

2nd Sunday of Lent

ALL-AGE SERVICE



Welcome

This month's All Age Service is about exploring what it feels like to be condemned, and how God and Jesus have a different plan for us!

Geoffrey

Hymn – I heard the voice of Jesus say

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUVCpF8-VuE>

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down
thy head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting place,
and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's light;
look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk
till travelling days are done..

Horatius Bonar
(1808 – 1889)

Opening

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all.**

**Lord, direct our thoughts,
teach us to pray,
lift up our hearts to worship you
in Spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen**

Confession

**Lord God, our maker and our redeemer,
this is your world and we are your people:
come among us and save us.**

**We have wilfully misused your
gifts of creation;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have seen the ill-treatment of others
and have not gone to their aid;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have ignored evil and dishonesty
and failed to strive for justice;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have heard the good news of Christ,
but have failed to share it with others;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

**We have not loved you with all our heart,
nor our neighbours as ourselves;**

Lord be merciful: forgive us our sin.

Absolution

God who is both power and love,
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Jubilate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qS-7qh9tz0>

Jubilate, ev'rybody.

Serve the Lord in all your ways,
And come before His presence singing,
Enter now His courts with praise.
For the Lord our God is gracious,
And His mercy's everlasting.

Jubilate, Jubilate,

Jubilate Deo! *(repeat a few times!)*

Fred Dunn
(1907-1979)

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Bible Reading

John 3.1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn – Father, I place into your hands

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T8759Wdq3U>

Father, I place into Your hands
the things I can't do,
Father, I place into Your hands
the times that I've been through.
Father, I place into Your hands
the way that I should go,
for I know I always can trust You.

Father, I place into Your hands
my friends and family.
Father, I place into Your hands
the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into Your hands
the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust You.

Father, we love to seek Your face,
we love to hear Your voice.
Father, we love to sing Your praise
and in Your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with You
and in your presence rest,
for we know we always can trust You.

Father, I want to be with you
and do the things You do.
Father, I want to speak the words
that you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
that you will draw to you,
for I know that I am one with you.

Jenny Hewer
©Kingsway's Thankyou Music

Talk

“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world.” Says Jesus. This verse, the first part of John 3.17, deserves to be as famous as the preceding verse, John 3.16, because it shows us the heart of God, a loving God and not a condemning God. He loves the people he has made.

However, sadly, two thousand years later condemnation is still all around us – with Christians quite often being the loudest to condemn others. I get the impression that condemnation is now more common than it’s ever been.

Let’s think for a moment of a time when we were condemned by someone for doing something wrong.

Here’s some examples from my experience:

- One day I asked someone to come round for a meal, someone who I didn’t know well, but was connected to other people I knew, and I wanted to get to know him better. The problem was that I forgot I’d invited him – he turned up for a meal and there was no-one there. He was understandably annoyed, and I felt awful, like I’d been condemned.
- In my twenties I was asked by my boss to go and collect some trees from a Nursery, and I took the company car with a trailer attached. I was happily driving down the motorway, when a police car pulled me over. “Do you know what the speed limit for a car with a trailer is?” they asked me. “Sorry officer, I don’t.” I had an anxious few weeks waiting to be summonsed – in the end I was let off, but was an awful time of waiting.
- At school I was terrible at getting homework done – I’d put it off and put it off, hoping somehow that it would go away. But in the end I had to admit I’d not done it, and I had to bear the consequences. I felt bad for not doing it, and even worse when found out.

I wonder have you had any similar experiences?

Being told off, being condemned is never enjoyable and sometimes feels unfair. And yet it’s so common.

My first example, of forgetting I’d invited someone to a meal, was a genuine mistake. Do I deserve to be condemned for that? Perhaps not? But I did learn to keep a better diary in future. However I felt awful and in a sense condemned myself.

My second, speeding along, was “ignorance of the law”, but it wasn’t as if I’d done it deliberately. And in fact, rather than being condemned I was let off because I’d learnt not to do it again. But I still felt awful about it.

My third, not getting on with homework, was really deliberate – and I was guilty. But being made to feel bad by the teachers, would that make me more likely to do my homework? Maybe I’d have done better if they had tried to work out why I didn’t do it, and helped me to get it done?

For all of them, I felt condemned. But God says he’s not interested in condemnation?

The problem with condemnation is that it makes us feel bad, Indeed it’s meant to. It’s a kind of punishment in itself.

Look at the judge on the front page – how would you feel if he found you guilty?

When facing a judge, I’d probably feel guilty and condemned just by being there, whether or not I knew I had done something wrong! Like when a police car suddenly appears behind me – what have I done wrong is always my first thought?

However Jesus is saying that feeling condemned is not God’s way. Rather his way is to welcome us with open arms, knowing that the best way to make us behave better is to be loved rather than condemned.

Look at Jesus on the front page – his arms are open, he is welcoming us just as we are. And this is because he knows us through and through. I may be deliberately trying to hide the truth from myself when I’m behaving badly, but Jesus can see through that. He knows everything about me, and yet his love is so strong and deep that he accepts me for who I am.

And knowing that I am accepted is the moment when life changes, is the first step to being saved. A turning point that allows salvation in.

Unlike a judge, who is bound to punish people according to the law, Jesus assures us that God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

And it’s God’s love that offers comfort and consolation when times are hard. God listens to our prayers and petitions, and he affirms us for who we are – disciples who are doing our best to follow his way.

We have so much to celebrate! Amen.

Affirmation of faith

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The Peace

Jesus says to his disciples,
'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
Not as the world gives do I give to you.
Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid.'

The peace of the Lord be always with us.

Hymn – Jesus love is very wonderful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THkzrO6Nyok>

Jesus love Is very wonderful,
Jesus love Is very wonderful,
Jesus love Is very wonderful,
Oh, wonderful love!

So high, you can't get over it,
So low, you can't get under it,
So wide you can't get round it.
Oh, wonderful love!

(Repeat)

Prayers

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ,
let us pray to the Father.

You sent your Son to bring
good news to the poor,
sight to the blind,
freedom to captives
and salvation to your people:
anoint us with your Spirit;
rouse us to work in his name.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us out to encounter those in need,
and work with them

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to tell the world
the good news of your healing love.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to comfort
the sick, the lonely, the depressed.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

Send us to those who mourn,
to bring sympathy and understanding where there is grief.

Father, by your Spirit
bring in your kingdom.

**Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
as our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

**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.**

Collect

Almighty God,
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,
that they may return to the way of righteousness:
grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn – O praise ye the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbA8prdCKOc>

O praise ye the Lord!
Praise him in the height;
rejoice in his word,
ye angels of light;
ye heavens, adore him
by whom ye were made,
and worship before him,
in brightness arrayed.

O praise ye the Lord!
Praise him upon earth,
in tuneful accord,
ye sons of new birth;
praise him who hath brought you
his grace from above,
praise him who hath taught you
to sing of his love.

O praise ye the Lord!
All things that give sound;
each jubilant chord
reecho around;
loud organs, his glory
forth tell in deep tone,
and sweet harp, the story
of what he hath done.

O praise ye the Lord!
Thanksgiving and song
to him be outpoured
all ages along!
For love in creation,
for heaven restored,
for grace of salvation,
O praise ye the Lord!

William Baker
(1821-1877)

Closing Responses

The Lord God almighty is our Father:
he loves us and tenderly cares for us.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour:
he has redeemed us and will defend us to the end

The Lord, the Holy Spirit is among us:
he will lead us in God's holy way.

To God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be praise and glory today and for ever. Amen.

The Blessing

The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**