for Abram but merely the beginning of the journey.

For us the story goes through many chapters and experiences. Abraham leads us to Moses and the exodus where the people begin to recognise God in their lives and in their national experience. But what is more important they begin to think ahead as various prophets and sages realise that the whole experience is part of a plan by God. It’s almost as if God is looking down on the whole of history seeing both what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future. In fact that’s exactly what is happening. Those who can link with God through the Spirit can experience what is going to happen. So in the life of Israel the prophets could look ahead and point to the future. People therefore have two or three ways of reacting to what they say. They can dwell in the past and continue to do things in whatever way they always have. Or they can live for themselves in the present now or thirdly they can trust that the future is in God’s hands and live in the faith that he is in charge.

The story, of course, is a long one. Just read through the titles of the Old Testament books and you’ll be reminded of all the various phases. History features a great deal. Kings who either look to God or don’t. Prophets who try to steer the people back to true religion. And again we see them linking in to what God is looking down on both past, present and future. And especially looking to the time when God, the father of all that goes on actually comes into the story in the person of Jesus, his son. At that moment the Father must have decided that people needed to start looking at him and what he means for the world.

As the story shifts to Jesus, our emphasis shifts to the true meaning of what our faith is about. It’s not about religion or works as scripture calls it but it’s about faith based in the Holy Spirit. But there are two uses of the words ‘works’. One quote say that it’s faith not works. Here works are religious act such as sacrifices or ceremonies. But there’s another quote from James which states that faith without works is dead. Now the works referred to here are deeds of faith like kindness, alms giving and so on. There is a totally new dimension. The Christian strength is now about what we do and not what we say.

As we look at Christ we are looking at God being active in his world and at people responding in love to what he does. The difference now is that God seals all that in the way Jesus died on the cross. A final sacrifice in which God himself provides the sacrificial lamb just as Abraham did all those years before. But this time he shows that literal sacrifice is no longer necessary because he brought Jesus back from the dead. Jesus is still here to be our Lord, our example and our friend.

The story of God’s dealing with the world goes on as we each react to need in the world and with our neighbours. And so we can ask ourselves what the future holds? Some things are certain. For example as I was preparing this world leaders were beginning to debate about how the richer nations could help the poorer with COVID Vaccinations. Something will happen but how it will come about who but God knows.

Other things in the world are not so certain. Perhaps it goes back to those three ways we can react to world events but the we is the world. We could look back at history, not a bad thing to do. We can learn from the story. Or we can go on in our own way, ignoring all else. Or we can but our trust in the God who made the story. In a popular quotation no-one will recover from the pandemic until all have recovered. We are interdependent. No man is an island! Jesus shows us all the way ahead in that while we trust him we trust God who knows the way ahead and will guide along the way. One of my favourite thoughts about the cross is that it’s made up of an Upright and a crossbeam. The first links us with God and the second links us to each other. The story is a story of discovery in every way.

StF 297

(Refrain)  
Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim  
till all the world adore his sacred name.  
  
1. Come, Christians, follow where the Master trod,  
our King victorious, Christ the Son of God.  
  
2. Led on their way by this triumphant sign,  
the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine.  
  
3. Each newborn servant of the Crucified  
bears on the brow the seal of him who died.  
  
4. O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,  
your death has brought us life eternally.  
  
5. So shall our song of triumph ever be:  
praise to the Crucified for victory!

Dismissal

Lord, we are called by your name and we are healed by your grace.

We have been appointed to be disciples and we have been enabled by your Spirit.

We have called to be your people and we walk as your children.

Now send us out to discover Christ in our community; to offer his love to our neighbours and to be Christ to all whom we meet.

AMEN

The Grace

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore,

AMEN