



Rotherham
Minster



St Paul's
Masbrough



A Service of the Word

Sunday 28 February
Second Sunday of Lent

Preparation

The Greeting

We meet in the presence of God
**who knows our needs,
hears our cries,
feels our pain,
and heals our wounds.**

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

Hymn

1. The God of Abraham praise
who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days
and God of love:
Jehovah Great I AM
by earth and heaven confessed,
I bow and bless the sacred name
for ever blest.

3. The God who reigns on high
the great archangels sing,
and 'holy, holy, holy,' cry
'Almighty King!'
Who was, and is the same,
and evermore shall be,
Jehovah, Father, Great I AM
we worship thee.

2. There dwells the Lord our King,
the Lord our righteousness,
triumphant o'er the world of sin
the Prince of Peace:
on Sion's sacred height
his kingdom he maintains,
and glorious with his saints in light
for ever reigns.

4. The whole triumphant host
gives thanks to God on high:
'Hail Father, Son and Holy Ghost'
they ever cry:
Hail Abraham's God and mine!
(I join the heavenly lays)
All might and majesty are thine,
and endless praise.

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Prayers of Penitence

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.

Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Against you, you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me:

cf Psalm 51

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The almighty and merciful Lord
grant you pardon and forgiveness of all your sins,
time for amendment of life,
and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray.

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his Way
come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First reading

A reading from the book of Genesis.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with

you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring.

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Genesis 17.1-7,15,16

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the gospel according to Mark.

Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8.31-38

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Homily – Rev. Rachel Young

Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mk 8.34)

I wonder what goes through your mind when you hear those words of Jesus?

When I read them whilst preparing for this sermon, my first thoughts were about the suffering that our whole world is going through – ourselves included – in this current pandemic. If ever there was something that could be called a ‘cross’ that we have to bear, this feels like one. Some of us are bearing more suffering than others; and most of us are weary because we don’t know exactly when it will end. And so this is the context in which we hear Jesus’ words this morning – I’d like to issue a health warning here, that we must be gentle with ourselves as we reflect on Jesus’ words together.

Jesus said these words to a crowd of people who were listening to him, including his own disciples. His disciples had just been hearing Jesus talking about his forthcoming rejection by the Jewish authorities, and that he would be put to death and after three days rise again. In Mark’s gospel, this is the first time Jesus had said this to them, and he will say it again twice more at different times. Each time the disciples hear him talk about it, Jesus follows up with a description of what it’s like being one of his followers. Here’s a summary of what he says:

Here, the first time, he says that his followers must be prepared to deny themselves and ‘take up their cross’; to be prepared to lose their life for his sake, in order to save it; and not to be ashamed of him and his words. The second time he talks about his death, in chapter 9, Jesus says that the first should be last, and the servant of all; that our faith should be like that of a child; and we should be like salt, which doesn’t lose its saltiness. And then in chapter ten, the third time, he talks to James and John, his disciples, about drinking the cup that he has to drink; about being a servant or a slave to others; and that the Son of Man – Jesus’ name for himself in Mark’s gospel – came to give his life as a ransom for many.

It sometimes helps us with our own understanding to think how the passage would have been understood in when it actually happened, and then when it was written down – in this case, about 40 years later: What would Jesus’ disciples and followers have understood by his words at the time? And what would Mark’s contemporaries have understood by them?

At the time Jesus spoke, no-one expected the Messiah to be killed – least of all Simon Peter. Which is why he reacted so angrily to Jesus’ suggestion and began to rebuke him.

Peter’s idea of a saving Messiah was not one that would suffer and appear to be a failure! So, it was a shocking and unwelcome bit of news. But by the time Mark’s contemporaries heard Jesus’ words, they would have known about and possibly experienced the sort of suffering and rejection that Jesus was talking about. The persecution of Christians for their beliefs was, by then, widespread and some of Jesus’ apostles were, indeed, also crucified.

So, what about us? How do Jesus' words resonate with our experience, and what affect could they have on our beliefs and our lives?

If we were to take his words literally – as his first disciples or followers would have done – we can expect that following Jesus might lead us to have to give up our life...that's quite a thought, isn't it? This is one way of understanding the words 'take up their cross and follow me', because the cross was an instrument of execution. People died because they were Christians – as, indeed, they have done in some countries and cultures in our world over two thousand years. Even today, Christians in some parts of the world flee their home country because of persecution or a threat to their life.

But we could also take Jesus' words metaphorically, meaning that they are just symbolic. So, for example, they would mean that we might have to bear some heavy burden that makes life harder, because we are a Christian. Perhaps it means carrying some form of suffering or weight in life that we would prefer not to. But it's suffering that we would encounter because of our faith in Christ.

I think that we can look at Jesus' words in both these ways, because if we profess to a faith in Christ, we will at some point in our lives have to make a decision as to how much it affects what we say and do. Here are some examples – you might be able to think of some more:

How many of us have, at some time in our life, had to decide as to whether to admit to our faith in Christ? I can certainly remember lots of times it's happened to me, and in fact it happens a lot now, especially when I'm not wearing a dog collar! We find ourselves put on the spot – perhaps about the way someone else is behaving or what they believe – and we have to either admit to our faith or hide it.

How many of us have been ridiculed or excluded by someone or a group of people because we are known as a Christian? How many of us have had to take some sort of decision because we're a Christian, knowing that we would be penalised in some way or worse off because of it? How many of us have known we must forgive someone and been misunderstood for it? How many of us know someone from a different country who has had to flee from persecution or a threat of death, because they are a Christian? In Rotherham at the moment there are currently over 500 asylum seekers, some of whom have done exactly that. How would we feel if we were in that position?

Jesus' instructions for his disciples to take up their cross and follow him, aren't for the faint-hearted. If you read his descriptions of the Christian life, it's clear that being a disciple will cost us something. For each of us it will be a different cost. But we can

(and must) balance this up with other teaching from Jesus, such as words from Matthew's gospel: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.." (Matt 11.28)

To finish with, here are some words written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German church leader who was killed by the Nazis nearing the end of the 2nd world war. He writes:

"Jesus says that every Christian has (their) own cross waiting for (them), a cross destined and appointed by God. Each must endure (their) own share of suffering and rejection. But each has a different share: some, God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering, and gives them the grace of martyrdom, while others He does not allow to be tempted above that (which) they are able to bear. But it is the one and the same cross in every case." (p.73)

In this time of Lent we are preparing for and looking forward to Easter. Let us consider our response to Jesus' challenge, to take up our cross, whatever that may turn out to be, and follow him. Amen.

Let us declare our faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The Creed

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

**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.

Hymn

1. Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,
if thou wouldst my disciple be;
deny thyself, the world forsake,
and humbly follow after me.

2. Take up thy cross: let not its weight
fill thy weak spirit with alarm;
his strength shall bear thy spirit up,
and brace thy heart, and nerve thine arm.

3. Take up thy cross then in his strength,
and calmly every danger brave;
'twill guide thee to a better home,
and lead to victory o'er the grave.

4. Take up thy cross, and follow Christ,
nor think till death to lay it down;
for only they who bear the cross
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

5. To thee, great Lord, the One in Three,
all praise for evermore ascend:
O grant us in our home to see
the heavenly life that knows no end.

*Words: C Everest
Music As Hymnodus Sacer, are. F Mendelssohn
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Prayers

Prayers of Intercession – by Rev. Bruce Leng

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you promised through your son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith. In penitence and faith, let us prayer to the Father and ask for his mercy and grace.

We pray for the life of the Church, your holy people. That they may grow in faith, triumph over evil and grow in grace. Help us to stand firm as Christians even when it

feels difficult to do so. We pray for those doing their best to maintain services online, while we are still in lockdown. Lord, strengthen our faith, also, over the coming weeks, so we may be a source of strength to others, in what hopefully should be the last stages of the pandemic. We pray that you will strengthen Bishops Pete and Bishop Sophie, our clergy here in Rotherham, and all your church in the service of Christ; that those who confess your name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory to the world.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the needs of the world as we remember that your Kingdom is at hand. We pray for political leaders here and abroad, that that they may act wisely, carefully and with compassion over the coming months. We pray that you will guide all our leaders in the ways of mercy and truth. Bless and guide Elizabeth our Queen; give wisdom to all in authority; direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honour one and other, and seek the common good.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are in special need, remembering:
The needy, that they may not be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor be taken away; the sick, in mind, body and, spirit, that they may know your power to heal. We pray for the elderly and sick, that they may find comfort and solace, and be protected from illness and infection. We pray for all those who selflessly minister to the needs of others, even when risking their own health. We pray for the very ill and for those for whom this day will be their last. And in a moment of silence we pray for those who are known personally to us...

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We remember and are thankful for friends and family who've gone before us to be with Christ. Hear us as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ; according to your promises, grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, give us strength to live in your name, through faith in the resurrection of God's beloved Son. Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and all Christian people to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father,

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Diocesan prayer

**Living God, Jesus calls his followers
to seek first your Kingdom.
Renew us as we make your love known;
Release us to share freely together in mission;
and Rejuvenate us to be fruitful in your service.
Give us courage, wisdom and compassion,
that strengthened with the grace of the Holy Spirit,
we may, as the Diocese of Sheffield,
both flourish and grow
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The 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.**

The 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.

Conclusion

Romans 5.1,2

Hymn

1. Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise,
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

2. O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.

3. O generous love! that he who smote
in Man for man the foe,
the double agony in Man
for man should undergo;

4. And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his brethren, and inspire
to suffer and to die.

5. Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise,
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

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The Blessing

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.

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