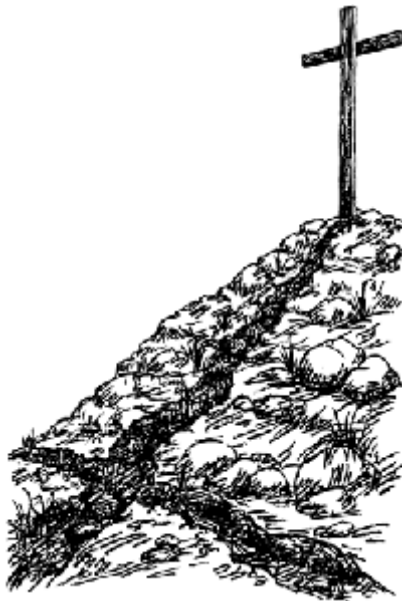


Ashburton and Moorland Team

3rd Sunday of Lent

20th March 2022



¶ The Gathering

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

Hymn – Guide me, O thou great redeemer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW-KDDKocMM>

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs and praises, songs and praises,
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams
(1717-1791)

Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

God spoke these words, saying, I am the Lord your God.
You shall have no other gods before me.
You shall not make for yourself a graven image.
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Honour your father and mother.
You shall not kill.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
You shall not covet anything that is your neighbour's.
**Amen. Lord, have mercy upon us
and write all these your laws in our hearts.**

Confession

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.
Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion, and
acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

**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.
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.**

Kyrie Eleison

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

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.**

The Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Isaiah 55.1-9

Ho, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

1 Corinthians 10.1-13

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.' We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Just as I am, without one plea,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8G0fAL8kDI>

Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt;
fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive;
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down;
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love
the breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
here for a season, then above:
O Lamb of God, I come.

Charlotte Elliot
(1789-1871)

Gospel Reading

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
The Lord is a great God, O that today you would listen to his voice.
Harden not your hearts.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke 13.1-9

There were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.'

Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?” He replied, “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon

Jesus is talking to a crowd and discussing with them right and wrong, good and bad, sinners and sin. And in the verses just before today’s gospel he has given an example of the sort of thing he is talking about.

“Thus, when you go with your accuser before a magistrate, on the way make an effort to settle the case, or you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.”

Someone has borrowed money and he doesn’t pay it back on time, so he gets into debt and the lender is in the process of taking him to court.

Where do your sympathies lie?

With the borrower who might have fully intended to pay it back when he took out the loan, but fell upon hard times – perhaps he might expect sympathy?

Or maybe the borrower had no intention of paying it back – does he deserve to be punished?

Or maybe the lender was a shark and was charging an extortionate interest, making it almost impossible for the borrower to pay it back?

Or maybe the lender was being generous and had done all he could to help the borrower through a financial crisis, and yet he was never paid back anything?

Two sides of a case, two opponents, and Jesus says that, as they go to court, they should settle the case between them, otherwise the law says the borrower would be locked up in prison.

I can imagine the scene as the two of them walk to the law court:

“It’s all your fault, you old skinflint – you knew I couldn’t afford to pay you back at the rates you’re are charging, but I was desperate.”

“Hang on, I was being really generous – you’d tried borrowing money elsewhere and everyone else was charging more – that’s why you came to me.”

“But you know I’ve been poorly and I haven’t been able to earn enough to keep up the payments.”

“You never told me that – you’re just making that up now as an excuse not to pay.”

“Just because you were born into a rich family you can get even richer by bleeding me of everything I earn.”

“Huh, with lending to customers like you I’ll soon be in debt myself, with nothing left in the bank – you were lucky I could help you out.”

.... and so on and so on as they head to the courts.

Jesus is describing this sort of argument as sin. Neither party is giving an inch. Neither of them are repenting of their actions.

“You are both in danger,” Jesus us saying, “unless you repent, you will perish as did those killed by a falling tower.”

In Jesus’ mind there was nothing in itself sinful about lending or borrowing money, but sin can creep in, for example, when there is no intention to pay it back, or when the amount is disputed, or when the lender is overly harsh.

Both parties need to treat each other well, to respect each other. To apply his injunction to “Love God and love your neighbour”, to treat your neighbour fairly. To make it up – to repent of harsh words and rigid arguments.

Saying sorry, trying to make things right, seeking forgiveness. Unless we constantly try and put things right, try and behave better and better, we deserve to be condemned.

Jesus then gives us another image. That of the fig tree not bearing any fruit, and the owner says “Cut it down.” A harsh, worldly judgement. Like the lender taking the borrower to court.

Oh dear. This all feels pretty grim – so many pitfalls that I, for one, am constantly falling into. But then the fruit tree is given another chance – it’s forgiven! It has one more year to prove itself.

Jesus doesn’t want us to live under the shadow of sin, constantly worrying that we’ve got things wrong, feeling guilty that we are not good enough, that we are not bearing fruit.

Rather he sweeps away all the punishments that the law would insist on, and through his death and resurrection allows us to escape the burden of sin, and lead lives of freedom, brought about by confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness.

But it’s up to us to confess and seek forgiveness from each other. Let’s re-run that argument between the lender and the borrower.

“I’m really sorry I’m struggling to pay my interest payments on time, but I’ve not been well.”

“I’m sorry to hear that – what can we do to sort this out?”

“I feel really bad because I know you trusted me and I feel I’ve let you down.”

“Now I’m feeling bad, sending you that letter saying I’d take you to court if your didn’t pay up by yesterday.”

“I’ll pay you in full in due course, I promise. Could we agree an extension to the loan?”

“Yes, that’s fine, and I’ll also stop charging you interest – so long as I get my money back eventually, I’ll have done perfectly well by you. I really appreciate your honesty.”

“Thank you so much – it’s such a relief – I’ll try and work extra hard to pay you back sooner.”

..... and so on and so on.

Isaiah writes about God saying:

“let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Even in the Old Testament we see God as merciful and loving.

Jesus went far further inviting all sinners to his table, all of us, as we are, to sit and feast with him.

Later in Luke’s gospel we hear Jesus saying, “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.”

Let us thank God for his generosity to us all.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

***I / We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.***

***I / We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.***

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**// We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**// We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
// We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
// We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

The Peace

Jesus says: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.'

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

Hymn – God forgave my sin in Jesus' name

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

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his love as he told me to.

He said:

*'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.*

*Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

All power is given in Jesus' name,
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

He said:

*'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.*

*Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

God gives us life in Jesus' name,
he lives in us in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his peace as he told me to.

He said:

*'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.*

*Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

Carol Owens
(b1931)

Prayers of Intercession

We pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the Church.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,

in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us into the family of those who are
the children of God.

May our love for our brothers and sisters
be strengthened by your grace.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,

in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be a temple
where the Holy Spirit can dwell.

Give us clean hands and pure hearts,
so that our lives and deeds will reflect your holiness.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,

in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine
as a witness to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body,
so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power
to bring hope to those in distress.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy, hear us.

You have called us to trust in your love throughout our lives.
Increase our faith in you and our trust in you
such that your love may draw us ever closer to you,
until that final day when we will be united with you for ever.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
**hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn – God is love, let heaven adore him

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYWW_P9MH4&t=55s

God is love, let heaven adore him;
God is love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
He who spread the heavens above,
He who breathes through all creation,
He is love, eternal love.

God is love and he enfoldeth
all the world in one embrace;
with unfailing grasp he holdeth
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
all the sorrow, all the aching
wings with pain the heart of God.

God is love, and though with blindness
sin afflicts the souls of men,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides them even then.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Timothy Rees
(1874-1939)

¶ Ending

Merciful Lord,
grant your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world,
the flesh and the devil,
and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Blessing

Christ give us grace to grow in holiness,
to deny ourselves,
take up our cross
and follow him;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen.